

WHISTLESTAR 7



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This ish produced with Adobe InDesign CS3. Fun.

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B A N A P P L E G A S

Unemployment: the secret of publishing Giant Fanzines

Given the opportunity, I become a workaholic. In the last ten years, I've had a number of stretches of holding down two to four jobs at the same time: teaching and designing computer self-help classes, managing corporate computer networks, writing and editing textbooks, writing software reviews and how-to articles for websites. The problem with this is that in my zeal to convince myself (or my departed father) that I'm not a lazy bum, after all, I've also managed to have several nervous breakdowns accompanied by periods of general ill health. The last issue of *Whistlestar*, almost seven years ago, was produced in such a time.

That issue, (#6), featured part 1 of Andy Hooper's fannish play, *Fanotchka*. I'd intended to follow with *Fanotchka* part 2 reasonably promptly, but it got sidetracked by a number of things—and then I got myself employed again. I started teaching A+ Certification computer classes, got a contract to write an A+ Certification training guide, and eventually returned to a job as a full-time system administrator.

That run ended, this January, after six years—leaving me back at home with my cat, Internet connection, and a surfeit of daytime hours to fill. I had a new desktop publishing application I ought to learn (PageMaker being history), so, “bring the Jubilee!” Time to Pub My Ish.

About This Ish

I'd been admiring Andy Hooper's plays for several years, back in 2002, before I managed to convince him that I had what it takes to perform in them. *Fanotchka* premiered at L.A.Con III and was popular enough to merit an encore performance at a subsequent Corflu. Since then, Andy has continued to amuse us with a number of successor works. Marty Cantor published one of them, *Fanorama 3004*, in *No Award #15* at efanazines.com; and I believe he'll be publishing another one, soon. Andy's plays have been the high point of several

Corflus for me. In a better mirror universe than ours (maybe the one where bearded Ted White's *Amazing* still features “The Club House”), Andy would have several rocketship statues on his mantelpiece.

As partial atonement for taking so long to complete publication of *Fanotchka*, I've assembled a special PDF version of the complete work, featuring a spiffy cover by Alan White. You should find it, by now, on my efanazines page. (Click the Whistlestar link, above, if you're reading this on a computer.)

Another attempt to remedy fannish neglect in this ish: after being saddened by the untimely departure of good friend and fellow Fanoclast richard wayne brown, I determined to search for a piece he submitted to *Whistlestar*, which I'd managed to misplace in the previous “Jubilee” cycle of the 1990s. Happily, the manuscript turned up—tucked in its original SallieMae envelope under a quire of mimeo stencils.

I always enjoyed the pixyish hoax style that rich used when pulling our legs—in pieces such as this one. But after reading through the piece again, I saw a number of problems. I wondered whether I should print it uncut, but I didn't trust my own ability to whittle it down. Fortunately, a solution presented itself: Dan Steffan was already working on a collection of rich's best writing and jumped at the chance to work on a new “unpublished” item from him. Dan's “Afterward” describes the process he went through in re-organizing *Morgenstern Lives!*

to show rich at his best. (I changed a few conjunctions, made one verb case agree with its subject, and added a few commas and em dashes after Dan completed his final pass—an act that I hope rich will forgive, if we meet again at the Great Convention in the Sky.)

Also back there in the mumbly, mumbly, “used to do this stuff but can’t now” time, I asked Ted White if he’d be willing to do a book review. Ted being a charter member of the original 1950s comics fandom, I thought he’d enjoy reading Michael Chabon’s *Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*. Maybe he’d deconstruct Chabon’s fantasy scenario of how the two Jewish immigrants invent a best-selling superhero in the 1930s, and compare it with the real life adventures of Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel. Maybe he’d look at Chabon’s fictional comic book industry and deliver details on how well (or badly) Chabon had borrowed from actual history. Was Kavalier a successful pastiche of Jack Kirby? Was there any resonance in Chabon’s world with the actual publishing careers of Lev Gleason or Will Eisner? What about the racketeering of Harry Donenfeld?

Ted does, indeed, have some things to say about Kavalier & Clay vs. Siegel and Shuster. But he hated the book, overall, as you’ll see when you read his review. For him, Chabon’s attempts to lend historical color to the story are just a clumsy hodge podge.

More comic book drama

Speaking of superhero comic books and clumsy hodge podge, I’d like to take a brief editorial moment to say how thoroughly turned off *I* am by the last several years of DC Comics under the editorial helm of Dan DiDio. Under his direction, most DC comics no longer contain stories. Instead, they feature issue-long combat sequences, many of them poorly-drawn in the haste to meet weekly deadlines. At first, I thought DiDio’s campaign to substitute ugliness and violence for everything heroic or whimsical in DC was just his theory of what it took to boost sales. But over time, I’ve come to the conclusion that DiDio really roots for the killers and psychopaths in the DC Universe. In a recent issue of *Green Lantern*, the arch villain Sinestro exults that he’s compelled the Guardians of the Universe to transform the Green Lantern Corps into cold-blooded killers. So, he brags, his war with the Lanterns isn’t lost; he’s won it. Looks like it, to me. Dull.

One superhero writer/artist at DC has remained to challenge (or, more practically, to ignore) the power of the DiDio regime. I spoke with Darwyn Cooke, author of the Eisner-winning *Absolute DC: The New Frontier*, at this year’s Wondercon in San Francisco. Cooke was diplomatic in several panel appearances, saying that “he just doesn’t see the point in attempting to produce ‘dark’ material for mainstream DC titles when so many other writers can do a better job.” Instead, Cooke prefers to draw on the heroic legacy of the classic DC characters of the 1950s and ‘60s. He invents intense stories that showcase that era and its problems, lending them his own contemporary sophistication. In *The New Frontier*, you’ll find Air Force pilot Hal Jordan in the Korean War, questioning its legitimacy and refusing to shoot down enemy planes. You’ll also find Wonder Woman defending abused women refugees and chiding “Spaceman” Kal-El for blind willingness to act as a tool of the Pentagon.

I talked with Darwyn between panels, telling him how much I enjoy his work and how alienated I am from the “story arcs” produced for most mainstream DC titles over the past three years. “Yeah,” he said, “I used to get too depressed for words reading that stuff. But then I decided I just wouldn’t let it get to me.”



The good news is that Dan DiDio may actually be losing his battle at the cash register. The flagship "Countdown" title of the current DC product line is selling as poorly as it deserves to. After directing known, good writers like Geoff Johns and Paul Dini to produce pages and pages of boring crap, I can only root for DiDio to encounter the Invisible Hand of the market, ASAP, and hope it will exert its Spectre-like power on him.

It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fined

In the current *Banana Wings*, Claire Brialey points us to an exchange of opinions between Arnie Katz and Andrew Trembley, which occurs in issues 5 and 6 of John Purcell's fanzine, *Askance*. (*Askance* #7 seems to have appeared in between paragraphs as I type this, with yet another Arnie screed.)

I've met Andrew Trembley (unlike Arnie, I suspect), and found him to be a pleasant individual. I don't know whether Andrew remembers me, but we were on a sparsely-attended panel together at L.A.Con IV titled "Why Do People Write for Fanzines?" Arnie, of course, I've known since I was six years old, when we lived three houses apart, on opposite sides of the street in an unincorporated Long Island suburb. (I didn't actually get to know Arnie *well* until we were ten and decided to become co-proprietors of a lemonade stand, instead of competing with one another for neighborhood foot traffic.)

In his first *Askance* screed, Arnie says that he coined the term "Core Fandom" because people got angry when he referred to the fanzine publishing, letter writing, s-f reading, early convention-going tribe—who wot of Bloch, Tucker, Burbee and Willis—simply as "fandom."

Andrew Trembley, a well-known California con runner, costumer, Doctor Who fan, and program participant at worldcons and regionals for over ten years, took exception to the implication that he was not "at the core" of s-f fandom. Reading Andrew's reply to Arnie, I found myself sympathetic to some of his indignation—up to the point where he objects to Arnie's description of Corflu as "the Core Fandom Worldcon." Andrew, in his screed, shows himself to have some acquaintance with the written history of science fiction fandom in the 20th Century. He says:

"Our conventions were born out of fanzines. Our history rests in fanzines. There is no denying that. Fan writing has grown beyond traditional print zines, but whether in print, over e-mail or on web forums, it's still the conversation of our culture that carries on when we're not physically together.

It irritates me when fannish subcultures remain ignorant (in some cases willfully ignorant) of our shared history. Anime fans, gamers, and comic book geeks trying to reinvent square wheels when we've got 60 years of ~~mistakes~~ experience to learn from? Stupid.

I constantly find myself going back to old fan writing when I want answers, and thankfully more and more of it is being digitized, although too much is still being lost. Fan writing is still relevant, and fanzine fandom is still relevant."

I wouldn't bring up Corflu, but for all the attendant crap about it being "The Core Fandom Worldcon." I'm sorry, but Worldcon is Worldcon. Worldcon is the "big tent" of conventions, recognizing and celebrating the full breadth of fanac."

I'd like to think that Andrew's button might not have been pushed in the way it was if Arnie had referred to Corflu as "the fanzine fan's Worldcon" instead of "the Core Fandom Worldcon." But I'm not sure. I'm mindful of the fact that Kevin Standlee, a good friend of Andrew's, would take exception even to that—and might substantiate the exception with a legal "cease and desist" letter. (Kevin would probably have corporate legal precedent on his side in taking that action, even as if Arnie had dared to advertise some home-made blog as "the fanzine fan's Coca Cola." But that's not my point. My point is that I find something cold and alienating in the attitude that the word "worldcon" is now a commercial servicemark, which might need to be protected against the tribe of fans who invented it.) Andrew didn't go that far. He only expressed irritation with Arnie's sloganeering. My chagrin at Andrew's notion of proper use for the word "worldcon" may be akin to Andrew's chagrin at Arnie's use of the term "Core Fandom."

(If Kevin Standlee were to read these words and, in full didactic mode, ask how I'd feel about a totally unknown group advertising its conventions as "the post-cerebral worldcon" (or maybe "the Cereal worldcon"), I'd have to say that it wouldn't matter much to me. I wouldn't lose sleep worrying about branding confusion of the Hugos with "The Corinthian Cereal Awards." But that's just me. If I were a stockholder in Coca Cola or IBM, I'd probably complain to their boards about the absurd bullying of some of their "mark protection" practices.)

In her *Banana Wings* editorial, Claire grapples with some existential fandom-related issues of her own. These issues strike me as similar to a few that sometimes tie me into emotional knots. (I realize that it says something about my sense of proportion when I can get myself tied into emotional knots by attending science fiction conventions and reading the accompanying corpus of Internet commentary that surrounds them. Like, maybe I just need to Get A Life, as other fanzine fans, emeritus, have done.)

I may be on the way to transforming into a stunted recidivist in my fannish old age. I have the feeling that what I'm about to write will mark me as one to anyone who's content with the shape of modern science fiction fandom.

The following is a brief post to the [Wegenheim] mailing list that I wrote in January of this year—impressions of the first day of *High Voltage Confusion*, a regional U.S. convention held near Detroit, Michigan:

To: wegenheim@yahoogroups.com
From: Lenny Bailes

I guess it belabors the obvious to observe that the fandom here is no longer our fandom, albeit it has a population of friendly s-f readers, party fans, pirate costume fans, media s-f fans, some good, new s-f "pro-fans" and a sprinkling of eccentric geeks who resemble our fandom. Many of the attendees have been going to conventions like the one I'm at for years, and see themselves as seasoned fannish veterans. Notwithstanding my good friend Arnie Katz's attempts to define them all, a priori, as fringe fans, who's to say that they aren't seasoned fannish veterans (here in the World of The Future)? Not me.

I'm scheduled for a panel tomorrow titled "Timebinding and Fannish History." (I'm on that due to the presence of Anne K.G. Murphy, an actual great con runner, s-f fan, and human being who's active in the Science Fiction Oral History Association.) I might tell some stories about arguing with John W. Campbell in his office, as a teenager, and interviewing Julius Schwartz (to see if anyone in attendance recognizes those names).



Robert Lichtman expressed curiosity about the outcome of the panel, the next day, and I replied:

Well...

"And so it did happen like it could have been foreseen,
The timeless explosion of fantasy's dream..."

Three people (out of a population of about 400) wandered into the room. One was a nice librarian who's a member of an "SF haiku writing" society, one was a guy who attends a circuit of Detroit/Cincinnati/Chicago regionals and was curious, and the third was a woman who has "read science fiction all my life," and thought "maybe the panel would be talking about how we first started writing science fiction."

We were running against "Building a Pirate Ship," "Dungeons and Dragons: Heart of Night Fang Spider," "ConFusion Masquerade Orientation," and "The Golden Age of YA Literature," (the last featuring GoHs Justine Larbalestier and Scott Westerfeld, young, funny, literate writers. Justine is also an s-f scholar, the author of the excellent history "The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction.") So, so much for luring in any question-asking, pondering primates that might have been wandering the halls.

The other panelists knew who Julius Schwartz and JWC Jr were. Ever-dutiful, I passed around a handout consisting of the front pages of VoicesofFandom.com, Efanazines.com, and Fanac.org, which the audience studied earnestly for around 45 seconds before returning it to the front table. I let Anne Murphy know about the recent addition to VoF of the Murphy Anderson/Julius Schwartz interview, since she was interested in *my* early interviewing escapades. (Arnie was an equal partner in those.)

The librarian was interested in the process of digital archiving and cautioned us earnestly to beware of depending upon CD media. [...] Seeing which way the wind was blowing, I shifted gears in my pitch: the science fiction reader wrote down my link to the Potlatch panel notes archive, which I promised included reports of Ursula Le Guin, Vonda McIntyre and other illustrious personae getting down and sercon about "subversive strategies in science fiction."

We are *so* over in the U.S. s-f convention population that Arnie calls "All Known Fandom." Our presence, at all, in these venues is (oddly) attributable to the SMOF/Conrunner demographic. Ben Yalow, Priscilla Olson, etc., are quite aware of who Bob Tucker and Jack Speer, and Pete Weston are (even Greg Pickersgill, Graham Charnock, and Leroy Kettle, most likely). The SMOFs guard some turf for our little demographic in their Museum of the Mind.

I've never in my adult life thought of myself as "not a fan." But, increasingly, I feel like something that used to be an important part of my life is being replaced by something that's not as interesting (to me, anyway). It's not like various groups and factions haven't always been appropriating "fandom" and recreating it in their own image. The difference for me, now, is that I can't find the thing I'm attracted to repopulating itself—in response to all the other "fandom" things happening at s-f conventions and on the Internet.

