

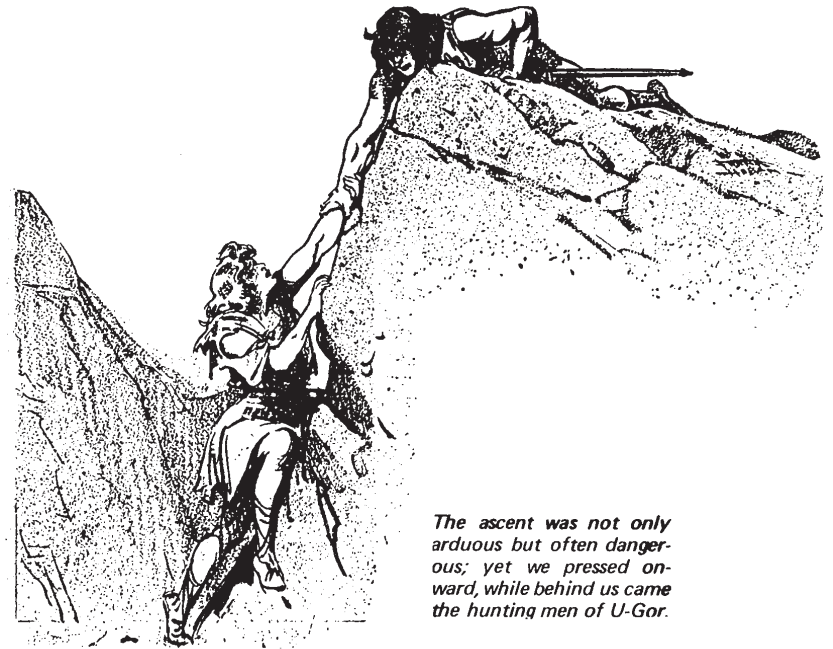
The awkward staging of Hutton's frontispiece overshadows some decent drawing in the primary figures. It bears the hallmarks of an insistent art director demanding that all the story be told in one image. The U-Gorians were likely an afterthought—Tavia and Hadron appear to have been repositioned to the right to accommodate them.

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Revisionist Graphics: An alternate dust jacket for Metropolitan's *A Fighting Man of Mars*

Phil Normand



The ascent was not only arduous but often dangerous; yet we pressed onward, while behind us came the hunting men of U-Gor.

Max Elser's original idea included a "wash reproduction" redrawing of one of Frank Hoban's *Blue Book* illustrations. Oddly, Burroughs had previously said that he thought that Hoban "made the red men of Mars look like half-wits." An opinion not really borne out by close examination. Ed was probably thinking of an illustration in *The Blue Book Magazine* by Joseph Chenoweth that was used to promote the magazine serialization. In any case, this is the Hoban spot that Hutton redrew for the frontispiece.

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The story of how Burroughs' seventh Mars novel ended up with its final dust jacket is detailed in Part IV of Robert R. Barrett's article, "Edgar Rice Burroughs and Metropolitan Books, Inc." in the Winter 2001 issue of *The Burroughs Bulletin* (Number 45).

In November, 1930, Maximilian Elser, Jr. of Metropolitan Newspaper Service decided that *A Fighting Man of Mars* would become the fourth Burroughs book to be published by them. He asked for a suggestion as to the jacket artist, and Burroughs of course suggested J. Allan St. John who had more than established an association with all of his books.

Elser wrote that he would contact St. John about the illustrations, but in January, 1931 sent Ed a letter detailing his "new idea" for the dust jacket. He wanted to use the Laurence Herndon cover painting for the May, 1930, *Blue Book Magazine* as the front illustration and one-color reproductions of various foreign translations of Burroughs' novels on the back. The back blurb would catalog the details of the foreign translations and also promote *A Fighting Man of Mars* while the flaps would contain a synopsis of the book along with press notices about *Tarzan at the Earth's Core* and *Tamar of Pellucidar*.

