

The Drink Tank

Issue 211



The funny thing is that this issue came together very easily, and that always worries me. My cousin, Claire, sent me a cover, I got articles from Taral and Howie and a couple of LoCs, all without thinking about it, really. It's not often that it goes this easily.

This weekend I went to a party with Linda where I got into a nice long conversation with a fellow named Paul who is all about the Christopher Marlowe is the real Shakespeare thing. I'm totally into that, I love Marlowe, and though I've missed out on reading up on these things, I held up a bit of the conversation. I really doubt that Shakespeare was the author of more than a handful of his plays, and more likely that he was simply a clearinghouse fellow who bought plays from playwrights and beat them into shape. Names like Fletcher, de Vere, Marlowe (who I really do believe wrote at least the first draft of King Lear as it so closely fits his style) and several others.

Christopher Marlowe was likely all sorts of things, and one of them is really smart. He most certainly was a part of the Government, and since there are very few records of what he was doing with the Gov, it's likely he was a spook of some sort. If you look at his life, he fits the CIA profile very nicely. Was he killed in 1593 in a fight over a bartab by three dudes who were known underworld types? Who knows? But then again, the fact is there are references to Marlowe having written hundreds of works that are lost or were never published. Could some of these have ended up in the hands of some dude from Stratford? Well, if Billy Shakes was a clearinghouse fellow, taking in plays and getting them to the stage (as seems possible), then it's really likely. Yes, there's a certain consistency with his work, but there are some plays that certainly show very different brushes at work.

Now, what does all that mean to someone like me? Well, I have to say that the question of Shakespeare's works are far less interesting to me than the question of their genesis. I'm on record saying that Shakspear was not the great writer nor dramatist in history, merely the one with the best publicist (called Academia!). For ghod's sake, he didn't even



have a standardized spelling of his name! Frankly, everyone from Ibsen to August Wilson and especially Tennessee Williams all have it all over Stratford when it comes to understanding and presenting the Human Condition. Of the Shakespeare plays, Lear and Mac-Beth are the ones that I think are really amazing. Lear is easily the greatest part in English Literature until you get to Willy Loman and the MC in Cabaret.

Marlowe was blood and guts. That was my friend Marin's argument against Marlowe as Shakes. My answer to that is everyone needs an editor, and if there were dozens of Marlowe works (including some that clearly are about topics that would have been very hot to handle in, say, 1589) that could be fiddled with, why wouldn't someone fiddle with them?

I gotta get John Hertz to write something about that. We've talked Shakespeare a few times over the years. He's a big fan, holds a very high opinion of his work, and I hold Hertz in high opinion, so it would make sense. But alas, he may never read this issue and so, we may never know. I should give him a call.

There is doubt among many, but we're doubtful to ever be able to set them aside because unless we find every Shakespeare play in the hand of the Bard himself, there's not that'll end the debate!

Portable Childhoods: a review

by howeird

Late in February, following the bread crumbs up the stairs, around corners, across a balcony, around more corners in the Domain Hotel to the Potlatch con suite, I found the back room, the one which opened onto the bathroom/drinks nook, and settled into a chair as a fairly average looking 40-ish woman with short light brown hair, wearing a light blue hoodie, held court from an office chair in the middle of the room.

At least I remember it as being an office chair, it may have been a standard hotel room chair, an easy chair or a bar stool. Whatever it was, the person sitting there made it seem like a throne. Looking around the room, everyone was riveted. Some were people I know, some were Famous Authors™ here for the conference, some were total strangers to me. I had no idea who the speaker was, but she was pouring out streams of articulate, intelligent, fascinating monologue at a high rate of speed, and if someone got a word in edgewise she would math that person's tone and subject and continue to be fascinating. I was enthralled.

Then one of the Famous Authors™ came into the room, walked up to her with a paperback book open to its title page, and asked for her autograph. The book was *Portable Childhoods* and the author's name is Ellen Klages. As soon as I got home I went online and ordered the book, and when it arrived I was hoping it would be at least half as good as the

court session at Potlatch.