Back in the day (for me, maybe anytime from 1962 to around 1987), s-f fans would discuss, unceasingly, the fact that discovering the science fiction community made them stop feeling like outcasts in their everyday lives. Often, in these discussions, you would find statements like:

"I never knew anyone, before fandom, who really wanted to talk about the books I read."

"I was always the odd one out in my peer group for asking too many questions."

"In fandom, I discovered a group where being skeptical about the status quo was normal."

In “modern” fandom, I see less expression of this intellectual-outcast-finds-a-tribe dynamic. Maybe I’m not looking hard enough. The Internet has no lack of coherently written personal diaries with some fire in them. Two brilliant ones (reminiscent of the pre-1990s, cutting-edge fanzine experience) are “Confessions of A Porn Store Clerk” and “Memoires of an Occasional Superheroine.” If you like intensely-written fanzines, you should look those up and read them! I don’t think the best stuff you can read on the Internet, now, is produced by people who identify with s-f fandom—that identification having been forged by dint of attendance at lots of science fiction conventions. The Internet has hundreds (maybe thousands) of enclaves that accommodate talented intellectual rebels—without requiring our previously-mandated voyage of self-discovery through “dupers” and the s-f fan community. This generation’s Burbees, Willisies, Demmons, Lemans, and Langfords don’t need to discover and be published in the s-f affiliated “fan press.”



One exception I’d make to the notion that s-f fandom has retired from its gig as keeper of the “Holy Fire” is Avedon’s Carol’s blog, *The Sideshow*. Avedon was always one of the most interesting and readable fanzine writers in the world. Now she’s transferred her concern for cutting through bullshit to a larger playing field, where there are higher stakes. I’m free to complain that s-f fandom is getting watered down; but Avedon drives home the point that we may not have any United States of America to complain about, if we continue to accept the bullshit being dished out to us by politicians and the media. Avedon talks sense on her weblog every single day—and her comment section is sprinkled with names recognizable from fanzine letter columns. She even still occasionally writes about s-f fandom and rock ‘n’ roll.

Some people in modern fandom may hold with the notion that the Nielsen Haydens’ *Making Light*, Cory Doctorow’s portion of *BoingBoing*, or John Scalzi’s *Whatever* are additional examples of “fannish” weblogs that propagate “holy fire.” I believe they do, sometimes. *Making Light* is the closest thing we have on the Internet to a public forum for all of the s-f community—like the one we once had in GENie’s Science Fiction Round Table.¹ Cory Doctorow is a friendly genius and a homegrown hero who grew up in the s-f community. Scalzi is a clever and entertaining writer who has implemented a multi-threaded conferencing system attached to his regular weblog.

But *Making Light* isn’t really a public forum for the s-f community in the same way that GENie’s SFRT was. It’s a weblog run by a talented co-op, who make no bones about exercising control over its content. They present an assortment of eclectic introspection and Internet bookmarking (plus occasional political outrage), encouraging feedback from anyone who resonates with their writing. But Teresa’s evolving ideas about what it takes to grow a community have been diverging gradually from the kind of thing that draws me in. It’s quite possible that she’s just outgrown my ideas of written fannish fun. She and Patrick are great

1. It’s my belief that GENie’s SFRT, in the 1990s, had a significant role in defining the shape of modern U.S. fandom. Before that, there were two easily-distinguishable demographics in the U.S. s-f community: people who stayed in touch with each other through fanzine writing, and those who only connected through club meetings and conventions. The SFRT provided a shared environment populated by S-F pros, fanzine fans, con-runners, con attendees, and s-f readers, who interacted with and got to know one another—as was previously only possible through fanzines. Many fannish connections made on that electronic BBS persist into the present day.

pros and great fannish party hosts at s-f conventions, but *Making Light* isn't a "focal point" for the fandom I've belonged to for most of my life.

Cory Doctorow, his talents as an essayist and fiction writer notwithstanding, devotes a large portion of his time on BoingBoing to reporting on Andy Warhol-descended pop kitsch *objets d'art*. John Scalzi appears to be having the time of his life with adventures and operations as an evangelist within the professional s-f community. But at the core, (as he might cheerfully admit), the principal goal of his Internet presence is promotion of his own writing career to a potential audience of consumers. Scalzi has been around the Internet for a long time, and promotion of his s-f writing may be just a current phase he's passing through. He has a benign laissez-faire attitude about his comments section and *Whateveresque* forums, and he's also conscientiously generous about promoting the careers of his friends. Recently, he's given space on his weblog to fanwriter Hugo nominees—in apparent zeal to publicize those awards to a wider audience. (That's not a bad thing, even if, like me, you happen to feel the Hugo Awards Ceremony has evolved into a weird, status-conscious parody of the Oscars.) Like Cory Doctorow and the Nielsen Haydens, John Scalzi occasionally produces searingly brilliant deconstructions of Internet bullshit, well worth reading.

So what's my point, then, with all of this subjective rambling? It's more or less this: I stayed connected to science fiction fandom, after my initial experiences with fanzine publishing and s-f convention-going, because it made me feel included in a community of iconoclastic artists, writers and thinkers. Not every late-night party was scintillating, and not every published essay was brilliant. But enough of them were to make me feel part of something special.

The professional science fiction community has iconoclastic artists, writers, and thinkers (along with talented reactionaries and journeymen who're just trying to make a living). But going to modern s-f conventions makes me feel like **prodom is the new fandom** (if, by "fandom," we mean the bohemian floating conclave that internalizes the experience of reading science fiction and responds to it by creating interesting, structured writing and art). The most visible "non-pro" fandom we have now—that runs science fiction conventions, populates hotel rooms, fills audience chairs at conventions, and talks to itself on the Internet is, I think, a different beast from the group I thought I belonged to.

The s-f fandom I bonded with was a *noncommercial* floating artist's and writer's commune that appealed to a certain common mindset and temperament. Sure, some members of that fandom had professional careers as science fiction writers, editors, and artists—but their creative participation in the fannish community was really kind of separate from that.

Which brings me to a list of personal exceptions from my fannish anomie: all-night music parties at Minicons (maybe the Fourth Street Fantasy Convention again, now), thoughtful, interactive programming at Potlatch, WisCon, and Readercon (where audience members are recognized as equals and trusted to contribute "more of a comment than a question" under the same common sense moderation that applies to panelists) ...

And Corflu—which might be quite dull to people who have a good time at other s-f conventions, but which, like Arnie Katz, I consider to be my "worldcon." Corflu lacks the element of interaction between fans and pros that was once a characteristic of the World Science Fiction Convention (when the attendance was smaller). But Corflu retains the basic assumption that everyone who attends is (or can be) a creator-participant in the artistic life of the community.

Parties at most modern s-f conventions are dull, for me. The possibility for stimulating conversations with peers strikes me as greatly reduced in the current (large) demographic mix that populates these conventions. I'm aware that there are people having a great time "pirate costuming," flirting, hanging out "backstage" at celebrity events, cruising the bars to exchange a few words with alpha stars of the community, or just taking in the spectacle of it all. But I come away feeling like a different kind of animal from the others in the herd.

"... the expectations and background of the average convention attendee at an Eastercon are now so outside our own (and I of course use 'our' as shorthand for 'me') that there's almost no point commenting on it, nor especially whinging about it. Fandom is conclusively a different place now and that's it."

—Greg Pickersgill, April 2008

I know there are other hard core reader-fan-geek types like me floating around at modern s-f conventions; but the way most of those conventions are structured doesn't make it very easy to discover and connect with new faces. We have LiveJournal, now, which produces some convention-attending folk who do thoughtful writing. But the distribution and feedback mechanisms of LiveJournal don't work well to foster the kind of "commons" we used to get back in "intense fanzine times."

"SF fandom's enthusiasm for the written word—with the consequent actual written record—does give it a somewhat different character. But even then we all know perfectly well that most sf enthusiasts—like the enthusiasts of almost everything else—ride a moving wave of the present which is their personal interest and enthusiasm in Whateveritis *right here and right now* and it doesn't really matter much to them what happened last week never mind ten years ago, unless their particular interest involves KNOWING what happened ten years back, like for example collecting classic aircraft kits."

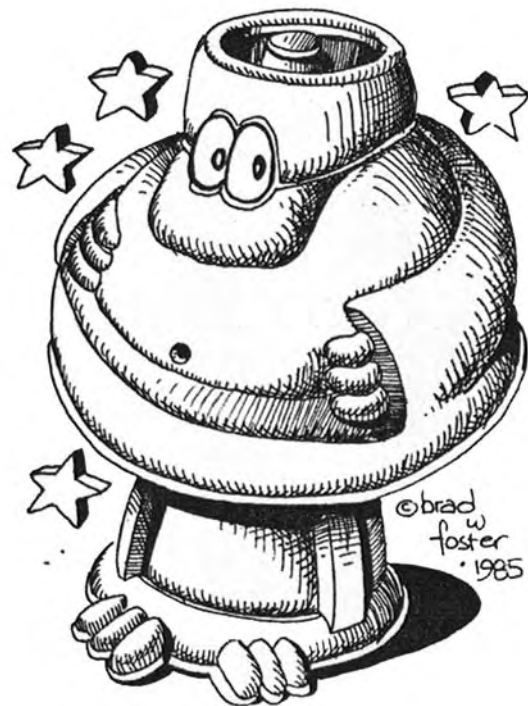
—Greg Pickersgill, again

All of this is just subjective opinion, of course. If your mileage varies, I hope you won't think ill of me for whinging about not fitting in. I think the little community of finicky eaters (or "fanzine fans" or whatever you want to call us) owes a certain amount of thanks to the volunteers who continue to make a place for us at modern s-f conventions—parties where our aesthetics don't usually set the tone. (This may be only right, since our dwindling numbers don't do much of the scut work of running those conventions, anymore.)

So thank you. Thank you, particularly, to subversives from our tribe (for values of "our tribe" that may include people other than me or Greg Pickersgill) for persistence in sneaking onto con committees and practicing diplomacy to make some of those conventions more interesting.

If you see me at an s-f convention and it looks to you like I'm hiding my head in a paper bag, feel free to start a conversation and try to talk me out of it.

— Lenny Bailes



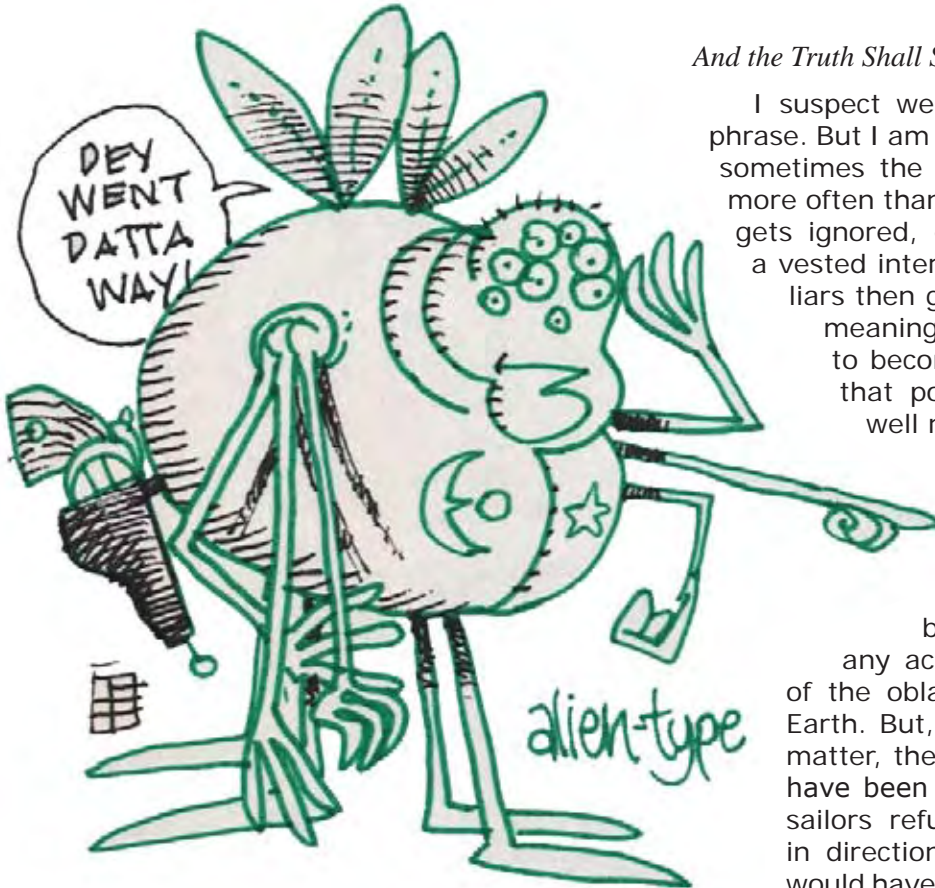
MORGENSTERN LIVES! A REVIEW AND A DIATRIBE

by **Dr. Ricard Montalbrown**
(edited by **Dan Steffan**)

And the Truth Shall Set You Free!

I suspect we're all familiar with that phrase. But I am here to tell you that while sometimes the Truth *may* set you free, more often than not it just sits there and gets ignored, especially by those with a vested interest in ignoring it. These liars then get joined by all the well-meaning people they have fooled to become a simple majority. At that point, the Truth might as well not exist.

Take, for example, the once wide-spread belief that the world was flat. No matter how many people believed it, it did not have any actual effect on the shape of the oblate spheroid we call the Earth. But, despite the Truth of the matter, the Earth might just as well have been flat after all, for all that sailors refused to take their ships in directions and at distances that would have proved it otherwise. Until Columbus came along, anyway.



It is always difficult to convince people they have "faulty" information. No matter how politely you try to put it. In effect, you're telling them that they're too dumb to figure it out correctly on their own hook. This naturally builds up a certain resistance on their part.

Take, as an example, the widely held belief that we began a "new" millennium with the beginning of the year 2000. While, technically, any year can be the beginning of a "new" millennium, unless you started counting with the year Zero B.C.—1 B.C. being the first year on the calendar most used here in the Western World—the millennium did not end with the year 999 but with the year 1000. Therefore, the second millennium started with the year 1001, and as a result did not end until the completion of the year 2000 (*not* the year 1999). But there was so much hype surrounding the ignorant belief that the second millennium began (rather than ended) with the year 2000, that most people continue to believe it, no matter how you explain it to them. Undoubtedly, the people in the future will look back and laugh at us the same way we now look back and laugh at all those who once believed the world was flat.

Having said that, by way of a preface, I wish start to start this article by making the

assertion that there are only two kinds of people in this world: the kind of who believe that William Goldman—the so-called “discoverer” of S. Morgenstern to the American public—is an unworthy poltroon, and the kind who don’t.

