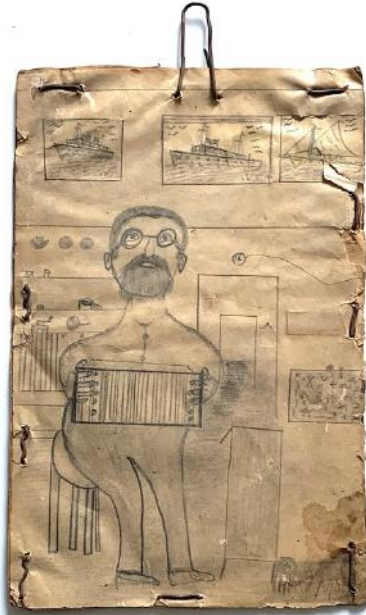


RICHARD OVIET TYLER COLLECTION, URANIAN PHALANSTERY Gnostic LYCEUM AND TEMPLE PRESS, AS COMPILED BY ROBERT ANDREW PARKER



RICHARD OVIET TYLER

Richard Oviet Tyler was born in Lansing, Michigan in 1926. While serving in the military during World War II, he witnessed the devastating aftermath of American firebombing in Tokyo, and registered the psychic trauma wreaked by history's first atomic detonation over a civilian population in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Following the war, Tyler worked as an illustrator for the army newspaper and took odd jobs, returning to the States at the end of his service contract and enrolling at the Chicago Institute of Fine Art on the GI Bill. Here in 1956 he met his wife, the painter, sculptor and filmmaker Dorothea Baer.

Tyler and Baer moved to New York and Tyler worked as a graphic artist (for Playboy magazine, among others) and as an instructor at SVA and CUNY. From an early stage he was also situated in a burgeoning downtown art scene

anchored out of Judson Memorial Church, and in October 1959 helped establish the Judson Gallery along with artists Claes Oldenburg, Marcus Ratliff, Jim Dine and Phyllis Yampolsky. Oldenburg's famous Ray Gun Show was held in that space several months later, and he executed his first performance *Snapshots from the City* there shortly after. It was a moment when Oldenburg and Dine were poised to break onto the scene and Tyler, though not himself a 'happenings' artists, turned to an art practice spanning experimental performance, music-making, and publishing/printing that was committed to an existential life-as-art doctrine.

The Uranian Phalanstery and First New York Gnostic Lyceum Temple was established on the vernal equinox of 1959 by Tyler (alias Rev. Relytor, Dr. Uranian) and Dorothea Baer (alias Mm. Reab). The group moved into their 'lodge' at 328 East 4th Street, between Avenue C & D, one of two side-by-side brownstones which housed the Lyceum and Rectory. At the same time Tyler was also the building 'super' to Oldenburg a few houses over - and in an 1983 interview with *Tattoo Time Magazine* Tyler relays how he would often find Oldenburg at his sewing machine late nights stitching 'soft hamburgers', and other works.

Tyler's Uranian Press was styled as an outlaw/fugitive imprint of the Phalanstery, producing a steady stream of editioned publications featuring his own writings and artwork, often in the form of socio-spiritual tracts and manifestos. Tyler sold his many chapbooks, broadsides and fine art editions from a 'free-press' pushcart (or 'bookbarrow') that he wheeled from his basement workshop in the East Village to a spot inside the Judson gate on a daily basis.

The publications and print portfolios of the Uranian Press are both an account of an inward journey toward self-realization and distinctly outward looking, with much of the work attuned to

and staked against the “terror of the times.” With a visual energy reminiscent of Romantic printmaker and poet William Blake and the political engagement of 19th Century printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, Tyler’s gnostic tracts are updated for an era dogged by fears of nuclear apocalypse, as well as exhaustion brought on by wars abroad and violence at home. Restlessness, anxiety and abiding nihilism (“Dissociation, Despair, Destruction,” as Tyler writes) is the cause of society-wide spiritual schizophrenia, and the Phalanstery aimed to find ‘self transcendence through the sacrificing self’ as a way out of darkness into the “great dawn of Mutual Love.”