It is, and then some.

The book is a collection of 16 short stories, with an introduction by Neil Gaiman. More telling than the introduction is the afterword. Klages sums up the tone of the book in a couple of short lines:

"...I write myself stories about being a kid.

They are not children's stories"

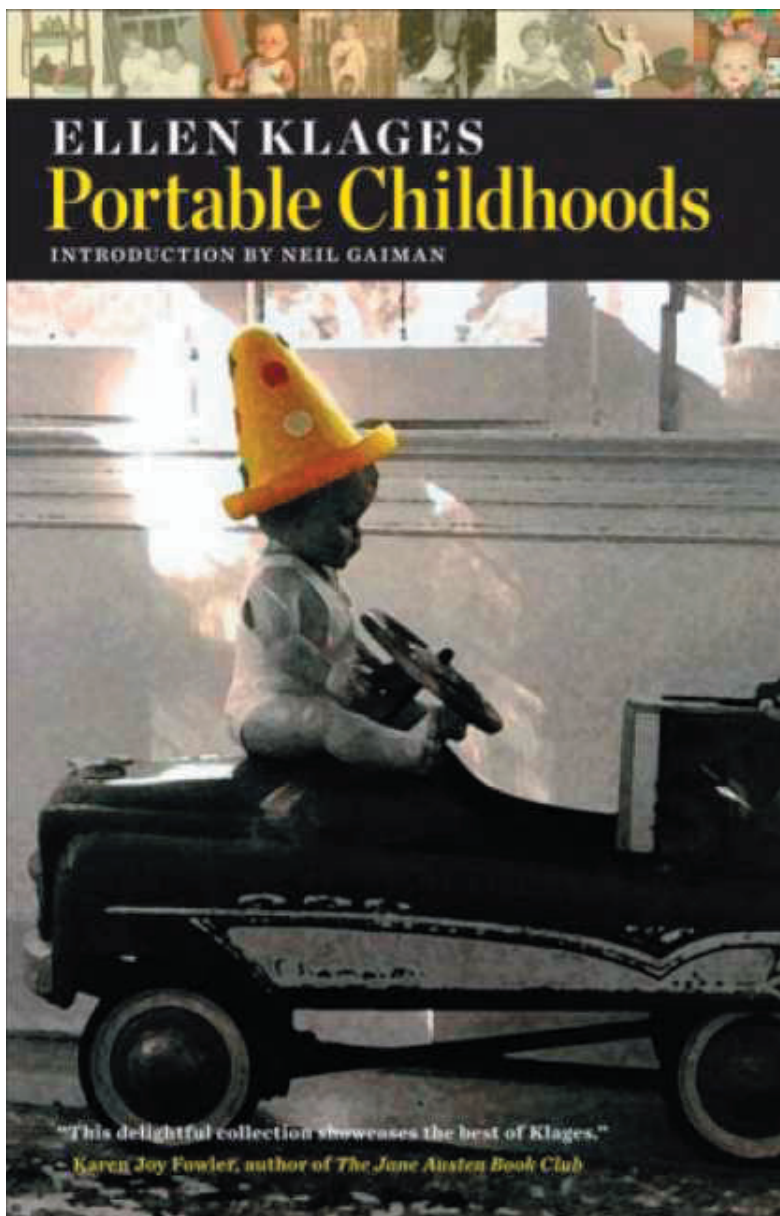
"And so I write about fear and wonder, and discovering who you are and where you belong.

Many of my stories have happy endings."

And my guess is some of the endings which seem happy to the author will strike her readers as slightly twisted. Klages has an absolutely brilliant talent for grabbing onto the tail end of a story and twisting it into another dimension. Sometimes it's a twist of lemon, sometimes a twist of sweetness, and sometimes something downright evil.

No spoilers, but here are some teasers for my favorite stories in this volume.