Burroughs had his mind set on using St. John, however, and said that he really couldn't work up much enthusiasm for any other artist. The *Blue Book* cover just didn't appeal to him. Elser backed off the Herndon painting but also closed the subject of using St. John because the artist wanted more money to do the title lettering. Metropolitan felt that they could create a more dynamic look to the jacket. "Mr. St. John is an excellent

artist, but, after all, he is rather conventional. What we need is a selling jacket," Elser wrote. He then suggested that they use either Hugh Hutton or Paul F. Berdanier, both working in-house at the time.

All this came at a difficult time for Burroughs who had been hospitalized in November for epididymitis and, though back home in December, 1930, suffered a relapse and was back in and out of surgery in January. Perhaps too tired from his illness to engage in his usual attention to the details of the illustration of his books, Ed finally told Elser that he could use his own judgement in the matter of the choice of artist.

The resulting Hugh Hutton wrap-around dust jacket is generally considered to be the weakest of all the Mars series jackets. It contains none of the strongly rendered action or classic anatomy that St. John was capable of painting. The design is subverted by an asymmetrical composition that puts the center of conflict on the spine and all the interesting details on the back cover.

In fact, in an interview with cartoonist Jack Bender in the fanzine *ERB-dom* in August, 1969, Hutton recalls the cover assignment as being done under miserable conditions:

"All I can remember was working against a deadline," he says. "I caught a 'bug' and had a temperature of 103 degrees. The only way I could keep going was to alternately paint and lie flat on the floor under the drawing board. Mrs. Feg Murray* walked in once and let out a shriek that cracked the door glass—she thought I had dropped dead at work."

Two years later Hutton moved to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* where he

became well known as an award-winning editorial cartoonist and a member of the Philadelphia Sketch Club until his death in 1976. His cartoons show that he became much stronger as an anatomist and draftsman than this cover exemplifies.

Elser got the go-ahead in February and by the 27th he told Ed that they had started on the art. Elser said that they (Metropolitan) considered the frontispiece and jacket "excellent." He also said, "We have been supervising drawing of frontispiece and painting of jacket design..." by which we might conclude that Elser may have been responsible for the art direction himself. The painting looks hurried and shows little style, but, perhaps Elser himself has to be held responsible for the result.

It is a good bet that the idea of putting some kind of emphasis on the spine originated with Elser since *Tarzan and The Lost Empire* is the first ERB dust jacket to use a spine motif. Ed must have thought it worked pretty well as a sales gimmick because he used a spine drawing on all the books published by ERB, Inc. that didn't use a wrap-around jacket.

For a couple of years, after doing the *Savage Pellucidar* alternate dust jacket, I had toyed with the idea of using the *Blue Book* cover as an alternate to the Hutton for *FMM*. I believed that it would have made a much more exciting cover. When Barrett's *BB* article came out I was astounded to learn that not only had it been the original consideration, but that there was a definite statement as to what the whole jacket was to have looked like. I determined to go ahead with the redesign and wrote to Robert asking if he had

more information about what books might have been depicted on the back of the jacket.

He promptly sent me a copy of a photostat of a group of foreign edition covers which ERB, Inc. had furnished Metropolitan and which had been intended for use in newspaper ads. Barrett assured me that we could easily assume that this would have been the same art for the dust jacket back panel. The cut is very dark and not really clear enough to use, so I sent a copy of it to George McWhorter at the Burroughs Memorial Collection in Louisville, Kentucky and he supplied me with color copies of all but two of the foreign edition covers. Shown on the photostat, but not available in the collection were the Arabic and Polish editions of *The Beasts of Tarzan*.

After an extensive search, I was unable to find copies of the elusive covers so I substituted foreign editions of *A Princess of Mars* and *The Gods of Mars*. While in Louisville, Kentucky, for the 2002 Dum-Dum, I took the opportunity to scan the cover from the May, 1930, *Blue Book* in the Burroughs Collection at Ekstrom Library. I digitally removed all promotional type and lettering from the cover and filled in the lower right corner of the painting. The book title lettering has remained the same because it was done in-house as a matter of course.

So, this is what might have been. I hope you enjoy this revisionist dust jacket and that it will find a place in your library.

Phil Normand, APRIL, 2004
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*"Feg" Murray was a sports cartoonist working for Metropolitan at the time.