

Issue 3, Spring 2004



"Ontology on the go!"

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Editorial

If I had an editorial for Issue 3 of J LHLS, it would be about the lack of an editorial for Issue 3 of J LHLS, so why not cut all our loses this issue and just skip it? I know I'll feel better if we do. It's a wonderful issue, so let's get right to it!

I do have one very important communication, our own R. Dean Tribble has a book of poetry, *Blue Flame*, out and none of it has appeared in J LHLS. I highly recommend this volume of poetry, which spans several decade of Bob's life and is almost 100% knee-weakening and thought-provoking free verse. And, you know, you really can't go wrong supporting poetry, it's like motherhood and voting, not every one does it, but everyone is for it. Or they should be. Bob can be reached for orders at rdean@tribbleville.com

And now, on with Issue 3!

Ginger Mayerson
March 2004



Kathryn L. Ramage

Explorations in Rye: Searching for Miss Mapp

Although Edward Frederick (E.F.) Benson wrote over 70 novels as well as a number of biographies, ghost stories, and other works of fiction and non-fiction, he is best remembered today for his six novels chronicling the social squabbles and adventures of two middle-aged ladies, Elizabeth Mapp and Emmeline Lucas (known as "Lucia" to her friends).

Lucia first appears in *Queen Lucia* (1920) as the autocratic but benevolent ruler of her small social circle in the village of Riseholme, a lady of artistic pretensions who affects to speak Italian when she knows but a few phrases, and plays only the first movement of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata because it is the slowest and easiest. Mapp makes her appearance in *Miss Mapp* (1922) while spying on her neighbors from behind the curtains of her garden-room window. "Anger and the gravest suspicions about everybody had kept her young and on the boil," Benson introduces her. Like Lucia, Mapp leads her own social circle in the town of Tilling.

The two ladies meet in armed combat for social supremacy in *Mapp and Lucia* (1931), when the recently widowed Lucia comes to Tilling, and the battle rages through two subsequent novels. Joining Mapp and Lucia in their ongoing war are a collection of delightfully idiosyncratic neighbors: fussy and feminine Georgie Pillson; Mrs. Wyse, who wears her fur coat even on warm days and takes her Rolls Royce into the most narrow and unnavigable streets, and Mr. Wyse, her antiquary husband; gender-bending artist, "Quaint" Irene Coles; blustering Major Benjy; the Reverend Kenneth Bartlett, who affects a Scottish accent even though he is not a Scotsman, and his mousy wife Evie. As a writer of the foibles of the upper classes in England between the two world wars, Benson can be compared to P.G. Wodehouse, if Wodehouse had focused more attention on Bertie Wooster's aunts. Like Aunt Agatha's zeal in stealing a silver cow creamer, the quarrels that arise in Benson's Mapp and Lucia novels involve trivial objects and circumstances that take on ridiculously exaggerated importance; for example, one of the fiercest battles between the ladies concerns a recipe for lobster *à la Riseholme*.

Tilling, which provides the setting for four of these novels, was inspired by the real-life town of Rye on the East Sussex coast. Rye was Benson's home from 1916 until his death in 1940. He was Mayor there during the 1930s, as Lucia became in *Lucia's Progress*. Lamb House, where Benson lived (and Henry James before him), is the "Mallards" of the novels, where Mapp and Lucia each in turn made their home.

Benson described the town in 1922:

There is not in all of England a town so blatantly picturesque as Tilling, nor one, for the lover of level marshland, of tall reedy dykes, of enormous sunsets and rims of blue sea on the horizon, with so fortunate an environment. The hill on which it is built rises steeply from the level land, and, crowned by the great grave church so conveniently close to Miss Mapp's residence, positively consists of quaint corners, rough-cast and timber cottages, and mellow Georgian fronts.