The Phalanstery acted as a nexus for a range of gatherings and activities, a collective home and meeting place for a rotating cast of artist-disciples (or ‘agents’ as they were called) to meditate collectively and create art. With Tyler as its de facto ambassador and minister, the group pushed for a communally-minded investigation into creative enlightenment and self-transcendence, melding a patchwork spiritualism with an avant-garde practice of a “self-documented life” through which gnosticism and everyday experience were folded into an encompassing artwork. The motley group who served as agents of the Uranian Phalanstery adhered to an ‘Eight-Fold Way on the Path’ borrowed from Buddhist principles (Right Mindfulness, Right Thought) infused with an elaborate symbological system determined by cosmology and planetary movement. The group regularly took LSD and other psychedelics as a mode of ‘controlled’ schizophrenia, helping to facilitate entry into non-material realms. Music and dance – “operations of white magic” as they’re called in the group’s Founding Articles – were a central element of the Phalanstery, and improvisational group performance acted as an important spiritual access point. The nine high holy days (coinciding with solstices, equinoxes and other cosmological occurrences) were marked by late-night, candlelit gatherings. Tyler was an initiate of Tibetan tattooing, a practice believed to have healing properties, while the Uranian Phalanstery’s Burial Society performed funerary rituals, including “low cost” cremations after the death of a group Member.

For all the Phalanstery’s activity, it is in the publications and bookworks of the Uranian Press where the many divergent threads and influences – a fascinating mix of pop culture and the avant-garde smashed up with the ontological – come together and offer the most direct view into Tyler’s manic creation of life lived as an artwork.

[Printed Matter Gallery, on the occasion of the 2017 exhibition *The Schizophrenic Bomb: Richard Tyler and the Uranian Press*]

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

Robert Andrew Parker was born in Norfolk, Virginia, 1927. He has illustrated over forty highly praised books, many for children. He is also an acclaimed illustrator for magazines, including *The New Yorker*, *Fortune*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Mademoiselle*, and has designed sets for operas. Parker has been the recipient of numerous awards and has exhibited his work extensively since the 1950s. Parker attended the school of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1948 until 1952 and also worked at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and at Stanley William Hayter’s Atelier 17 in New York during the 1950s. His luminescent watercolor paintings and drawings are characterized by a loose, playful integration of subject and background, a metaphysical emphasis on the environment, natural or otherwise. He has

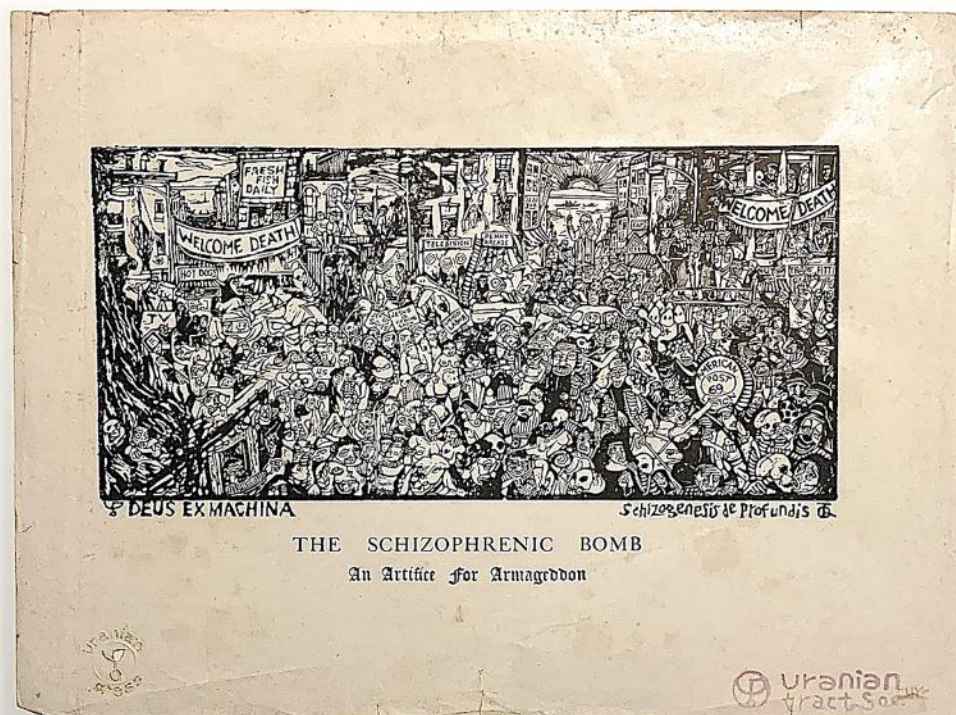
illustrated over forty children's books and has been recognized with awards including a Caldecott Honor and an American Library Association Notable Book award.