I say this not to shock readers by revealing that there are, in fact, only two schools of thought among recognized Florinese scholars in the U.S. with respect to the character of William Goldman—which is absolutely incontrovertible—because, as it happens, there are *only* two recognized Florinese scholars specializing in the works of Morgenstern in America today.

The lesser of these scholars, Professor Farouk Haaji Renfrew Jesus y Maria Alvareez del Kronhausen of the University of Leiderkranz Extension (East Mashed Potato Falls, Idaho), has published roughly a dozen books—the majority of which are, unfortunately, seriously flawed (particularly when compared to other, more painstakingly, and meticulously researched volumes on the same topic). The Professor holds unshakably (some would say “pig-headedly”) to the conviction that Goldman, for all that he may be an acknowledged author in his own right (*Boys and Girls Together*, *Soldier in the Rain*, *Magic*, and the original screenplays for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Marathon Man*, *All the President’s Men* and, of course, *The Princess Bride*) is an utterly despicable bum. This is actually one of the *kinder* things the Professor has said about Goldman, mostly as a result of what Goldman did to *The Princess Bride*.

Of course, there is another side to this debate: namely and to wit, that while there’s no doubt that this Goldman fellow is a bum for what he did to Morgenstern’s lesser (but “epic novel”) classic work *The Princess Bride*, it must be added that without him there would still be no Morgenstern in print in this country today. For that reason only, I believe that he is *not* “utterly” despicable, at all—only *kinda* despicable.

In terms of attempting to reach some larger consensus, it is unfortunate that only those who have read *The Princess Bride* in the original Florinese can begin to appreciate the extent of Goldman’s obscene, perverse and ill-considered butchery. Both Professor Kronhausen and myself totally agree on this point.

Professor Kronhausen has expressed, on more than one occasion, his belief that it is equally unfortunate that this sad world is not a whit more *just* than it is. Otherwise, one might be allowed to get dressed up in a tight rubber suit and flog Mr. Goldman to within an inch of his miserable life.

Yet I believe -- even while granting that such thoughts are wholly understandable—that one must pause from time to time to remember one’s Morgenstern. Indeed, as even that miserable worm Goldman himself understands, the underlying thrust of *The Princess Bride* —to say nothing of Morgenstern’s other (and far superior) works —is this and only this: Life is not fair. It is not just. It is not even kind. It is simply better than (or at least preferable to) the alternative.

Of course, as Morgenstern himself has said many times, even the cheeriest optimist in the world could make such an admission and still describe him or herself as an optimist. And one must (as I have just done) give credit to Mr. Goldman for having said as much in several of the “asides” in *his* version of *The Princess Bride*—regardless of what one otherwise believes those asides to be—the rudest kind of crassness and the crassest kind of rudeness. So, in effect, all I’m doing here is acknowledging the fact that Mr. Goldman can read something and understand it, if it is repeated to him often enough.

Be that as it may, it would be totally understandable if you did not—even at this juncture—recognize the underlying reasonableness of *both* points of view that have been outlined thus far, with respect to Mr. Goldman’s despicability. Therefore, it is necessary for me to devise an explanation that illustrates just why this is so. To my mind, the best way to proceed in this matter is for me to come up with an analogy with which you can find some degree of empathy.

However, before attempting to devise such an analogy—especially for those of you who are unfamiliar with Morgenstern—I must strongly emphasize that what is to follow is *only* an analogy. Nevertheless, in order to make *any* sort of parallel which might be understood by those of you who do not realize how utterly empty your lives are—by virtue of having been denied the pleasure of reading Morgenstern in the original—it is necessary to start *somewhere*.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but even William Shakespeare was a mere hack and an insignificant scribbler when compared to the incomparable Morgenstern. True, Shakespeare was a crowd pleaser with a certain (shall we say) “knack” for a well-turned phrase, who gave his audience precisely what they wanted—kings acting like fools and fools acting like kings. And yet, to any *knowledgeable* scholar familiar with both, it remains obvious that—despite The Bard’s many accomplishments—he is not worthy to shine the mud stained boots of a true literary giant of Morgenstern’s caliber.

This being undeniable—you may take it from me—one could probably also argue that there exists a certain legitimacy that excuses such comparisons.

Were I foolish enough to *seriously* engage in such an argument, no doubt someone else—such as my colleague, Professor Kronhausen—would come along to sneer at the notion, adding, “Yeah sure—and if you believe *that*, I’ve got a bridge in Brooklyn I could let you have for a song.” But the truth is, I could just as legitimately pick out the one barbarian—from a society of totally primitive, invariably violent, and unhesitatingly blood-thirsty barbarians—who always tipped his hat and politely said, “Pardon me,” before he proceeded to bash the brains of anyone he met on the battlefield into oatmeal, and claim *he* was the Albert Schweitzer of *his* kind.

Fortunately, as I believe I have already established, I am *not* foolish enough to seriously put forward any such argument.

With this being clearly understood, we may proceed.

In order for you to fully understand the points of view expressed by Professor Kronhausen and myself, with respect to William Goldman, it will be necessary (as I have indicated) to make an analogy. Thus, in the course of this analogy, where I say “Shakespeare” or “Wm. Shakespeare,” you must read “Morgenstern” or “S. Morgenstern.” Where I say “Italian” or “Latin,” you must think “Florinese,” and where I speak of specific works by Shakespeare, you must instead substitute some work by Morgenstern, and so on and so forth.

The first thing you must do is imagine yourself to be a devoted scholar and lover of Shakespeare (remember, think “Morgenstern”), a veritable *Bardoloteer*—but in a universe somewhat askew from the one in which we actually live. An “alternate” universe, if you can navigate the parameters of such a scientific notion, in which Shakespeare had been—oh, for the sake of argument—Italian and all of his works were initially published in Latin.

Now stretch the boundaries of your imagination to their limits and envision yourself as one of two individuals (read: Professor Kronhausen or the author of this article) who has devoted his life to the consummate study and appreciation of Shakespeare’s works. And then imagine, if you can, that the vast majority of people—and, indeed, the smaller subcategory of *readers*—in this country have never even *heard* of The Bard of Avon or his works.

In this “alternate” universe, the only brief fragment of Shakespeare’s considerable body of works to see print in English—remember we’re making an analogy here—had appeared in an abridged edition published a number of years beforehand, and had been indifferently received, like veritable pearls cast before the swine.

Now let us suppose, for the sake of argument (and this analogy), that this long out-of-print and sloppily translated work was called *Romeo and Juliet*—in other words, *not* one of The Bard’s major works but, nonetheless, something that might have helped develop a following

for his many other works. And let us also suppose that word has reached you, in your ivory tower, that a *major* publisher now intended to issue a new edition of that work that would finally accord it a half-way decent translation, and marginally acceptable printing. How do you imagine this would make you feel?

I can tell you, without fear of contradiction, that your heart would soar. The new smile on your face would push former frown lines right off your countenance and, though you might be in the winter of your life, you would find that you could yet believe in Spring again.

You would hand out posies to old women and young children you met as you walked down the street.

You would find poetic profundity again in simple words like "honor" and "love" and "beauty."

You would taste salt-water tears of joy as they coursed down your cheeks as a result of simply contemplating the mere fact of its existence.

You would, in effect—if I might coin a cliché—feel God was in His Heaven and All was Right with the World.

You would be on top of the world and virtually nothing, no matter how tragic or depressing, could cause you to come crashing down from those heights.

Not even the pangs of envy and professional jealousy that would wash over you when you subsequently learned that this "new" edition was to be edited not by yourself or a learned colleague who shared your enthusiasm for Shakespeare's work, but by a mere writer of popular fiction. A lowly quill for hire.

"Well," you would say, shrugging your shoulders philosophically, "at least a new edition of *Romeo and Juliet* will be published. That's something."

Your joy would know no bounds.

Unless, that is, this writer of popular fiction did to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* what William Goldman did to the immortal S. Morgenstern's *The Princess Bride*.

When the book finally arrives, you would not have to read it to know Something Was Wrong. For one thing, you would realize immediately that something so *thin* could never contain *Romeo and Juliet* in its entirety. You would scan the paltry tome with dread, only to discover—while reading the introduction—that the popular fiction writer had not, until recently, ever looked at a copy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

For all that he had acknowledged its "influence" and proclaimed it one of his "favorite" works, you would still cringe as you learned that it had, in fact, been read to him by his father many years earlier, and that he'd always regarded the work sentimentally, as a "gift" from dear ol' dad. Your misgivings would continue to mount as you were informed that he had never actually read it himself until he gave his own son the abridged edition on his 10th birthday, only then to pronounce it "unreadable"—an assessment with which his son was in *total* agreement—discovering thereby that his own father had shamelessly abridged the work while reading it to him those many year ago.

But the worst would still be ahead.



You would shudder, lie down upon the floor and kick wildly, holding your breath until you turned blue when you learned it was this writer's intention to provide, not the complete *Romeo and Juliet*, nor even the vastly inferior "abridged" work that had been out of print these many years, but instead something that would approach the "good parts" version his father had read to him.

With growing horror you would thereafter gasp, pull your hair, stamp your feet and clutch your heart each time this—this—this *writer* rudely inserted his "asides" and unworthy opinions, without preamble or apology, into The Bard's play.

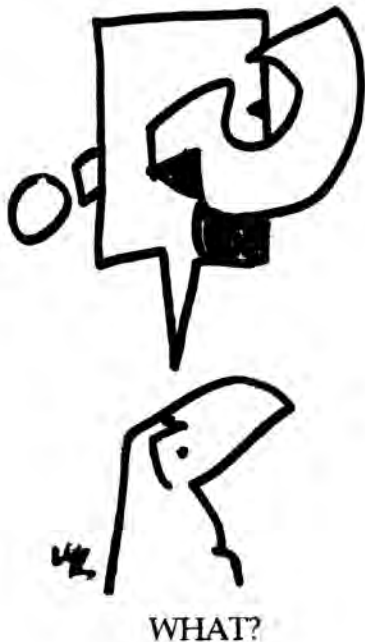
And it goes without saying that you would groan and/or bang your head against the wall as you discovered which scenes and sections had been discarded by this *person*—albeit with lengthy "explanations" about why the play was "better" without this scene or that section.

Establish the long-standing nature of the feud between the Montagues and Capulets? Of course not—that would be "too boring for words."

Well then, how about the famed "balcony" scene? Nope—in his opinion ("substantiated" by what he recalled his quasi-literate father had read him), that scene was just "too mushy."

But certainly the couple's suicide? Don't be silly.

If you have been following this somewhat torturous analogy, you can perhaps begin to appreciate why one "Shakespearian" scholar might be of the opinion that this writer of popular fiction was a "bum," while the other would be forced to point out that, nonetheless, without him the public would have absolutely no Shakespeare to read, whatsoever. However mutilated, butchered, and debased that small bit might be, it was—he contends—better than no Shakespeare at all.



This is a sentiment, I maintain, which must be granted to William Goldman's version of *The Princess Bride*, as well. But, as you have no doubt already perceived—provided you have been following my lengthy analogy closely—Professor Kronhausen and I do not precisely see eye-to-eye with respect to William Goldman's "crime."

For the benefit of those who have yet to read our letters on the topic, I can briefly summarize the Professor's point of view by saying that he believes I have been (and this is an exact quote) "much too soft" with respect to the "apologetics" and "justifications" I have made for what Goldman has done. Sarcasm abounds in the responses the good doctor has aimed in my direction. ("Adolph Hitler, you might convince me about. Tell me how he was always 'nice' to dogs—that, I might listen to.")

Indeed, despite my own considered opinion that Goldman's audacity exceeds even that of Ezra Pound—as I substantiated quite conclusively in my critical broadside, *Morgenstern: Giant Among Pygmies* (1974, University of Chad Press). It was almost certainly Pound, who in 1918—down on his luck and without a dime of his own—secretly negotiated with the New York publishing czars to translate Morgenstern's classic from the original Florinese, only to then, out of laziness, abridge the work as he went along. Certainly, it can be established that, at that point in time, Morgenstern was still "acquiring"

English and hence was dependent on others to translate his writings. Undoubtedly, were it not for this simple fact, and my professional and personal pride, I would have been tempted to drop all pretenses and “side” with Professor Kronhausen.

And although I sincerely believe the Professor may have been tempted from time to time to agree with my contrary point, I feel I can now admit that there have been times when I have asked myself if the mere fact that without Goldman’s “good parts” version of *The Princess Bride* there would be virtually no Morgenstern in print in the U.S. today—if that fact could, alone, provide sufficient reason for a sincere Morgenstern scholar to pardon what Goldman had done. I have thought many times these past half dozen years, that Professor Kronhausen has presented a convincing case to say that it does not.

My major academic rival is harsher than I am on this point, if truth were known. He believes there can be no forgiveness, since the sin is quite a bit beyond any possible redemption. I have, at least, pointed out on a few occasions that, while all that my rival says of Goldman and his deed is true on its face, it is in justice equally important to say, however begrudgingly, that without Goldman’s butchered “good parts” version of *TPB*, we would have little more than the handful of copies of the English and Florinese editions published more than 70 years ago. Those copies, as many of us know, are hard enough to find in the present day and age as it is.

And that brings me to yet another thing that the Goldman camp has thus far failed to do—namely, correct errors that were made in the Goldman written portions of his “abridged” version of *The Princess Bride*. The first is relatively minor—Goldman stated that *TPB* had been written before *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. In truth, *TPB* came before *The Wizard of Oz* movie, but *not* before the book—which was published by The George M. Hill Company in 1900. For the second, I quote Morgenstern himself, in his written request to Urban Del Rey asking that changes be made in subsequent editions of Goldman’s book: “...The second change is of more importance to me—you say in several places that I am dead. As I sit here and watch my fingers form this note, I am forced to believe that you are in error. I am old, but alive. Perhaps as you age, you will find the two are not mutually exclusive.”

Yes! It is true! Just as I said at the outset - *Morgenstern lives!*

Now I am not, I assure you, being at all figurative in my choice of words here. Nor am I attempting to emulate some “cool” jazz aficionado with respect to the works of Charlie “Bird” Parker. I mean, I’m not simply making the point that Morgenstern’s prose “comes alive” on the page (although, of course, it does) in the manner in which the jazz buff suggests, with a similar phrase, that Parker is imbued with immortality by virtue of the quality of his honking and screeing.

No, I’m not doing that. I am simply stating my joy at the revelation that the Maestro is *still among the living*.

As a scholar it is with sincere *pity* that I must point out that the belief that Morgenstern had



died must be laid almost entirely at the doorstep of my once-respected colleague, Professor Farouk Haaji Renfrew Jesus y Maria Alvarez del Kronhausen. It was, after all, the cornerstone of his hastily written text, *Morgenstern: Prophet Without Honor and Honor Without Profit* (1957, University of Leiderkranz, Idaho Campus Office of Publications), that he accepted the word of one of Morgenstern's lifelong friends: fellow Florinese immigrant Moshe haLevy—who, after feeding his pigeons in the park on Riverside Drive, believed he had overheard Morgenstern saying "If they want to know where I'm going, tell them I'm either going to Miami or I'm going to die."