Miss Mapp, Chapter 2

It remains very much the same 80 years later. When I visited in May of 2002 with my friend and fellow Luciaphile, Susan, we found Rye still a beautiful little town of steep cobblestone lanes and black-and-white houses, some of which date back to the 15th century. Susan and I had gone to Rye in quest of Mapp and Lucia's Tilling. Both of us had been fans of Benson's novels for many years, and were especially intrigued by the British ITV production of *Mapp & Lucia*, which was filmed in Rye in the mid-1980s.

The wonderful thing about visiting Rye after reading Benson's novels is that the town is already familiar; his descriptions are so detailed that you feel as if you've been there before and know it well even at your first visit. Standing in front of Lamb House, we easily identified Georgie Pillson's cottage next door, and the homes of Major Benjy and Captain Puffin, facing each other on either side of the slope of West Street below. Another street plunging sharply downhill to the left, while named Mermaid Street in real life, was immediately recognized as Benson's Porpoise Street, where the Wyses had their Tudor home.

The next morning, we visited St Mary's, the "great grave church" that sits at the top of the hill Rye is built on. We went up into the tower, squeezing our way along a narrow passage of a clerestory-tourists are kept from falling by a barrier of netted wire fixed against the ancient stonework-and then climbing up through the bell chambers on wooden stairs that might almost be called a ladder. It's a very steep climb; Miss Mapp is supposed to have carried a painting and an easel up and down these stairs, but I don't see how she could have done it. Atop the tower, we found a spectacular view, overlooking not only the town, but Romney Marsh to the northeast, Camber Castle to the south, and the English Channel eastward in the distance.

In *Mapp and Lucia*, Mapp spies on Lucia from the top of the church tower and sees her skipping around the walled "secret" garden behind Lamb House, after Lucia had claimed to be bedridden with influenza to avoid meeting Mr. Wyse's Italian-speaking sister, the Countess Faraglione. Susan and I quickly determined that it wasn't possible to see into the garden at all without, perhaps, climbing up onto the parapet. We were not willing to go this far in our experiment, but we agreed that we couldn't put it past Mapp in her eagerness to expose her rival!

In the marshlands beyond the town, we noted a solitary house-a white square by a cluster of trees-and decided it must be Grebe, the house Lucia lived in before she purchased Mallards. We learned later that afternoon we were wrong.

That afternoon, we went to the lookout point at the end of the High Street, which Benson dedicated while he was Mayor, to meet Allan Downend, president of the E.F. Benson Society. The Society offers a "Mapp & Lucia" tour that features real-life settings Benson was familiar with, locations that were used in the ITV series, and possible locations of the homes of characters in the novels. Some detective work is required. For example, there are two possible contenders for the Wyse home - handsome black-beamed Tudor houses on either side of Mermaid Street - and persuasive arguments can be made in favor of each. Diva Plaistow's residence is also difficult to pin down; while Benson always places it on the High Street, it seems to move from novel to novel. Mr. Downend points out the most likely candidate, a house with blue bay windows, where Diva could have sat to look over the comings and goings on the street below while working on her latest piece of creative dress.

Most of the filming of the ITV series was done around the church square, and makes no geographical sense if you know where the actors are in contrast to where they're supposed to be: people turn left to go to Mallards, when the house is down the lane to the right; Quaint Irene paints the front of her house near the bottom of West Street, when the building she's painting is actually the old water tower in the churchyard. But the square is one of the prettiest and most carefully preserved parts of Rye, so it was no surprise that it was used so often.

The house that stood in for Mallards in the series is obviously not Lamb House since it is a pink stucco villa in the middle of a level street and has its entrance in a side-alley, while Lamb House is a red-brick, early Georgian building with an imposing black door that opens directly out onto the top of a steep, downward sloping street. The televised Mallards is on Watchbell Street, behind Lamb House, and backs onto its garden. Lamb House does not make an appearance in the series. While the house with the crooked chimney, next to Mallards, is mentioned frequently as Georgie's cottage (the two are not the same in the books, nor in Rye), it only appears in a sketch, accurately rendered, over Lucia's mantelpiece.