[Robert Andrew Parker Collection, Modern Graphic History Library, Washington University]

THE COLLECTION

This collection is an in-depth window into a side of the New York avant-garde scene in the 1950s and 1960s (and beyond) which has received far less attention than many of the concurrent movements and players. It is not mentioned in many major surveys, such as Clay and Phillips' *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side*. Despite being at the physical center of the underground press and art worlds, the Uranian Press and Tyler's work remain severely underappreciated, especially when viewed alongside its contemporaries such as Ed Sanders' publishing arms, Ted Berrigan's C Press, and Wallace Berman's *Semina*. Its evolution into a quasi-religious collective incorporating Jungian and Gnostic ideas of creativity and consciousness, LSD, astrology, alchemy, Tibetan Buddhism, and much else, further marks its unique position. Few of its publications are held in American institutions, and despite his extensive production output, Tyler remains a bit of an enigma. This collection, assembled by a well-regarded modern artist who seems to have otherwise not been particularly associated with the religious aspects of the Society, would be almost impossible to replicate. The crown jewel is the mysterious "Secret Agt." kit, which hints at many fascinating possibilities.

"It's totally not hippie-dippie New Age. There's this sort of dark current that runs from the very beginning of his work to the end of it. [Tyler was] a man whose life really was his art practice."
[Max Schumann, executive director of Printed Matter]



URANIAN PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Publication One, Published Impulsively, 1956. Single sheet, folded to create sixteen panels. Texts by the “word jazz” artist Ken Nordine. Nordine writes in the contents that he is “on words,” whereas Dick Tyler is on xylography; very clearly illustrated and printed by Tyler.

Elizabethan Ballads, 1959. Broadside announcing the Uranian Press’ publications inspired by sixteenth-eighteenth century broadside ballads and chapbooks, “perpetuating these works taken from the originals in the Rare Book Division of the New York Public Library collection, & reissuing them in Limited Eds. with Original Art work by the press masters and their apprentices.”

Mucklefoot Miscellany, 1960. Four broadsides in printed folder. Poetry by Victor Lorenz Kaplan, woodcuts by Dorothea Baer. One of 400 numbered copies, signed by Baer and Lorenz. The broadsides, “Simple Simon,” “Of Hodge Wracked by the New Plague & Mucklefoot’s Prescription of Deliverance,” “Ralph O’Bellevue,” and “A Fable for Foxes,” are presumably the items referred to in the Press’s 1959 Elizabethan Ballads broadside (see above).

Ichthus, 1960. Woodcut image by d.b. (Dorothea Baer). Broadside. Uranian Tract Society stamp on verso.

Dust for Sparrows. Broadside poster for dance performance at the Henry Street Playhouse, May 29, 1960. Woodcut by Ronald Short, handset and printed by Manuel Narciza at the Uranian Press.

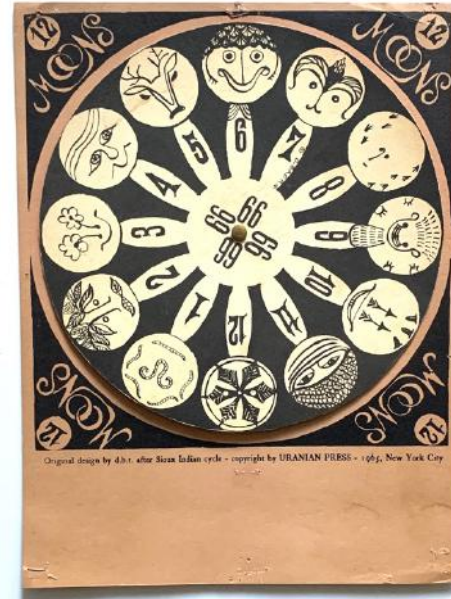
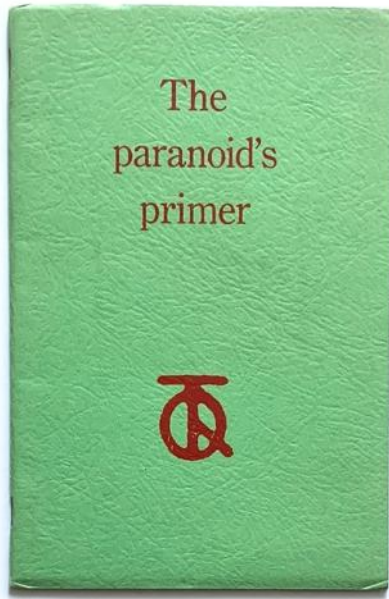
Attention Attention ROT Has Recently Returned Safely & Successfully From A Privateering Pioneering Expedition Into The Archaic Layers Of The Mind.... Broadside announcement for Tyler’s first exhibition at the Judson Gallery, March 25 to April 14 [1960].