What he actually heard was Morgenstern saying, in Florinese, "I had one once, but the wheels fell off," which, when you come right down to it, sounds remarkably like "If they want to know where I'm going, tell them I'm either going to Miami or I'm going to die," in English (particularly if you are half deaf and you had to pick out what he was saying over the sound of passing tugboats and your own wheezing, sickly, wracking cough).

At any rate, when Mr. haLevy was unable to find his old friend Sol in Miami a few months later, he put two and two together—not realizing that Morgenstern had already come and gone, having been offered and succumbed to a chance to "house sit" at his nephew's condo in Boca Raton.

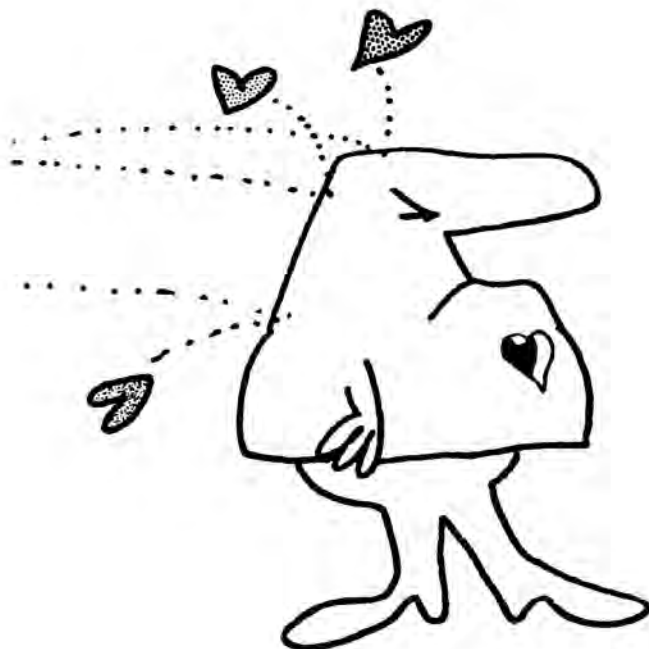
(It should also be pointed out that Morgenstern was "Sol" to his regular friends and "Simon" to his literary followers, and both names are correct; since on his birth certificate he was listed as *Simon Sol Morgenstern*.)

While, in retrospect, it must be admitted that this was far from proof of the Maestro's demise, one must, at the same time, concede that, in truth, Kronhausen never actually claimed it was. The belief that Morgenstern was no longer among the living was generally accepted among Florinese scholars when the Professor's book was published. And although this belief has now

been shown to be untrue, it only seems fair to add that credence was given to the rumor by virtue of the fact that no denial was forthcoming until the publication of *The Silent Gondoliers*, by Urban Del Rey in November 1983.

I admit many well-meaning people sincerely believed Morgenstern was a hoax—and his works a *tour de force* credited only to Mr. Goldman. They did so because of deductions they made based on things Goldman said in his "good parts" version—deductions, however, which do not take into consideration how long it has been since this version was first published.

There are too many errors to even begin to list them all; but one gets pointed out frequently by researchers: that if you look Goldman up on the Internet, you'll find that he is the father of two daughters, not "a son" as he claims in his introduction. Since Goldman had the most to gain if people believed Morgenstern did not exist,



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this would be clever of him to have done on purpose. And Goldman is indeed nothing if not a clever fellow.

Clever or not, what is now abundantly clear is that the Maestro has acquired sufficient command of English that he must no longer stand in need of such lazy, mean-spirited and clumsy “help” as that once provided by the likes of Ezra Pound.

In light of Morgenstern’s revelation with respect to his non-demise, in the frontispiece of *The Silent Gondoliers*, it stands to reason that this must have been the case. Certainly, it fits in with what we know about Morgenstern during that period: cheated and robbed by his publishers, forced to “pay” not only for the translation necessary to publish his book in America, but for an *abridgement* he did not authorize or desire—he had for some months been living on soda crackers and water, and sleeping on a park bench. As to why he never got as far as Miami after the famous Coney Island hot dog incident, given that Morgenstern was then (and therefore probably still is) something of a “recluse” (who refused to speak either to critics or scholars about his life or works)—well, who is to say? I fear this must remain but one more dark mystery in the life of this oft-misunderstood intellectual giant.

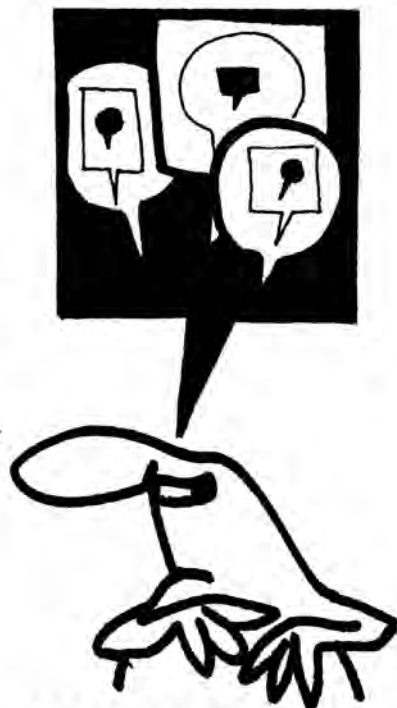
I will reveal nothing here of the plot of *The Silent Gondoliers*. It is, I need hardly point out, a work of genius, although it is not as “new” as Morgenstern may have led his publishers to believe. I mean, Morgenstern was so often the “victim” of money grubbing publishers in his early years, one must celebrate that he has at last put one over on one of them.

It is, in fact, his own translation of his previous novel, *Lugo Uni di Niknik Gon'dlareria Vencenziae ab Zilinguestrili* (or, roughly, *Why the Singing Gondoliers in Venice Are [Now] Voiceless*), which was published by his cousin in a limited edition in his native Florin in 1921. At most, this tale has been “updated” a bit. (The reference to Caruso, who died the year the work was first published, has been changed to a reference to Robert Goulet.) And it also incorporates a rather freewheeling translation of the dream sequence that takes place in the 10th chapter of his monumental *Il Topi Mukital Ludknudea tof Piuticzo* (aka *The Very Red Leaves On Ludknud's Potted Palm*). To get their money back at this late date, the publishers would have to have him extradited from Florin City, which I don't see as being all that likely in the current political climate.

There may be those who wonder whether I should reveal this mild deception here.

The answer is that, at this late date, no harm can possibly come of it, since Morgenstern has, without doubt, already received his royalty payment and—translation or no—the work is entirely his own—and “original” in the sense of never being published in English before.

Besides, even if the great Morgenstern sold this as an entirely new work, no reader or believer in justice could withhold total absolution for the deception—after reflecting how often, how completely, and how consistently in the course of his long and varied career Morgenstern was cheated by his publishers—including his cousin. The temptation, therefore, is not merely to excuse but to applaud him for “fudging” a bit.



WHAT DID HE MEAN BY THAT?

And anyway, now the American public has been, at long last, treated to a work which is wholly and completely that of The Master Himself, I would not be at all surprised, should *The Silent Gondoliers* do well in the bookstores, to find an upsurge in interest in the other works of this overlooked and long misunderstood genius. If it leads others to seek out even the abridged (albeit substantially more complete than the Goldman version) English edition of *The Princess Bride*, I, for one, shall be gratified.

And in truth—impelled in part, I suspect, by my elation at the discovery that Morgenstern still lives—I feel it necessary and even possible to admit that Goldman’s “good parts” version is quite good too; just not quite as good as the original, is all.

About the author:

“Dr. Ricard Montalbrown is one of two recognized Florinese scholars living in the U.S. today who specialize in the works of S. Morgenstern. (A handful of “minor” Florinese scholars who do not specialize in the works of Morgenstern but who, of a certainty, are familiar with his major works, thrive at Columbia University in New York City, as acknowledged in William Goldman’s introduction to his “good parts” version of Morgenstern’s *The Princess Bride*.) Dr. Montalbrown’s published works include several lengthy tomes on the life and literary masterworks of the justly famed Florinese author (*S. Morgenstern: Colossus of Florin*; “*Morgenstern: Giant Among Pygmies*”; “*The Significance of Angst*,” “*Empathy and Droll Cajoleries in the Early Novels of S. Morgenstern*.” and “*Morgenstern and the Meaning of Life*”), co-authorship of *Selected Letters: Kronhausen and Montalbrown on the Goldman/Morgenstern Controversy*, numerous articles on the import of Morgenstern to Florinese (and world) literature, and well over 3,000 “true confessions” under an almost equal number of pen names. He has held the Morgenstern Chair of Florinese Studies at the University of Vienna (Virginia Campus) since it was founded in 1981. Dr. Montalbrown lives on the grounds of the Washington Monument under the name of Saunders.”

--rich brown, 1990+

AFTERWORD by Dan Steffan

The article you have just read was written by the late rich brown, for the most part, in May 1990 for this very fanzine, *Whistlestar*. Postmarked on the 14th of that month, it was “misplaced,” soon after its arrival by our esteemed editor and was not seen again for the next 17 years. Some were convinced that the article had been placed in the Fanarticle Protection Program for its own safety, while others believed that it was just somewhere at the back of Lenny’s closet, along with crudsheets from *Quip* #4 and the mummified body of Francis Towner Laney.



As the years passed, so did many other things—like mimeographs, video tapes, break dancing, Habeas Corpus, and, alas, rich brown himself. It was the latter event that finally caused Mr. Bailes to hire a team of Swedish archeologists to begin searching for the original manuscript of this article. If they succeeded, Lenny hoped to finally publish rich’s long lost commentary about one of his all-time favorite books and movies, *The Princess Bride*, as a tribute to our beloved and much missed friend.

Finally, sometime in 2007, Sven Lundquist and his

crew of randy Scandinavians reached the bottom strata of Lenny's closet and actually found rich's long lost article, finally bringing to a conclusion their legendary quest, known far and wide as Operation Lost Crapola. Captain Lundquist later said that it was one of the toughest expeditions of his career, but rejoiced in their success and he celebrated by dancing in tiny circles while drinking a flagon of his own urine.

The article came to my attention in the fall of that year when Lenny offered me the opportunity to include it in my anthology of rich's fanwriting, called *I Had One Once, But The Wheels Fell Off*—which is due to be published in the fall of 2008. To say I was excited at the opportunity to include this article would not accurately describe the pleasure and honor I felt at the prospect. But then Lenny dropped the bomb on me —the article *needed editing* and he wondered if I would be willing to take a crack at the job. Naturally, I jumped at the chance.

"I asked Ted White if he'd do it," Lenny told me wistfully, "but he turned me down. It was too daunting a task for him," he told me. Nevertheless, I was still excited by the challenge of working on the article. After a year of tracking down published pieces from rich's 50 year fan career, I welcomed the opportunity to actually edit something that rich had written. You see, that's the problem with putting together memorial anthologies of previously published works—you can't actually edit anything except the occasional typo. And after reading more than 80 bits of his fannish prose, I *really* wanted to edit something that rich brown had written. I *needed* to edit something that rich brown had written.

When he was alive, rich was quite a stickler about having his writing edited. He had spent years as a professional editor himself, and he had developed some very specific ideas about how he wanted his writing to appear. Namely, he didn't want it fucked with. For many years this was just fine, as his skills were always more refined and polished than most of the faneditors for whom he wrote—especially me. During my days as editor of *Boonfark*, in the 1970s, I was uneducated and inexperienced in the rigors of editorial manipulations and spent most of my time—rather unsuccessfully —trying to avoid typos and misspellings while trying to stencil my contributor's text, including several installments of rich's own "Totem Pole" column, which ended up being among the highlights of my fanzine and, as time would tell, of rich's own fan writing career.

But in the intervening years since those days of fanboy exuberance, I had eventually managed to develop some actual skills of my own as an editor for fanzines like *Pong*, *Science Fiction Eye*, and *BLAT!*, and now I felt sure that I could do justice to rich's article and his memory. But mostly, I wanted to have the chance to prove once again what an entertaining writer rich brown once was and this was my chance.

Sadly, during the last ten or so years of rich's life, he suffered from an acute form of Sleep Apnea that eventually took a heavy toll on his ability to sit at a keyboard and write in a succinct and focused manner. Eventually it became almost impossible for him to write anything of any length without falling asleep at his computer screen. Towards the end, this left him able to force out only the occasional internet posting —many of which were fueled by the anger and frustration he felt at his deteriorating physical condition and, in essence, the loss of his writer's voice. The last major fan article he wrote, about Harlan Ellison's legendary MidWestCon adventures in the 1950s, literally took him *years* to complete, and even then it was a mere shadow of his once articulate fannish voice.

Meanwhile, his reputation on the internet had slipped into a caricature of his once playful print persona, leading to a long string of semi-coherent online arguments which left him an object of derision in some circles, and provoked one of his acquaintances to lament that he had "become such a butthead" at the end of his life. For me, this article about the imaginary author of *The Princess Bride*, written before his decline, was a chance to bring some balance back to the equation.

The problem was, however, that the article he wrote for Lenny in 1990 was, upon first reading, a convoluted mess—not unlike the unfocused rants of his later years. It started badly

and then seemed to dissolve into a redundant style of prose that went in circles, without ever reaching its destination. After the first few readings I was left feeling sad and deflated, and doubted that I could do much to improve the article or rich's tarnished reputation. But then, on the third time through the article, I decided to read it out loud. I thought that if I could hear rich's voice in my head as I read it, I might be able to pull it all together. I hoped that he could guide me, like Obi Wan Kenobi, to find the fannish Force and defeat the dark side of the prose. And it worked.

When I read it aloud, I had an epiphany. I found myself laughing out loud at rich's florid, pseudo-intellectual writing style and I realized, at last, that the joke had been on me all along. This article wasn't another example of rich writing in confused circles because he couldn't find his focus, this was rich writing in flowery circles, full of preposterously purple prose, for comedic effect. This was rich brown at his absolute silliest. After that, I knew what I had to do and how to make it work.

The key was all that ridiculous nonsense about substituting the work of Shakespeare for the work of the imaginary Morgenstern. Taking the stance that Morgenstern was a real author of profound talents—possibly epic talents—who deserved the same kind of respect afforded The Bard of Avon was, when read aloud, funny to the point of absurdity. Just as rich intended.