In *Basement Magic*, Mary Louise is tormented by her father's new trophy wife, and finds an escape in housekeeper Ruby's tales of voodoo. *The Green Glass*



Sea, which I'm guessing was the seed for Klages novel of the same name, tells a story of Alamogordo from a child's eye view. *Flying Over Water* is a sort of reverse Silkie story. *A Taste of Summer* turns a lost girl into a research chemist in training. *In The House of the Seven Librarians* is the most children's story of the lot, the tale of a baby found on the steps of an old library which had been abandoned by the town – but not by the elderly librarians. The old library feels much like the classic gingerbread house in the deep dark woods. And the Clever Title Award goes to *Möbius, Stripped of a Muse*. It is also the ultimate recursive composition, with, of course, a twist.

Each of the stories has something to recommend it, there isn't a clinker in the lot. Though they are all stories of childhoods, the subjects, characters, formats and directions they take are diverse. Worth full price, as they say at BASFA, and don't be surprised it, at the twisted end of a story, you hold the book at arm's length and say to yourself "Ellen Klages, sometimes you are just plain wicked."

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Portable Childhoods

Ellen Klages

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A Day of Our Own

Taral Wayne

So why shouldn't we follow in the footsteps of such venerable tradition? For the sake of the advancement of all artists, and particularly furry artists, comic artists, and fan artists of all kinds, I propose *Artists' Day*!

Could anything be simpler? Of course not. In addition to a long list, if you feel more appreciative than a mere five bucks can express, you can make it a tenner instead. Or even twenty!

The only issue of any consequence that remains to resolve is the choice of a day. There are so **many** holidays on the calendar already. And quite a lot of them as spurious as Kwanzaa, so picking one might be a little tricky. It won't do to celebrate Artists' Day so soon after some other major holiday that everyone is broke.

I have a solution to that question as well. First, make a list of days you think suitable. Put it in an envelope addressed to **me**. And make certain you include \$5 so that your suggestions can be considered... (Office expenses, you understand.)

With any luck, it should be possible to find a popular celebrity to front our cause on TV. Someone like Robin Williams, Patrick Stewart, or J.K. Rowling. If possible, the star should be associated with art, in however distant or non-obvious a way. Frank Miller, say. Or Gary Trudeau. If all else fails, even Matt Groening would do, though it might be necessary to remind the public what possible connection there could be.

In time, there might even be parades in major cities throughout the country. Floats, clowns, marching bands, majorettes. Especially majorettes in tight skimpy costumes and thigh boots. Yum. And then, bringing up the rear, a phalanx of honored artists, bearing the gilded tools of their trade at Port Arms, while the adoring crowds throw showers of silver dollars at their feet. (Or credit cards, if dollars are hard to find in sufficient numbers.) It would be undignified, of course, for the marching artists to scramble to pick up the tribute. It should be possible to negotiate with Sally Struthers for the loan of third-world orphans to scuttle about and pick up the money for us.

The purpose of Artists' Day is not simply venal. Though I will concede a material benefit. The higher calling that Artists' Day answers is to free artists of all walks of life from having to please customers.

Customers (known also as Clients in some parts of the country, or even "Employers") are the bane of all artists existence. Customers put Kelly





Freases to paint covers for nurse novels, drive Windsor MacKays to animate Raid commercials, and limit Will Eisners to illustrating the adolescent adventures of caped heroes. A little closer to home, they consign certain artists to supplying endless numbers of nekkid bunny girls. Customers, in other words, keep us from doing what artists really want to do, they way they want to do it. Artist's Day can free us from Customers!

So don't delay. Consult a calendar and send the modest \$5 processing fee with your suggestions today. And when it's finally announced, celebrate Artists' day generously and unstintingly. Put your money where your gratitude is! And for God's sake, don't put any requests for nekkid bunnies in the envelope with the money.

Thank you.

I should mention something here...

...but I'm not sure what it would be.

And now, some notes from my man in Australia, Dick Jenssen aka Ditmar!