The Mischances of Morley Perus in the Universal Mind, Part the First, 1960. [24] pp. Stapled printed wrappers. Handset type with woodcuts by Tyler. One of 300 numbered copies, signed by Tyler, with Uranian press seal. Bookplate of Robert Andrew Parker on interior front cover.

Uranian Press Catalogue no. 1, 1960. Single sheet, folded twice. Invaluably lists items available from the Press, including Fine Art Editions, Broadside Ballad Folios, posters, and greeting cards. With four inserts: Elizabethan Ballads broadside (see above); The Outcast Seed broadside (see above); Greetings From Uranian Press N.Y.C. (see below); a reproduction of an article in Village Voice; and a reproduction of an article from Life magazine (see below). Bookplate of Robert Andrew Parker on rear cover.

—another copy. With the reproductions of Voice and Life articles only.

A Warning! Broadside insert for Creativity as a Mantic Procedure of the Intuitive Function, 1960.



8 Death Tracts, 1960. [8] leaves, laid into a printed folder. Texts and deep etch relief prints by Tyler. One of 300 copies, signed by Tyler. Each leaf with the Uranian Press seal.

The Agt., n.d. Typeset and woodcut by Tyler on green paper. "The ideal agent must be so psychologically well-balanced as to appear normal." With Uranian Press seal and stamp.

—another copy. On brown paper with stamp on verso.

"*Dis Associated Anarchists.*" Woodcut, signed by Tyler to Parker, with Uranian Press seal. n.d.

Creativity as a Mantic Procedure of the Intuitive Function, 1960. Broadside insert for pamphlet of the same title.

The Paranoid's Primer, 1961. [28] pp. Handset type with six woodcuts by Tyler, one double-page in red. Stapled printed wrappers. One of 300 numbered copies, signed by Tyler, with Uranian Press seal.

The Schizophrenic Bomb, n.d. [c. 1961]. Broadside woodcut, with Uranian Press stamp and seal. Reproduction of the same image from *The Paranoid's Primer* (see above).

Printed invitation for Studio for Dance Gallery exhibition, January 14, 1961. Graphics by Tyler and Baer.

The Outcast Seed, or, Bandit Sperm Bank, 1961. Text by Tyler, print by Ronald Short. Uranian Press seal and stamp.

9 *Gnostic Tracts*, 1962. [9] leaves, laid into a printed folder. Texts and deep etch relief prints by Tyler, cover print by Baer. One of 300 copies, signed by Tyler. Each leaf with the Uranian Press seal.

Biography of a Flower, 1963. [20] pp. String-bound wrappers. One of 300 copies. Text and woodcuts by Dorothea Baer. Meditations on the verses of the 2nd Century Gnostic 'Gospel of Truth'. Heavy wear and almost split at spine.

Stop! Ritual Violence. Handset type with woodcut image, Uranian Press embossed seal. [n.d.]