Not that there weren't still some serious problems with the piece—especially with the beginning. As it stood, it was clumsy and awkward. It had too much goofy information and too little direction. I had to figure out how to get past that part and get the reader to the wonderful meat of the article. The silly Shakespeare meat. Fortunately, Lenny had provided me with the much needed lumber to build a new beginning and to fill in a few holes along the way.

About ten years after writing this lost article for Lenny, rich wrote another piece about Morgenstern for a *Princess Bride* website and Lenny had been smart enough to send me a copy of that article along with the original manuscript. That article had never appeared in a fanzine before and was, by its nature, a much more down to earth and serious bit of writing about his beloved film and book. That article had one very important thing that the fanzine piece didn't: a beginning. And I stole the first several paragraphs of it lock, stock, and barrel and snapped them into place at the front of Lenny's article. The result was much more satisfying and allowed the reader to ease into rich's silliness without making them climb through an obstacle course of bad prose and incomplete ideas to get there.

Having already cannibalized the piece's starting point, I felt totally at ease about using other small bits of it in other places in the article, to help smooth out the prose and give the whole thing a more composed auctorial voice. When I was done, I had an article that anybody would be proud to publish, including me—and I will, when I include it in rich's anthology later this year.

What you've just read is almost entirely the work of richard wayne brown and should be regarded as such. In the course of these nine pages of prose, I have added somewhere between 50 and 75 words of my own—mostly adjectives and connecting phrases -- but all the rest came from the silly mind of the author himself. Yes, I did some whittling of redundancies and rearranged some of the sentence structure and paragraph placement to help make his thoughts and ideas read a little bit clearer, but in no sense is this a posthumous collaboration. Virtually everything you've read was written by rich, while—in the words of an old television commercial from the 1970s —*I helped*.

My sole comedic contribution to these pages were the parenthetical publication dates and press names listed beside Dr. Montalbrown's academic books about the subject of this article, the great Sol Morgenstern.

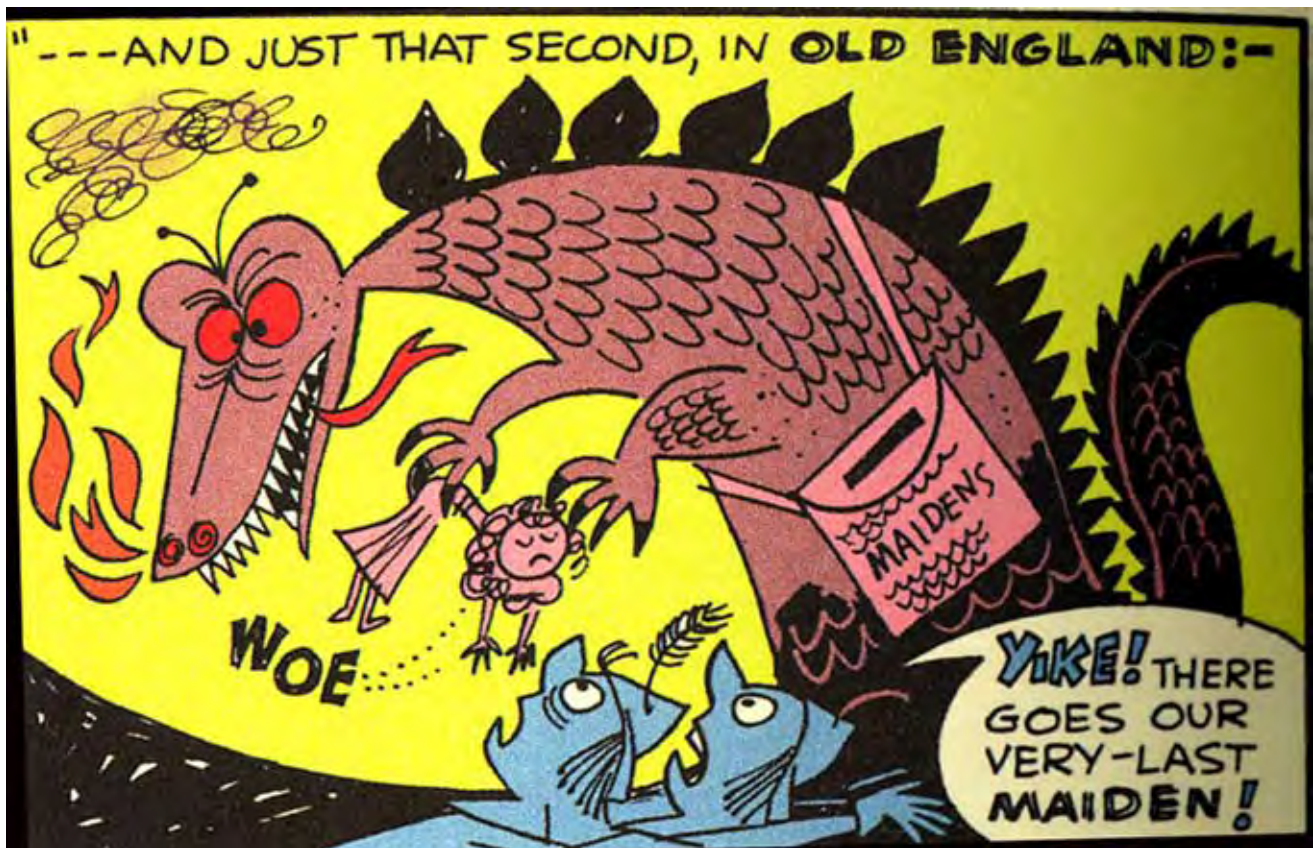
rich brown truly loved William Goldman's book *The Princess Bride*, as well as the movie Goldman made from the book. I will always remember the sight of him sitting in front of the TV, watching the movie for the umpteenth time and laughing like it was the first time. Laughing

until tears ran down his face and he would start coughing because he was too convulsed with laughter to breathe. That was the ultimate rich brown reaction to anything that tickled his fancy. He would laugh until he couldn't laugh any more. Until he couldn't catch his breath.

In retrospect, that's a damned ironic thing to remember him by because, at the end of his life, it was his inability to catch his breath that finally took him away from us.

Thanks, rich, have fun storming the castle.

With love,
Dan Steffan





THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF KAVALIER & CLAY

by Michael Chabon

A BOOK REVIEW

BY TED WHITE

I've just spent a week immersed in this 636-page, metaphorically shaggy book. It's a dense read—and, ultimately, a disappointment. Somehow I had expected more

substance from a book of this length, especially since its cover proudly boasts, "Winner of the Pulitzer Prize."

Ostensibly a book about the early days of the comic book industry, and in fact a novel about two Jewish boys, cousins, who come up with a million-copy-selling comic book character, the volume is divided into six "parts." Only the first, "The Escape Artist," really works as engrossing narrative. It tells how one of the boys (Kavalier) escapes from Prague in 1939 and ends up with his cousin (Clay) in Brooklyn. Chabon does an excellent job in this section and undeservedly got my hopes up for the five "parts" to follow.

And for a time Chabon continues to deliver. The chapter devoted to "The Escapist's" mythic origin (and its echo, later, in the chapter devoted to the "Luna Moth's" origin) is a nice touch. But, gradually, I start noticing things.

Like paragraphs which fill whole pages – and sometimes more than one. These are usually devoted to dense digressions, ruminations, or exposition, and for the life of me I can't figure out why an editor didn't break them up and in so doing make them more readable.

And, worse, the dawning realization that *all* the climaxes to the situations which unfold throughout the long novel—*all* the climaxes!—occur offstage. We may get some fairly successful narrative for several successive pages, in which a scene builds to its exploding point—but we are never allowed to *witness* that explosion. Instead, the narrative picks up *afterwards* – sometimes days, weeks or months afterwards— and allows us to infer the climactic moment, sometimes synoptically describing it. This seems at first purposeful and maybe even clever, but after a while the charm wears off and it seems more evasive—as if Chabon had no confidence in himself to write such scenes and hoped we wouldn't notice.

But it takes reading the entire book to reach the conclusion that it really isn't about very much at all. Ultimately Chabon's low-key, anticlimactic prose trivializes his story. He traces the bell curve of Kavalier & Clay's successes and failures and leaves them belittled in their

middle ages. There is no epiphany, only a sense of diminishment.

And although this novel is supposed to be about the comics industry in its heyday—and Chabon spends two and a half pages at the end thanking the comics people he interviewed or read, and lists all the books he read (including *All In Color For A Dime*)—it verges on simple parody, betrays only the most superficial understanding of the publishing and distributing atmosphere in which comics were published, and —saddest of all—offers no insight into either the creative impulse which drove the comics' creators, or their actual work methods and life. (This too takes place largely offstage.)

In *Kavalier & Clay* Chabon tells a story which begins in close parallel to that of Siegel & Shuster: two teenaged boys make up and sell a major superhero to the comics. They make thousands of dollars but their publishers, who bought all rights, make millions. But Chabon faces a huge problem: he has to create a comic book character and imbue him with the qualities of a super-star, a hit on the order of Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel or Captain America.

"The Escapist" doesn't cut the mustard. As presented, he sounds like a third-string character, one which would be relegated to a 6- or 8-page story somewhere in the back of the "book." His success is not believable in the context of comic book superheroes. He might have made more sense as a pulp magazine character, or a radio character (like The Shadow)—and Chabon does have him make the leap to both radio and the movie serials.

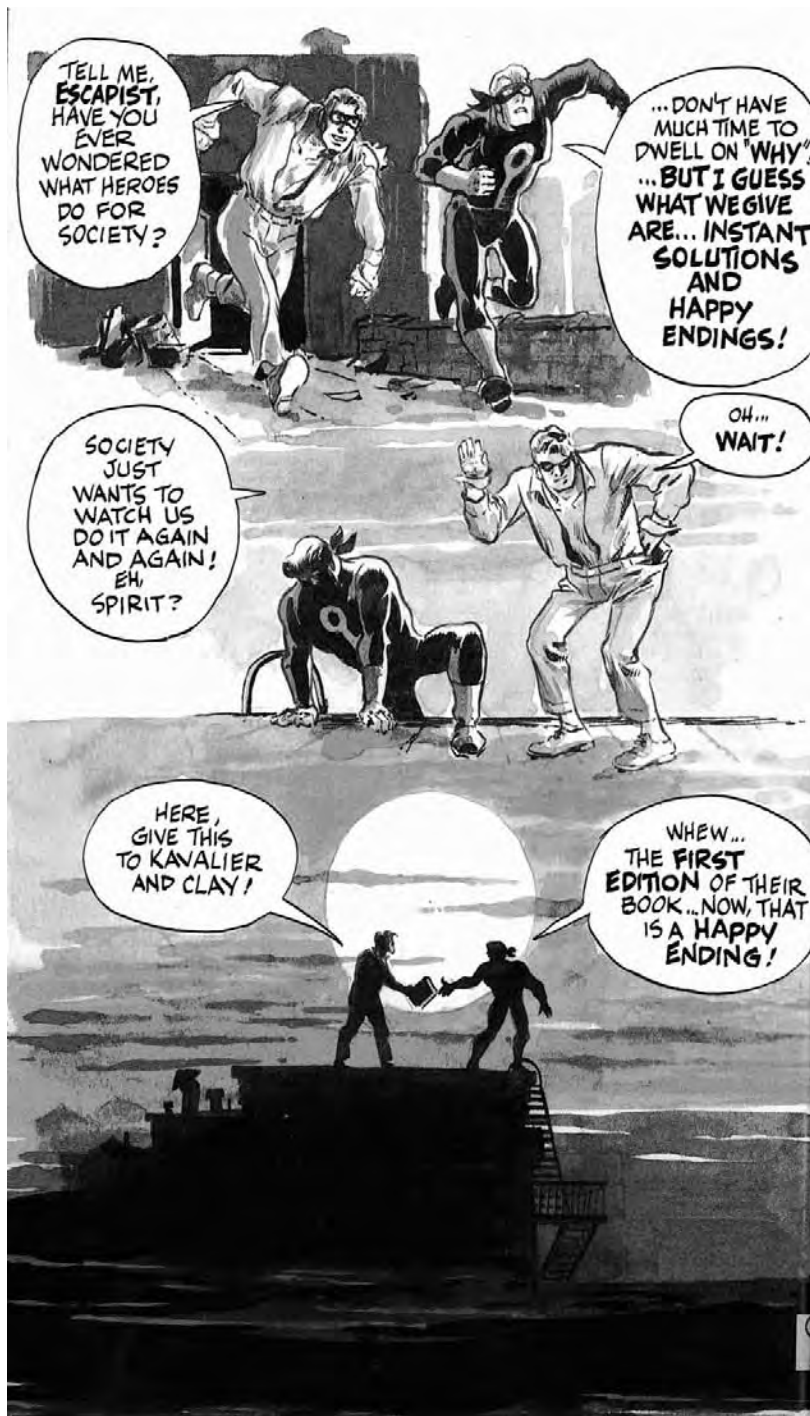
Chabon tries to get around the weakness of his comic book character by having him fighting Nazis before the U.S. had entered World War Two. This, I guess, was supposed to distinguish him from the other Superman imitations. But in actual fact, Simon & Kirby's Captain America was also doing this at the same time. And when the U.S. *did* get into the war, comic book superheroes had a genuine problem: they *couldn't* win the war for us singlehandedly—not for as long as our real armed forces were still fighting the real war.

This was a tough issue for the creators of those comics. Chabon has his character striking Hitler in the nose on the cover of his first issue, but Hitler couldn't be disposed of that easily, and as the horrors of the war were revealed, it became obvious that his brand of evil could not be trivialized that easily either.

Chabon's Kavalier comes out of the chaos and horror of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and loses his entire family, including his younger brother (who is on a ship transporting Jewish children to the U.S. when it is sunk by a German U-boat), in the war. His response to what the Germans were doing was to pick fights with them in New York City. This is presented mostly offstage and without insight. In the course of this Kavalier encounters a pathetic American Nazi who in turn is a big fan of Kavalier's comics. Kavalier tears up his office, but leaves an autographed sketch behind. The Nazi in turn leaves a hoax bomb in the Empire State Building and subsequently tries to blow Kavalier up but mostly harms himself. I kept waiting for this to turn into something meaningful, but it never did. It was conceptually weak and comic-bookish.

More central to the story is Clay's emerging homosexuality, which is presented so delicately that it never gains much emotional weight. And when Clay is humiliated and almost arrested in a police raid, he abandons his homosexuality immediately and apparently as easily as casting off soiled clothes. He marries and "settles down" on Long Island. This may well be in some sense true to the prevailing attitudes of the times, but it makes for weak fiction.