Chris,

The cover to Drink Tank #210 is actually called "Another Fake Bonestell" because it was as exact a COPY as I could make of one of his very famous paintings "Saturn as seen from its satellite Titan". This is Plate XXXVI of the book "The Conquest of Space" by Willy Ley and Chesley Bonestell.

I've never actually seen that book. I know, I'm an uninformed philistine, but to be fair to me, there are many other things I've never seen. I am a fan of Willy Ley, to be sure, and I've discovered that he worked with Disney quite a bit on one of my favorite of their films with Ward Kimball.

I wonder if you could, in the next Drink Tank, perhaps, point out that it was MEANT to be a copy - a test of the abilities of my graphics software to simulate a far, far better artist than I could ever hope to be. (Otherwise some nit-picker may attack me for being just another plagiarist. And, apropos of that, thank God Bonestell was the artist and not Harlan Ellison. You CAN quote that last sentence...)

As for nit-pickers - well, here I go...You misspelled Bonestell as Bonestal...

But - PLEASE - keep feeding my ego by using my graphics...

Cheers,

Dick Jenssen

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or

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You see, I totally get that. As I'm working on the Computer Graphics section of the Timeline of Computer History, there are a lot of folks who did just the same with other images. It was a test of every lineprinter to see how accurate a reproduction of the Mona Lisa it could do. Many of the early images were attempts to recreate the works of Mondrian. It was a fun programme.

And there's no fear of me not using your graphics. They're just too awesome to not have in my pages!

And, of course, there's Lloyd Penney!!!

Dear Chris:

I get the feeling this is gonna be a quick one...I'll try not to make this a self-fulfilling prophecy. Here come comments on The Drink Tank 209 and 210.

I just love having Mr. Lloyd Penney to comment on!

209...greetings to James Bacon, and I wish I could comment more on this issue, but... I've never been a comics reader, never read The Watchmen, and never saw the movie. I know enough about The Watchmen to know who they are, and that they aren't exactly the sterling examples of superheroes that perhaps Superman and Wonder Woman are. Beyond that...sorry, folks, so much to read, and so little time.

Can't blame ya. Folks who don't read comics have a lot of trouble with Watchmen.

One question that I don't think was answered...if so many people loved the comics and the movie, why will Alan Moore spit venom all over it? And why would half the audience walk out on the movie? And if the movie was so dark and dreary, why are there Lego characters, soft dolls and My Little Ponies done up like Watchmen? (Had to laugh out loud at the Rock and Bullwinkle gang done up like the Watchmen. Somehow, I think Jay Ward would approve.)

It's weird that it was so divisive. I think that the film had a lot for fans with a certain world view (think of people like me and the Lovely and Talented Linda) who will grasp it and love it and try to make something fun of it and others who just can't get beyond certain things. Of course, there are also folks who make Twilight knit stuff, so it takes all kinds, I guess.

210- Hey, Steve Green's the TAFF winner! I live just south of the Woodbine Racetrack, one of the premiere racetracks in Ontario. I've been there once for a work-related team-building effort, but beyond that, it's just a big grassy area with the odd horse trailer going in and out.

Congrats to Steve! It was a nice race and they did a lot of great work putting the TAFF name out there, which is important. I look forward to workin' with Steve.

Ad Astra's past, and this past weekend saw us in Niagara Falls, New York at the annual Eeriecon. It's small and slow, and relaxing, and full of old friends I might get to see once a year. Yvonne and I have decided to rejoin the Ad Astra committee to help out, distribute flyers and offer opinions and past experiences. I'm trying to get more fanzine lounge information, and get Leigh Anne the info she wants... I may have to wait a couple more weeks until after the World Horror Convention comes to Winnipeg.

I can't wait until the Fanzine Lounge happens at WorldCon. As I've said, I'm happy to help in any way you need me. Perhaps we can run the TAFF auction out of the Lounge?

All done, and barely a page. Oh, well, better luck next time. See you then!

And I thank you, He of Awesome LoCs!

Yours, Lloyd Penney.



