

speech (as if censoring what adults read has anything to do with planning for children the kind of reading matter that will not harm them.)

15) That the "experts" have approved of comic books so they must be all right. (But experts are not needed, only common sense.)

16) That comic books are socially harmless. (On the contrary, they immunize a whole generation against pity and against recognition of cruelty and violence.)

17) That comic books are a healthy outlet. (On the contrary, they stimulate unhealthy sexual attitudes: sadism, masochism, frigidity.)

IT IS pretty well established that seventy-five per cent of parents are against comic books. (The other twenty-five per cent are either indifferent or misled by propaganda and "research.") Since the comic-book industry enjoys second-class mailing privileges, the parents, as taxpayers, are paying for what they do not want. The apologists of comic books, who function under the auspices of the comic-book business (although the public is not let in on that secret), are sociologists, educators, psychiatrists, lawyers, and psychologists. They all agree that this enormous

What I Can Offer You

By Richard Gillman

FIRST: I will promise you nothing.

I am too fragile to keep my vows,
Too weak to lasso stars
From their constellations,
Too sensitive to bring you back from war
Enemy scalps.

Secondly: I am fickle.
I love the cherry lips of beautiful girls,
The dynamic energy of well-joined

over-stimulation of fantasy with scenes of sex and violence is completely harmless. They all rely on arguments derived from misunderstood Freud and bandy around such words as "aggression," "release," "vicarious," "fantasy world." They use free associations to bolster up free enterprise.

My own clinical studies and those of my associates of the Lafargue Clinic, the first carried out independently from the comic-book industry, and the first leading to their condemnation, have convinced me that comic books represent systematic poisoning of the well of childhood spontaneity. Many children themselves feel guilty about reading them.

The worst sector of comic books is increasing and the best, if there is a best, is getting smaller. The comic-book publishers seduce the children and mislead the parents. Their mass production is a serious danger to the production of good inexpensive children's books. The publishers of these good children's books, instead of fighting the experts of the comic-book industry and decoding their "codes," lie on psychoanalytic couches themselves, and delve into their own dreams instead of providing decent fare for the dreams of childhood.

When I recently conducted a symposium on the psychopathology of comic books I was blamed for not allotting more time to a representative of the comic-book business who was there. I am even more guilty than that: I once conducted a symposium on alcoholism and didn't invite a single distiller.

Fredric Wertham is senior psychiatrist, New York City's Department of Hospitals, director of both Bellevue and Queens General mental hygiene clinics (NYC), and the author of "Dark Legend: A Study in Murder."

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HOMELESS ...

AFRAID ...

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