My basic problem with this book is the acceptance, accolades and awards (the Pulitzer!)



it has received. Given the unsatisfactory nature of its conception and realization, why has it been so well received? I won't speculate, but I suspect another example of "The Emperor's New Clothes" syndrome. Members of a comics list to which I belong loved the book and had no difficulties with its skewed take on the comics industry (which, for all Chabon's research, is an outsider's cartoon). I think in their case the very *concept* of the book was what won them over. Chabon has, with this book, made himself a Big Name in comics fandom. Indeed, his fictional creation, "The Escapist" is now the subject of an actual (limited-run) comic book series. It's all just too, too camp.

But for me the book is, at heart, a failure. By the time I'd reached its end I was tired of it and disgusted with it. Too shaggy a dog by half.

—Ted White

Andy Hooper's

FANOTCHKA PART 2

THE CAST

Iranoff	Con-runner from the Tri-State Science Fiction League
Mudger	Con-runner from the Tri-State Science Fiction League
Beaupall	A slightly more cautious con-runner from the Tri-State Science Fiction League
Mr. Lansing	Day manager of the Builtup Hotel
Roberto Bolsa	A room-service waiter
Leon Dalghu	A frivolous fanzine fan
D. Jenny Winder	Big-name fan, long-time chair of the Tri-State Science Fiction League
Mercenaire	A famous huckster
Fanotchka Fettucini	Deputy convention commissioner, Tri-State Science Fiction League
Otto Fied	A mimeographer
MacArthur Ho Park	A fanzine fan
Lentil Hackberg	Another fanzine fan
John Barkenhorst	Convention Commissioner, Tri-State Science Fiction League

SYNOPSIS OF PART 1 (published in *Whistlestar* #6)

The *Tri-State Science Fiction League* is in trouble! In order to fortify the club's dwindling treasury, three con-runners, **Iranoff**, **Mudger** and **Beaupall**, have been dispatched to the Worldcon to sell the science fiction collection amassed (with club funds) by famous BNF, **D. Jenny Winder**. Winder, the Tri-State League's ex-Chairman, is now leading the high life, with her latest boy-toy, the fan-editor **Leon Dalghu**, who is trying to support her lifestyle by negotiating a book deal for her fan memoires.

Roberto Bolsa, a waiter at the hotel where the three con-runners have stored the Winder collection), is also a former aide of former Madame Chairman Winder. He speeds across Anaheim to where the BNF and her faned lover are ensconced at the Goulart Arms. He informs her that her priceless collection (including a Vargo Statten reversed-color cover, E.E. Smith page proofs, unburnt stumps from the Supermancon indoor cricket game and chicken bones from the Walter Breen picnic) is being readied for sale in the William Shatner suite of the Builtup Arms Hotel. Dalghu vows to stop them and rushes across town.

Dalghu obtains a restraining order and arrives at the William Shatner suite in time to brandish it, as the collection is being shown to **Mercenaire**, a famous huckster. Iranoff and Mudger argue that Winder signed all rights to the collection back to the Tri-State League in order to avoid prosecution for absconding with the club treasury. The huckster leaves the room. Beaupall is afraid that if the collection sale falls through, all three con-runners (including himself) will be killed, or suffer a worse fate, at the

hands of **John Barkenhorst**, the current Convention Commissioner of the TSSFL. Dalghu offers them a deal, whereby proceeds from the sold collection would be split 50-50 between Jenny Winder and the Tri-State League. And they all agree to think about it.

When the con-runners inform Barkenhorst of Dalghu's proposal, he roars his disapproval. They quickly move the collection out of the Shatner suite, and at Barkenhorst's instructions, proceed to the airport to meet Tri-State SF League Deputy Convention Commissioner **Fanotchka Fettuchini**. Fanotchka has been dispatched by Barkenhorst to make sure that the sale of the collection proceeds as originally planned. She quickly insures that the California State Attorney's Office will not respond to requests for seizure of the collection and reveals to the con-runners that Fanotchka Fettuchini is, indeed, her real name. Her father was a member of the Diggers in the sixties and changed his name from Robert Clarke to Frankie Fettuchini. Since he and her mother were fans of the Strugatskys and Andre Tarnovsky, they named her Fanotchka, "little fan."

Fanotchka calculates that Dalghu is a gambler who knows that Winder will not prevail in court. She determines to wait him out over the Worldcon weekend and continue to offer the collection for sale.

Entering the convention center, Fanotchka decides to forget about money and enjoy the art show. There are people everywhere occupying almost every available space. There are message boards and maps and guides and newsletters to direct her from place to place, but she can't even get to them. In desperation, she climbs onto a garbage bin to see over the crowds. And it is in this manner that Leon Dalghu lays eyes on her for the first time, unable to push an empty soda cup into the bin without dribbling melted ice on her shoes.

Dalghu shows her a shortcut into the artshow through a back corridor off the green room, and the two discover a mutual love for Jim Burns. They look at one another's badges. Dalghu is ghosting the convention with a badge that reads "Claude Degler." Fanotchka's badge reads "Member 4, Tri-State Science Fiction League." She asks "Claude" to call her "Trina" after well-known fan artist Trina Robbins.

"Trina and Claude, together again." Dalghu replies. "Two star-crossed souls trapped in a world they never made. Crisis on Infinite Earths!" He asks her if she'd like to get a drink and, together, the pair leave the artshow and proceed to the Fan Lounge....

Scene 10: In the Fan Lounge

NARRATION: The Fan Lounge is a pretty cool place, you should check it out. Tables full of fanzines, comfortable places to sit, usually a good crowd of conversationalists. Into this warm embrace come Dalghu and Fanotchka, to a tiny table in the corner.

DALGHU: So, is there a Mister #4?

FANOTCHKA: No comment. But Trina is definitely single.

DALGHU: One supposes the same must be said of Claude, although I doubt it was his idea.

FANOTCHKA: Poor fellow. Doesn't get out much?

DALGHU: Too busy cataloging references to Doc Smith in *Yandro*.

FANOTCHKA: Well, one can see the attraction. Although my taste runs more toward Connie Willis and Misty Lackey.

DALGHU: I'll spare you my guilty pleasures. Tastes in science fiction, like religion, are best not discussed in polite company.

FANOTCHKA: What a funny idea. Why else would you be a fan, if you didn't love science fiction?

DALGHU: Hmmm. I think I'll get us another drink.

FANOTCHKA: What I'd like you to do is kiss me.

DALGHU: What? Right here in the fan lounge?

FANOTCHKA: Are you afraid of what your friends will say? Kissing some strange con-runner girl right here in the very center of fanzine fandom?

DALGHU: I wouldn't say you were strange.

FANOTCHKA: So kiss me!

(Sound FX: A short smooching noise.)

FANOTCHKA: Is that the best you can do?

(Sound FX: A bit more tenacious this time)

DALGHU: Was that better?

FANOTCHKA: Mmmm. Maybe I should have taken a look at Fanzine writers a little earlier.

DALGHU: Personally, I'm glad you waited for me.

(Sound FX: A large, inky, sweaty person running up)

OTTO FIED: Hey, Leon! Here's the latest hoax-zine! Your article is on the cover!

DALGHU: Thanks, Otto -- look, here's some of my stuff!

FANOTCHKA: Leon? (a beat; reads) Leon Dalghu!

DALGHU: I'm afraid so, I'm not the real Claude Degler.

FANOTCHKA: You Bastard!

DALGHU: Um, not as such, but I --

FANOTCHKA: You're the creep representing D. Jenny Winder!

DALGHU: Ah...y-yes, I do some work for Ms. Winder, we're friends but I don't know what that has to do with anything.

FANOTCHKA: You're the reason I'm here in the first place. Yo know those books were stolen someone who stole from us, who took --



DALGHU: I'm sorry, I had no idea that you were associated with the collection. But I should of known (striking forehead), three stiffs from Rain City show up and then I meet a woman who has #4 written right on her chest.

FANOTCHKA: I have to go.

DALGHU: Listen, I don't want to have anything more to do with those books, I was acting as Jenny's agent.

FANOTCHKA: Would you PLEASE let go of me?

DALGHU: All right! I'm very sorry I didn't tell you who I was right away, but YOU were the one who didn't want to know . . .

OTTO FIED: Ah, let her go, Leon. This is Worldcon. People meet, fall in love and break up almost once every eight seconds. Convention romances decay faster than an unstable isotope.

DALGHU: You say the most stfnal things, Otto . . . but you're right. So, when is the next issue collating? I feel like doing some real work for a change.

Scene 11: The Fanzine Lounge

NARRATION: It's hard to portray subtle introspection and heavy thoughts in a radio play, so you'll just have to take my word for it that both Leon and Fanotchka thought about each other constantly for the next six hours, as she totaled up expense vouchers and he labored to put together a convention one-



shot. After checking to see that Iranoff, Mudger and Beaupall were safely loaned out to a Boston bid party, Fanotchka went wandering around the Builtup Hotel, trying to find the room where the fanzines were produced. And on the way she asked a few questions about Leon Dalghu, and found out a few surprising things.

FANOTCHKA: Hi, is this the -- wow, what a nice room!

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Welcome to the fan library -- uh -- "Fanotchka Fettucini." Huh, cool. I'm Mac Ho Park, and welcome to Decker fandom hour at the Worldcon.

FANOTCHKA: Gosh, thanks, I had no idea -- is that in the program book?

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Oh no -- this is all stuff we scheduled ourselves. Actually, Decker fandom hour is a lot like the Las Vegas Pancake Feast we had two hours ago and the Winston-Salem Whipporwill Wingding that starts at eight. It's just a way to personalize

our shifts supervising the party.

FANOTCHKA: Oh, so it's just another set of bid parties.

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Har! That's funny. no, this is just a regular party-party. You'd have to hand me a full run of *Energumen* to get me in the door of a bid party.

FANOTCHKA: But why?

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Oh, God, where do I start? Mostly because they're so damn crowded. And if you do get in the door, and find your thimble of scotch or your walleye cheeks, they start in trying to suck money out of you. (sing-song) "Put this sticker on your badge! Would you like to presupport our bid? Did you know Ross Pavlac can lie down full length in one of our hotel rooms?" And you have to shout like crazy, because you can't hear over the bagpipes or the cows or whatever. No thanks, I like a party like this one, with lots of couches and people you want to talk to.



FANOTCHKA: Yes, you certainly have a lot of couches.

LENTIL HACKBERG: Thank you for noticing. I had to bribe eight teamsters to get all these couches.

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Lentil Hackberg, meet Fanotchka Fettucini. Lentil is in charge of the library, plus she publishes the fanzine "Vercingetorex."

FANOTCHKA: Now where did I hear that name before?

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Probably on the Hugo ballot.

FANOTCHKA: OH, of course! I'm sorry, I didn't vote for you. I didn't know what any of the fanzines were like.

LENTIL HACKBERG: I wish people felt that way about presidential elections too. But that's okay, I wouldn't win anyway, I only make 200 copies of each issue.

FANOTCHKA: Only 200 copies? Why do you bother then?

LENTIL HACKBERG: Well, if I sent out too many more than that, I just wouldn't be able to read all the letters and fanzines I get back in trade. We publish fanzines for the response we get, not for money or awards . . . oh, but if your from Rain City, you'd know that. Great fanzines come out of Rain City. Or they used to anyway -- have you seen a copy of *Fry on the Spamless* recently, Mac?

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Not for a few years now.

LENTIL HACKBERG: It's a shame. That was a great fanzine.

FANOTCHKA: I can't believe there are so many fanzines out there -- you guys are almost out of table space!

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Oh, and I got two or three big boxes that I don't have room to put out. People have been publishing fanzines for over sixty years. Look, this one is from 1948.

LENTIL HACKBERG: Yeah, those Portland fans in the late forties were something. Look, Roscoe Wright!

MACARTHUR HO PARK: That's nothing! Check out this copy of *Science Fiction Five-Yearly*, with the three color cover -- acrobatic mimeography!

LENTIL HACKBERG: That's nothing! Look at this issue of *Plokta!* Art carved into potatoes, then modeled by a holographic magnetic imager, greyscaled in photoshop, printed on a 1200dpi laser printer, and captioned by a cabal of staring idiots!

MACARTHUR HO PARK: That's nothing! Look at this beauty! *Real Soon Now* -- a fanzine so rare, it *doesn't even exist!*

LENTIL HACKBERG: That's nothing! Look at this cover of *Outworlds #15*. Jim Shull -- Jeff Schalles -- printed on human skin . . .

MACARTHUR HO PARK (together): Oh, Roscoe...

LENTIL HACKBERG (together): Oh, Ghu...

FANOTCHKA: So, um . . . do you have any fanzines by Leon Dalghu?

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Hee hee -- do we have any fanzines by Leon Dalghu? Here, check these out! (Sound as of a heavy box being placed on a table)

FANOTCHKA: All those?

LENTIL HACKBERG: And these are just the ones he put his own name on. I have another box with material by his pseudonyms, Frank Silversure, Dr. Twonk, The Hermit of Twink Hollow . . .

MACARTHUR HO PARK: Here, these are extras I culled out of some donations. Go ahead and take them!

FANOTCHKA (flaring): NO! I mean . . . I really shouldn't

LENTIL HACKBERG: Why not? You'll read them, right?

FANOTCHKA (fighting): I -- wouldn't. I -- would.

MAC HO PARK: Of course. Who can resist opening a fanzine?

FANOTCHKA: What does this mean, member fwa?

Scene 12: The collation room

NARRATION: As Fanotchka opened her newly-acquired copy of Leon Dalghu's *FAPAZine Fret*, Leon was hacking out an editorial for a convention one-shot. The project was ambitious, and it took several hours to complete, but the big drum turned, and the night rolled by . . .

DALGHU: Okay, that's the last page done. We're ready to collate. Go out to the lounge and see who's still around Otto. No, lay that page on it's back, just like the others. We have to let the stack dry for a few minutes. Now are the staples we have long enough to handle eight sheets of this thick fibretone, or do we need -- Oh. (beat) Hello. (beat) How long have you been standing there?

FANOTCHKA: See, you're not afraid of hard work after all, are you?

DALGHU: Not if it's in pursuit of a good time, I'm not.

FANOTCHKA: You don't really need to take things that don't belong to you, do you?

DALGHU: I'm just a regular fan, Fanotchka. I do what I do.

FANOTCHKA: So you found out who I am.

DALGHU: When you have a friend with a laptop and password to access the convention database, you can find out all sorts of things.

FANOTCHKA: Similar things can be achieved with the telephone. Why wouldn't you accept the Hugo nomination for best fan editor?

DALGHU: Ah Christ, not that business all over again.

FANOTCHKA: You've been scribbling away behind the scenes for years. Look at all the names you write under! You have more pseudonyms than Lionel Fanthorpe! And last year you finally had the votes to make the final ballot for a fanzine Hugo award. Most people would call that the climax of a career in fandom. But you wouldn't accept the nomination. Now why would a man so eager to make off with anything that's not nailed down refuse something which he legitimately earned and deserved?