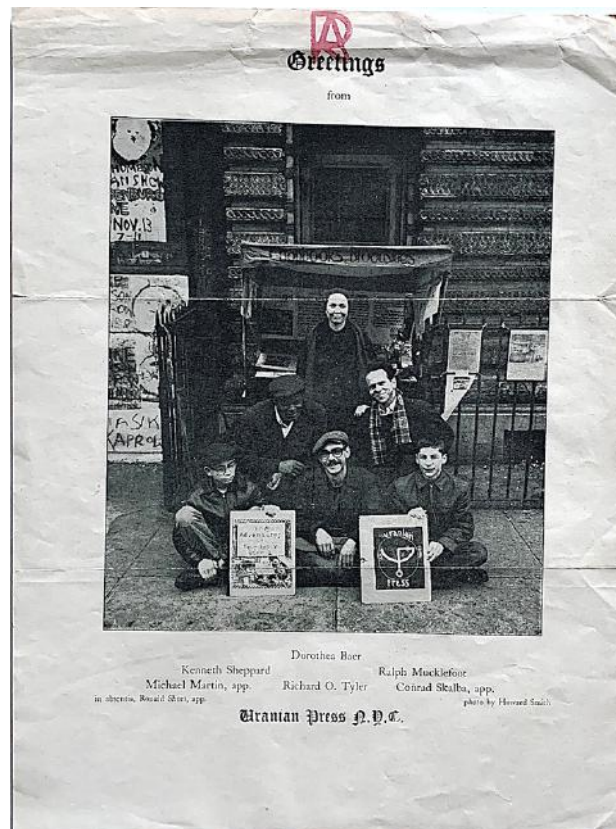
Devour Freely. Handset type with woodcut image, Uranian Press embossed seal. [n.d.]

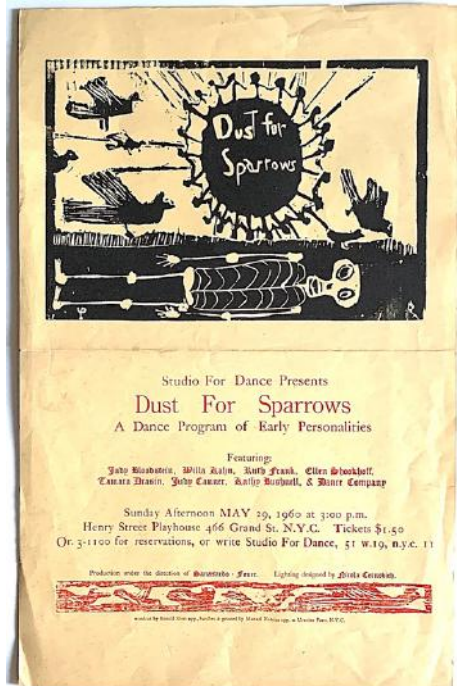
Twelve Moons calendar, 1965, design by Dorothea Baer, with attached volvelle.

Greetings From Uranian Press, N.Y.C. Photo of Uranian Press staff. Verso handwritten to Brother RAP, Agt, dated 12/22/68, from Tyler.

—another copy. Verso handwritten to Bob, Agt, dated 7/11/67, from Tyler.

—another copy.





Chinese Year of the Earth Ape, 1968. Broadside, with calendar stapled to lower quarter and mirror attached to center.

Chinese Year of the Iron Dog, 1970. Broadside, printed on suede-like stock, with calendar stapled to lower quarter.

Stolen Paper Review 3, 1977. An offprint of Richard Tyler's essay, "Creativity as a Manic Procedure of the Intuitive Function," reprinted from and including the cover image of the 1965 issue of San Francisco based literary journal *The Stolen Paper Review*. Stapled printed wrappers. [8] pp.

Reproduction of Typed Letter Signed to the State of New York Department of Audit and Finance, 1976, clarifying Articles of Association, with Uranian Phalanstery embossed seal and other colored stamps.

Reproduction of text from "Gnostica" [2 pages] regarding music, with Uranian Tract Society markings and additions. [2 copies]

Reproduction from "The Secret Life of Plants" [1 page, folded], with Uranian Tract Society marking.

Reproduction of article by Erik Eckholm, "The Unnatural History of Tobacco," 1977, [7 pages], with Uranian Tract Society and Phalanstery stamps.

Uranian Tract Society flyer for protest at the United Nations regarding freedom for Tibet, 1978.

"Vani timoris justa excusatio non est." One of 22 numbered copies, 12 pages [c. 1977], with embossed seal of the Uranian Press. Regarding Tyler's termination from his position at Lehman College. Designated Robert Andrew Parker's copy, he is listed as a reference for Tyler on page 8.

Flyer for exhibition at Hunter Arts Gallery, "1st Public Appearance in Two Decades."

Uranian Tract Society flyer/proposal for financing the printing of Liberty LongCut chapbook.