DALGHU: Ms. Fettucini, that is a very complicated story, and I have over a thousand copies of a fanzine to collate. Since you've taken such a powerful dislike to me, why can't we just leave it at that, so I can done with this work before three in the morning?

FANOTCHKA: I never said I didn't like you, Leon. I just can't stand what you're trying to do to my fan club.

DALGHU: The point was never to do anything to your fan club, it's just -- ah -- well, okay, I imagine some of Jenny's plan was to damage your fan club. She was very hurt when they threw her out, you know.

FANOTCHKA: She made off with more than \$50,000 in club money!

DALGHU: No she didn't! She came away with nothing but a bunch of ugly shoes and a deposit she forgot to take to the bank until after you'd brought charges against her! The woman is addicted to shopping, Fanotchka, and she took the monthly library budget and spent it faithfully until someone got nervous about her being too popular and found a way to get rid of her! She's still the same way, only now she's into costuming. You know what they say: She who dies with the most fabric wins? She has so much fabric that she could outfit an entire Dino De Laurentis film and have enough left over to do the road company of "Cats."

FANOTCHKA: So you do care about her.

DALGHU: No! I - Yes! Yes, I do, she's been a great friend to me. We've . . . we meant a lot to each other. But things are different these days. You get tired, always having to be "up" for things, not being able to publish on your own nickel -- it's just a lot of work not working, you know?

FANOTCHKA: So she's the one who paid for your fanzines. And that's why you didn't want to accept the Hugo nomination.

DALGHU: Partly. And partly who wants an award that once went to *Science Fiction Advertiser*?

FANOTCHKA: You and I have very different ideas about what we owe our friends. But you're not a creep, Leon. I never really thought you were.

DALGHU: High Praise I suppose, or at least the highest I'll get tonight.

FANOTCHKA: Do you really need to stay here? Can't your friend Otto handle a collation on his own? It's not like it's brain surgery.

DALGHU: I don't know -- you have to make sure no sheets stuck together, and then the placement of the staples is actually very important . . .

FANOTCHKA: I'm asking you to go to some parties with me, Leon. But you shouldn't expect me to beg.

DALGHU: Let me get this ink off my hands.

FANOTCHKA: No...no...I like these hands the way they are Leon, dirt and all. Let me hold one for a little while, okay?

DALGHU: My pleasure

Scene 13: The Shatner Suite, 1 am

NARRATION: They did not dance on the tables, and they didn't get blind drunk. They didn't fill a bathtub full of lime jello, and they didn't climb the outside of the building. But they did have a good time. And at one that morning, more than a little high, and with bid party stickers all over their chests, Leon and Fanotchka found themselves back in the Shatner suite surrounded with rare and garish paperbacks.

DALGHU: My God, look at these Doc Smith first printings! Look at the covers on these Ace doubles! Colors that do NOT appear in nature!

FANOTCHKA: And there's a lot more than just books, too. Look, this box is all full of fanzines!

DALGHU: I know, I saw the catalogue. But I can't believe the condition these things are in. "Ah, Sweet Idiocy!" Issues of Le Zombie and Slant! There are people at this convention who would be willing to pay a pretty penny for these things!

FANOTCHKA: But not you?

DALGHU: Ah, I've read almost all of them in reprint editions. Or heard people go on about them for so long I feel like I have. But it does make me think of something. I wish we had a few of these titles in the pile of stuff for the Trans-Oceanic Fan Fund auction. Maybe we could raise some real money for a change.

FANOTCHKA: Everyone has a cause at this convention.

DALGHU: But not you?

FANOTCHKA: I don't really know anymore. I've spent most of the past three years working to get our Worldcon bid up and running. But what is the Worldcon really for? We spend so much time and money putting them together, but I don't know who we're really working for. For fandom? what's fandom? I've found more definitions of that tonight than in the whole time I spent working with the tee-ess-eff--ess ... the teiseff-leff . . . Snaffhaff --

DALGHU: In the old days, they called it RICSFIC.

FANOTCHKA: Riff -stick?

DALGHU: The Rain City Science Fiction Club. RICSFIC. Oh, and they published some wonderful fanzines. Fry of the Spamless. Tales from the Basement. Don't they know about those things any more?

FANOTCHKA: I've never heard of them, anyway.

DALGHU: See, that's the problem with your bid. You even HAD a Worldcon in Rain city, back in the late sixties. Lots of fun, too. The Trans-Oceanic Fan Fund brought Joan W. Carr over from England. Heinlein stormed in at the last minute. Someone locked Harlan in a steamer trunk and said they were going to throw him in the sound. Then they opened the box and it turned out he was never in it, it was just some

Rain City fan throwing his voice. What was that guy's name? Freddie something

FANOTCHKA: I had no idea. Can you imagine that, trying to run a Worldcon bid without even knowing you've already had one? I guess everyone was just so eager to put all the scandal behind them . . .

DALGHU: The past remains locked around our ankles as we try to break into the future.

FANOTCHKA: Who said that?

DALGHU: I did.

(Both Laugh)

FANOTCHKA: I'm getting so sleepy. I don't normally drink so much you know. At home, I tend to drink Fresca or just water

DALGHU: Before you go to sleep you should take some aspirin...drink a lot of water ... I'll go . . .

NARRATION. But by the time he got back to the bed, Fanotchka was fast asleep. Leon looked at her for a long time, then left the aspirin and the glass of water on the night stand, and went back to his own room. This is a family play, you know.

Scene 14: Masquerade pre-judge, 8 AM Saturday morning.

NARRATION: His head smarting and his eyes stinging, Leon still felt better than he could remember feeling in a long time. At 8 the next morning, he went in search of D. Jenny Winder at the masquerade.

WINDER: Leon! What an amazing surprise! I didn't know anyone with a brain in their head was up this early in the morning!

DALGHU: I'll omit to comment on what that might say about you, Jenny dear.

WINDER: Oh, you know it's these idiot masquerade regulations! We have to start pre-judging now if we ever want to get the presentation done before midnight. Turn around dear, let us see -- oh, that's all right. You can just face left while you cross the stage.

DALGHU: I have something to tell you, Jenny. I hope it'll make you happy for me.

WINDER: Of course, dear. What is it? Have you won another award for your writing?

DALGHU: Nothing like that, Jenny. The fact is, I think I'm falling in love. In fact, I'm quite sure I'm in love. By all rights I should be too hungover to move. I had about seven cups of blog, and one of those giant beers the Croatians were passing out, and then Ghu only knows how much I drank at the Australians party -- yet, I feel fine. Ecstatic, even. I don't think there's any doubt about it, Jenny, I'm really in love.

WINDER: That's very nice, Leon. I'm very happy for you.





DALGHU: Is that all you have to say?

WINDER: Well, what else can I say without being impolite dear? Please let us see the blood worms really shake as you walk by -- that's it, that's a potential best novice award! Not you, of course, Leon, you're far from a novice at this sort of thing.

DALGHU: (leaning in to kiss her forehead) I knew you would want to be practical, Jenny. But we both know what I owe you. All you have to do is ask me to, and I'll do my best to forget her.

WINDER: What a dramatic way you have about you, Leon. You know I would never ask such a thing. and you also know there will always be an extra towel by the Jacuzzi for you.

DALGHU: I hope someone else will be drying off with it soon.

WINDER: Thank you, Leon. Giselle, can we do SOMETHING about these lights? Run along now, dear, I have hours of these costumes to go through. No, little one, SMILE ! Flap

your poison sacs and SMILE!

(A beat, A very, very long beat) Giselle, I need you to take over for me here, for just a little while. I have something I need to take care of. I assure you, I'll be back soon.

Scene 15: The Shatner Suite, 11 am Saturday

NARRATION: Fanotchka came awake with a dreadful pounding in her head, and the feeling that she had swallowed a large bucket of sand. Some thoughtful soul had left a glass of water and some aspirin by the bed. Even after swallowing, the insistent tapping continued, until she realized there was in fact

someone at the door.

WINDER: Good morning, dear. I hope I haven't come at an inconvenient time. I know it always feels far too early when you're still wearing last night's dress.

FANOTCHKA: Oh my God.

WINDER: Yes, I'm sure it's a shock to meet someone you've seen only in mug shots.

FANOTCHKA: I don't know what -- I'm not so sure I'm willing to believe all the things I've heard about you Ms. Winder, but I hope you'll appreciate that I can't talk with you under the present circumstances. So I'll have to ask you to leave.

WINDER: I'm not sure I know what circumstances you're referring to. Do you mean that silly little litigation over some books and plastic toys?

FANOTCHKA: Of course.

WINDER: Well, that's all over now, Ms. Fettucini. As you can see, you no longer have any collection to protect.

FANOTCHKA (running around): What? What do you mean? I -- WHERE IS IT?

WINDER: To be honest, I really have no idea exactly where the books are. But they're someplace safe. Which is where you should have kept them, instead of using them to put stars in poor Leon's eyes. The benefit of having a personal friend on the catering staff, with a set of keys, of course.

FANOTCHKA: What? Uh -- you're mistaken about Leon, He's not here.

WINDER: I didn't come looking for Leon. (holds up his name badge) Or his name tag.

FANOTCHKA: So why DID you come here? Just to gloat?

WINDER: No, I want to propose an exchange. You have something I want, in exchange for which I am quite willing to return the collection.

FANOTCHKA: What do I have that you could possibly be interested in?

WINDER: Why, Leon, of course.

FANOTCHKA: I don't know what you're talking about.

WINDER: Well! This is a first. Leon mooning around in the morning light with words of love on his lips, and the object of his affections doesn't even know it yet. I am sorry, I'm sure he would have preferred to tell you himself.

FANOTCHKA: I don't -- I hardly even KNOW Leon. I only met him yesterday afternoon.

WINDER: Yes, he can be terribly impulsive. But also very stubborn, and loyal to his decisions once he's made them. I'm taking this very seriously, so I advise you to do the same.

FANOTCHKA: What do you want me to do?

WINDER: I want to give you what you came here for, Ms. Fettucini, the keys to the kingdom. You can have the books back, every box. I have just one condition.

FANOTCHKA: Name it.

WINDER: I want you on the four o'clock plane back to Rain City. I have a ticket for you right here -- Stromboli Airways, I hear they're good -- they serve real meals. I promise you -- I don't know if that's

worth anything to you, but it is to me -- I will never attempt to lay claim to any item in the hands of the TriState Science Fiction League again. All you have to do is walk away, and forget about Leon. If you've known him for such a short time, as you say, there ought to no question as to what you ought to do.

FANOTCHKA: Of course you know I don't have any choice. I have to fulfill the trust placed in me by the TriState Science Fiction League.

WINDER: I know.

FANOTCHKA: Just out of curiosity, Ms. Winder, what do you think Leon would say about all this if he found out?

WINDER: He'd be scandalized, of course. He would thunder and blow. For a while. Then he would calm down and forgive me, and go off to spend a little more of my money. He wants to be man of principle, Fanotchka, but few of us have the luxury of being able to live off our principles. A few weeks from now, things will be back to normal again.

FANOTCHKA: But what about you? Don't you ever wonder if it's you he loves, or just the money?

WINDER: Look, this very simple, my dear. You're not sure if you love him yet. But I know I do. Go somewhere and make up your mind, have a good cry if you like, smash up some crockery or eat a pound of chocolate. My love for him was there when he was kissing you, and it will be there when he's kissing someone else next week. I'm not going to give that up on the odd chance that you might turn out to love him too. Who would take that chance? Do you think Leon would want me to?

FANOTCHKA: (A beat) No. If you'll excuse me please, I'm going to take a shower. And I'll have to pack quickly if I'm going to get to the airport in time for my flight.

WINDER: Orange County, dear. Not Ontario.

Scene 16: The TOFF Auction

NARRATION: The hours pass. A buzz of anticipation runs through an eager crowd just before the Trans-Oceanic Fan Fund auction. At the back of the room, Iranoff, Mudger and Beaupall sit in silence, with glum faces.

DALGHU: Would everyone please sit down? We have an enormous number of things to get through this evening -- If you'll please just sit down, we'll have a brief presentation on the TOFF from delegate Michael Simpson, and then get to the auction!

OTTO FIED: This note just came up from ops for you, Leon.

DALGHU. OK, OK, thank you Otto . . .

NARRATION: Because people don't actually read letters aloud in real life, I'll do it for poor Leon. What Fanotchka wrote was: "Dear Leon, I hope you will forgive me, but I will be unable to attend the TOFF auction, because I have been unexpectedly called home. P.S. Thank you for reminding me about my father, and the old-time fans in Rain City. Ventriloquism was only one of his many talents, something which I had forgotten. Please accept these fanzine for your auction, with the compliments of the RICSFIC.

DALGHU: (Looonnnnggg beat) Very good! Thank you very much Simo, you're a credit to your debased and inbred culture. Now to lead off the program, I have hear a copy of SKYHOOK #4, edited by the late Redd Boggs.

(Sound FX: Oooooohhh!)

Scene 17: Fanotchka's apartment.

NARRATION: Some time has past. In the small, but airy apartment of Fanotchka Fettucini, the phone

rings. Although Fanotchka sits in the large chair on the sun porch, with rain running down over her glasses, she does not answer the phone. And answering machine picks up, and after beep, a familiar voice speaks:

DALGHU: Fanotchka? Are you there? Aren't you ever home? I keep leaving messages for you, but you won't return them. I suppose you must think that for the best, but it doesn't seem that way to me. I wanted to tell you how much we appreciated your gift of fanzines, they really impressed everyone, and when I told them where they had come from, the bidding was even more intense. Everyone left vowing they would support your bid for the 2004 Worldcon, so I think you'll find that you made more money off that one box of fanzines than you did on the rest of the collection. I got your address and number from the convention database. (pause) I put you on my mailing list. (pause) Maybe you could write and tell me if you like my fanzines some time. (longest pause) Well, I probably ought to leave some room on your tape for someone else's message. I hope you're doing okay.

FANOTCHKA: Would you please just SHUT UP?!!

DALGHU: I hope you're . . . well, I really enjoyed it, Fanotchka. I'll see you again sometime, maybe in 2004.

Scene 18: Rain City Science Fiction Confederation Clubhouse

NARRATION: Even more time has past, nearly a year. Back in a musty little office under the eaves of the Rain City Science Fiction Clubhouse, Convention Bid Commissioner John Barkenhorst pauses in his study of the New York Times Crossword as Fanotchka Fettucini enters the room.

BARKENHORST: Ah, Fanotchka. Good to see you. Your report on bid expense trends impressed everyone on the committee. Especially fine work.

FANOTCHKA: Thank you, John. It was a pleasure to write.

BARKENHORST: But that isn't why I asked you to come in. We have something of a problem I would like you to attend to.

FANOTCHKA: I'll certainly try.

BARKENHORST: It's about those three party organizers you worked with at the Worldcon last year, Mudgie, Beaupall, and Earanoff?

FANOTCHKA: Mudger, John. Mark Mudger. He wants to be a film editor when he finishes school.

BARKENHORST: Yes, well, we were all ready to put them onto something like Children's books when they ran afoul of that business with the library sale. But your reports of them were so strongly worded



on their behalf that there was no way we could even consider it. You made them sound like the heroes of the whole thing, when we all suspected that you were clearly the one who should have received the praise.

FANOTCHKA: They're nice guys, John. Everyone likes them.

BARKENHORST: Nice guys we have plenty of, Fanotchka. What we need are people we can trust with the purse strings a thousand miles away. And it was on your recommendation that we've given them that kind of control again at Westercon.

FANOTCHKA: I'm sure they'll do fine.

BARKENHORST: Your confidence seems to be misplaced. I'm getting phone calls, e-mail: Everyone says the same thing; the three of them are out of control and we have to do something about it. So, since they seemed to pull their weight pretty happily with you around, the only logical thing that comes to mind is for you to head down to San Diego.

FANOTCHKA: Oh, no! Not me! Not again! I can't do it, John. I just about lost myself the last time I went to one of those big conventions. They make me crazy, there's just too much -- there has to be someone else you could send!

BARKENHORST: Who, Fanotchka? Who can I send who has a good relationship with the three caballeros? who can I trust not to pad the expense account? And as far as big conventions go, you seem to forget that we're bringing the worldcon here in another five years. Are you going to spend it lying at home with a damp cloth over your eyes?

FANOTCHKA: Did you know you look and sound like Vince Lombardi when you get going?

BARKENHORST: Out! Get thee to San Diego, and find out what those three chimps are doing with my



money. I want full reports! And Fanotchka --

FANOTCHKA: Yes sir?

BARKENHORST: Bring me back a T-shirt. And a run of the daily newszine if you can get it, I'm thinking about who to ask to edit one at our conventions. There never seems to be an end to the kind of trivial detail you have to handle in this job . . .

Scene 19: Westercon 53, The Bid Suite of the TriState SFL

NARRATION: Down in San Diego, the bid party is in full voice as Fanotchka arrives, lugging her bags with her. A tall white-haired man is doing something odd with a malomar balanced on the navel of a nubile young woman lying supine on the coffee table. Outside, there is a dreadful clattering, as a group of fans try to build a beercan tower to the moon. Fanotchka looks about in confusion for a moment, until at last she sees a familiar face.

FANOTCHKA: Beaupall!

BEAUPALL: Fanotchka! You came!

FANOTCHKA: Of course I did, you fool. You spend money at twice the rate you're authorized, you set off fire extinguishers on the balconies, throw a perfectly good life-size cut-out of William Shatner into the pool -- who do you think they will send?

BEAUPALL: Mudger! Iranoff! Look who's here!

MUDGER: At last!

IRANOFF: We knew you'd come!

FANOTCHKA: People keep saying that! I can't say I expected you to be so happy to see me.

IRANOFF: We're ecstatic! Delighted! Here, have a copy of my fanzine, "Pulsing Naked Singularity #1" Look, I got Rotslers!

FANOTCHKA: You should see a doctor then.

IRANOFF: (as Pee-Wee Herman-like as possible) Ha ha! That's a good one. But there's someone here who you'll want to see!

FANOTCHKA: Oh yes?

MUDGER, IRANOFF & BEAUPALL: (rather Beavis-like) Uh-huh!

DALGHU: I hope so, anyway.

FANOTCHKA: Leon!

DALGHU: Jenny got mad one night and told me the whole story. The deal you and she struck. She's dating David Brin now, so I suppose she got what she deserved. But I always wondered if maybe you'd wanted things to end differently. And since I couldn't get permission to come see you, I had to find some way to make you come see me.

MUDGER: And nothing draws your attention like people having too much fun.

DALGHU: Aren't you going to say anything?

FANOTCHKA: I'm waiting to see if perhaps you have something else to say to me.

BEAUPALL: I wonder what she means?

IRANOFF: Shhh!

DALGHU: Maybe so. But maybe I ought to say it down here, on my knees

FANOTCHKA: No, no. No complaining later that the track lighting was in your eyes, or you got a charley horse down there and the pain went to your head -- you stand up here and look me in the eye.

DALGHU: All right. Eye to Eye. I love you, Fanotchka.

FANOTCHKA: And I love you, Leon.

(They kiss)

MUDGER: Woo hoo! Fire up that grill, Tommy! We got a lot to celebrate tonight! The fourth of July! Rain City in ought-four! And now we gots Cupid in the house!

BEAUPALL: Man, don't you love happy endings?

(Thunderous Applause, and introduction of the actors)

-oOo-



Fanotchka Cast, Corflu Wave Performance -- Walnut Creek, 1998

Victor Gonzales, Paul Williams, Cindy Williams, Jerry Kaufman, Stu Shiffman, Richard Brandt, Andy Hooper. (Photo by Mike McInerney.)

Astral Fingers

Letters of Comment



(on *Whistlestar* #5, October 1989)

Harry Bell

Thanks for Whistlestar.

I was interested in your theory that “publishing fanzines is the key to unblocking creativity.” I’ve often thought that might be the case as I sat with my creativity totally blocked and the DynaRoot man out on a call. I think I’ve started five fanzines in as many years and even as I write this there’s half a fanzine sitting in the attic waiting for the mood to strike again. But isn’t that the problem? It takes an element of creativity to publish the fanzine in the first place.

Having hinted at this total lack of creativity on my part, I cast off the mask and reveal two pieces of artwork for your consideration. The larger of the two, as you can see, I did last year with no one in mind, but now there’s WhistleSTAR. Maybe you’d consider it as a cover. You’re such a clever bugger with the micro, I’m sure you could fashion a title along the top. On the other hand, if you don’t want it (or the other one) that’s OK. But maybe you’d let me know?

PS: Hope the quake did you no harm? (9 Lincoln St., Gateshead Tyne & Weir NE84EE)

{As you’ll see from this ish, I liked the art—hope you’re not too greatly annoyed at having to wait so long to see it. The ‘89 quake was significant in my life, primarily for providing a taste of the different ways that anarchy might manifest in a real post-apocalyptic situation. I was in downtown San Francisco when it hit. With the power, traffic lights, and telephones out, I decided I’d be better off walking or hopping whatever buses were running to a friend’s house in the solidly middle class inner Sunset area of SF—instead of the blue collar, street-person populated Mission district, where I live.

Fires and visible smoke manifested in the North Beach areas I passed by, but buses running to the Sunset district had no problems crossing unmanaged intersections. Sunset residents with undamaged flats celebrated the catastrophe by staging impromptu candlelight wine tasting parties on the sidewalks. When I eventually decided to try going home, I noticed a distinct change in ambience traveling south and east to the Mission. Intersections of major streets were in confusion, and gangs of marauding teenagers congregated each time the bus stopped, hassling the driver and (in one instance I witnessed) attempting impromptu holdups of the passengers. The driver on my bus bravely, bodily threw the gang kids off and continued on his route. I arrived home to a flat with books thrown off the shelves but no structural damage. —LB}

Brad W. Foster

Greetings Lenny— I've no idea where Bartlett Street is situated, but I hope you managed to weather the recent earthquake in SF OK. Keeping a good thought, will proceed from that.

About a year and a half since issue #4 to WHISTLESTAR #5 showing up in my mailbox. Let's see, if you publish something annual, that's one a year. Semi-annual is twice a year, and bi-annual is once every two years. So that would make your pubbing schedule semi-bi-annual, I think.

I see you managed to pound those last three fillos I sent into the appropriate size to fit this issue. That still leaves the other two fillos way unused from back in '85 and '86 even lonelier than ever. Must be a tough life as an un-loved fillo. Enclosed are two more for your consideration. The Mad Mushroom Twins haven't been sent anywhere else yet, so be gentle with them!

Don't scare me with stories of spending a year in working with a PC. Looks like my business/creative situation is getting so heavy here that I'll have to break down and start shopping for one of those little suckers myself in '90. Getting it to free up time, but nervous about how much time it will take first to learn how to save time....sounds like some soft of skiffy paradox plot, doesn't it?

Enjoyed Ted's fanzine column very much. As in his intro to the meat of the matter, most "reviews" these days do seem to be little more than single-sentence comments. (Not all, but most.) Irregardless of whether I agreed or not with his comments, was nice to finally get someone giving some thought-out opinions on it all. (Was it on purpose that LAN'S didn't get listed at the end of the column for folks to seek out, or just a wonderful extra bit of accidental criticism?)

Kick to see that time-warp comment on my MECHTHINGS comic. Things are picking up

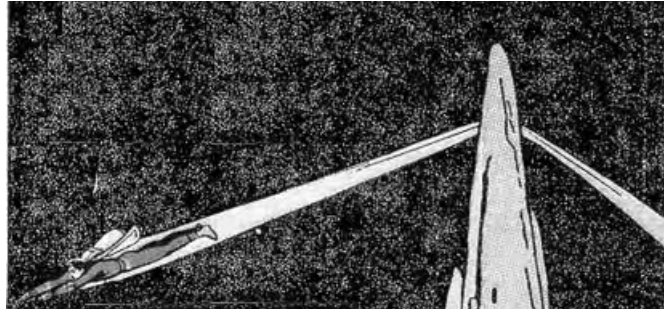
for my own Jabberwocky Graphix outfit. And while it still looks to be over a year away at least, I'm confident of picking up and publishing that series myself eventually. If you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself! (PO Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016)

{Well, in 2008—up the timestream from the Rock of E—Jabberwocky Graphix is an impressive accomplishment (www.jabberwockygraphix.com/). I'm wondering if Cory Doctorow knows that his "inner robot" is just waiting there to be unleashed. I'm endeavoring to give those lonely fillos more love.

I'm a fan of Ted's



writing, too—although I'm not totally in sync with his take on Kavalier & Clay, this ish. One of my religious beliefs about fanzine fandom is that a new era of great fanzines always begins when Ted decides to publish another genzine. We had a small taste of the energy that lies sleeping in his attic with the faan fiction piece he wrote for SFFY #12.—LB}



(on *Whistlestar* #6, March 2002)

David M. Sherwood

Nice to hear from Ted White altho this aint one of his better pieces not that its not well written but frankly I don't give a damn about Julie Schwartz. From what I've heard he's a nice guy to party with a shit to work for (see the attachment I enclosed with this—the tale of Jerry).

Score one for electronic fanzines. If you were reading this on a PC with an Internet connection, you could just click here to read the Chip Delany story about Julius Schwartz that David enclosed: <http://tinyurl.com/2nbsmp>—LB}

About your day job: I've just got a degree in Computer Studies so this gives me a chance to talk back to the teachers so to speak. I found classroom grading a bind and a bore requiring me to memorize a lot of stuff I felt, and still felt I did need to know for any job I might get. But if I didn't regurgitate it on cue I'd be flunked out. An example I can never despite having passed the necessary tests in them (by cramming the night before knowing on the day & a week later forgotten again) certain facts about the proper format of about a ½ dozen commands in C or C++ e.g. String Splicing.

Mostly I just look them up in help. O'course by sods law some of these are not that well served by Help. These I keep in a little notebook which is in my notes folder. This seems to be the rational way to handle these things but the exams are not open book so I've got to ruin several evenings of my life doing the slave labour of brute-force memorization when I could be watching reruns of the Waltons. I hope for a rational response from this altho I've already had a nasty row with a lecturer on memorization. He felt that in degree courses one was above all that in a realm of intelligent mature intellectual dialogue. I had to tell him to wake up and smell the coffee. If I had a photographic or Aminovian memory I'd off passed the Business Studies module (a subject which arouses in me all the keen curiosity I've got as to what poodle do-do tastes like) of my 3rd Year and been a shoo-in for an Honours degree instead of scrapping a bare Ordinary degree.

Haven't kept up my watching of BUFFY so am not able to comment on the ending of the 5th series very intelligently. The whole question of innocent bystanders is far trickier than the rather simplistic way you say. The Catholic Church's way of dealing with it is that if it's a byproduct that you rather regret, its more or less OK. If it's the whole point, it's a no-no (e.g. if you bomb Dresden intending to cause economic damage to your enemy & just as a sort of an afterthought killing those careless enough to live there, that's a regrettable necessity of war. If you set off a bomb in downtown Jerusalem intending to kill civilians that's an atrocity.

Always felt that that is a cop-out, making a virtue of a certain sort of willed ignorance—& perhaps a relic of the days when armies met in a prearranged field at a prearranged time and went at each other with no incontinent non-competent underfoot—but have never been able to focus my vague intuitions on the subject. (PO Box 23, Port Talbot, SA13 1DA, UK)

*{Well, not wanting to belabor an old r.a.s.f.f argument, but I disliked the ending to the 5th season of Buffy. Giles murders the (more or less) innocent Ben, who shares a body with the invulnerable god (demoness) Glory. The apparent payoff for most fans of the show is that this murder was *the only way* that the Buffy world could ever rid itself of Glory. Buffy (subbing for Jesus Christ) refused to murder an innocent, planning to sacrifice herself to save the world. But Giles refused to play. The punch line for the viewer is in watching the usually mild and civilized Giles show his Ripper side. The Whedonesque wisdom: "Sorry, boys and girls. Sometimes you need someone who's capable of being a cold-blooded murderer if you want to save the world."}*

I don't buy into this. In our world, you say, "If you intend to kill civilians, that's an atrocity." That's also my reaction. The Whedon universe was rigged by the script writers to controvert this fact. I think what they were selling with this was emotional resonance with the decision to deliberately murder a noncombatant—in order to save everyone else. "Yeah, maybe sometimes you have to do that."

I'm not inspired by or thrilled at that moral/dramatic statement the way some Buffy fans appear to be. The Buffy writers chose not to (for instance) have the heroes send Glory back to Hell—and set an eternal watch on all Hellworlds to prevent her return. That would have been too lame and unsatisfying a climax, apparently—so they implied it was impossible. (But that solution was good enough for Tolkien. which is one reason why I have more emotional resonance with "The Silmarillion" than with "Buffy.")—LB}

We Also Heard From: Jerry Kaufman, Lloyd Penney, and possibly you. Please accept my apology if I misplaced your LoC in the timestream during the six-year hiatus since the last Whistlestar. I won't do that again.

In the meantime, write, question authority (filtering out unuseful pugnaceousness), laugh in the sunshine, sing, cry in the dark, fly through the night.



SEEKERS INTO MYSTERY



WHISTLESTAR #7