Liberty LongCut exhibition flyer, 1977.

Appeal: Protest Statement. Chapbook [20] pp, 1978. Regarding the Phalanstery's request to the IRS for tax exemption.

Chinese Year of the Earth Horse, 1978. Broadside.

Earth Ram Calendar, 1979. Broadside, with calendar stapled to lower quarter.

Cong[regation] Calendar, 1979. Broadside, mounted on red stock, with calendar stapled to lower quarter and Uranian Press embossed seal.

Memento Mori/Chenrayzee Dzung. Broadside, 1982. Uranian Press embossed seal.

Cong[regation] Calendar, 1988. Broadside, with hand coloring.

Nine oversized [8 ½ x 14] broadsides, photo-reproducing collages and Tyler's handwritten texts.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

New Talent Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, 1955. Brochure. Works by Tyler and two others.

Exodus 2, 1959. Printed wrappers. Contains Tyler's "Life and Death of the Chickenman," a text in linocuts, printed on special paper, and one illustration "Tattoo." Although not noted, published by Judson Studio, an affiliation of Judson Church. Bookplate of Robert Andrew Parker on interior front cover.

Life Magazine, March 7, 1960. Contains "Boy Printer and His Book," [pp. 91-94] regarding Ronald Short and his book "The Adventures of Tom Gray," printed at Tyler's press.

Abyss, volume 3, number 1, 1971. Cover and interior note by Tyler.

Collage, 1962. Published by the School of Visual Arts. Edited by Parker, includes a contribution by Tyler.

Stolen Paper Review 2, 1963-4. Contains Tyler's "The Planets." (pp. 52-55)

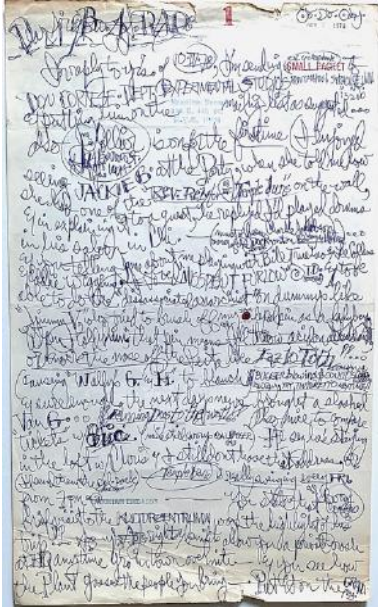
"Uranian Tattoo Magician: Richard O. Tyler," n.d. [1988]. Article by V. Vale, photocopied from *Tattoo Time* magazine, 1988, pp. 52-60.

Newspaper clippings re Tyler. Village Voice, Aufbau.

CORRESPONDENCE

Typed Letter Signed to Parker from Elizabeth Ames of Yaddo, dated 31 January 1957, thanking him for the recommendation of Tyler and Baer to visit.

Autograph Letter Signed to Parker ("Bob") from Tyler ("Dick"), 4 leaves, text on recto and verso of first three leaves, dated Feb 24th 57.



Autograph Letter from Tyler to Parker, dated May 7, 1978. Single sheet with collage photo-reproduction on verso.

Packet sent to Parker from Tyler, with addressed envelope dated 1979, concerning Playboy magazine, to which Tyler (and presumably Parker) had contributed as artists.

Autograph Letter Signed to Parker (“Bob”) from Tyler, single sheet, with photo-reproductions on verso. Dated Jan 25 1982.

Autograph Letter from Tyler to Parker. Single sheet with collage photo-reproduction on recto. n.d.

“Richard O. Tyler,” by R.A. Parker. Photo-reproduced typescript, [3] pages.

OTHER MATERIALS

Portrait of Tyler, pencil on paper, with stapled edges and metal mount, n.d. Signed “JM.” (see first page for image)

Parker’s Uranian Society Secret Agt. “Assassin” Attache Case. Housed in a cardboard Automat briefcase. Laid in (mostly secured with string to the bottom) are six fake cigars; a cigarette box with cigarettes within; a compass; a fake metal stiletto; a book of rolling papers; an Agt. notebook; and a laminated copy of Parker’s Agt. ID with the Uranian Press seal and a photo. Another copy of the ID is laid in, unlaminated, with the “assassin” stamp.