The tour ended at Lamb House. Since this house was also Henry James' final home, there is a great deal of information about him to be found here, but plenty for the edification of the Benson fan as well. The ground-floor rooms are open to the public - the dining room, an oak-paneled parlor, and the "telephone" room. The "telephone" room is larger than imagined; the name itself suggests a phone-cabinet sized closet, and when Lucia places Mapp's out-of-tune piano there when she rents the house in *Mapp and Lucia*, the piano is said to fill the room, "...but it was still possible to telephone if you went in sideways." When we stood in the room, which is at least 10 foot square, Susan and I found it hard to believe that Lucia would have had trouble squeezing around any piano smaller than a concert grand.

When we finished exploring the rooms, we went out through the French windows in the dining room into the high-walled garden, which is also larger than imagined. In Benson's day, there was a garden room, separate from the house and set at a right angle to it; the front window was said to command a view of the lane to the church square and West Street down its length. "There was little that concerned the social movements of Tilling that could not be proved, or at least reasonably conjectured, from Miss Mapp's eyrie" (*Miss Mapp*, Chapter 1). The garden room was destroyed during an air raid in World War II, but the space where it used to be is outlined by bricks in the grass; old photos and paintings of it are in the house, and there is a small model in the dining room.

Early the next morning, before we left Rye, I walked out to the house that Mr. Downend claimed was the basis for Grebe, Playden Cottage. This is not the white house Susan and I had observed. Grebe is described as being half a mile outside of Rye; across the road is a river contained by a high bank, and the marshes lie beyond. So much might apply to either house, but Grebe is also described as sitting close against a cliff, part of the coastline before the marshes were reclaimed from the sea. The land does indeed rise sharply behind Playden Cottage, while our choice was out on the flat marshlands on the other side of town. However, Playden Cottage is also well up on a hillside. In *Mapp and Lucia*, the bank of the river collapses and Grebe is flooded. Mapp, intent on stealing Lucia's recipe for lobster *a la Riseholme*, is trapped in the kitchen and both ladies are swept out to sea on an upturned kitchen table, to be eventually rescued by an Italian

fishing trawler. While there is a high-banked river across the road from Playden Cottage, only very deep water could have flooded the house and carried the ladies away.

So it seems that, although some poetic license has been taken to further various plot points, Benson's Tilling is in general an accurate reflection of Rye. What is most remarkable, however, is that so much of the town as it was in the 1920s and '30s remains intact today. We left feeling as if we had really visited Tilling, and had walked almost in Miss Mapp's footsteps.

Bibliography

Queen Lucia, 1920

Miss Mapp, 1922

Lucia in London, 1927

The Male Impersonator (a short story featuring Miss Mapp), 1929

Mapp and Lucia, 1932

Lucia's Progress (also published as *The Worshipful Lucia*), 1935

Trouble for Lucia, 1939

For more information about the E.F Benson Society, the Mapp & Lucia tour, and Benson's Tilling, see the Rye website at <http://www.rye-tourism.co.uk/efbenson/society.htm>

Kathryn L. Ramage lives in Maryland with her cats, Austen and Lucia. She studied literature at a British university, and likes to return to England for visits every 2 or 3 years.



Maxwell Maxfield

A Visit with J.F. Elouardio

For the past several years J. F. Elouardio has been quietly absent from the L. A. art world. His last exhibit - *Silence of the Hummers*, at Pacemaker/Sho [April 1994] - received notice in the local press although its uncanny prescience could hardly have been recognized at that time.

The exhibit featured four military vehicles in camouflage paint (Humvees) facing each other at the cardinal points of the compass. Each vehicle had been set up with speakers concealed under their hoods from which the marches of John Philip Souza were being broadcast. The marches had been performed and recorded by the Westwood A Cappella Crusaders with whom Elouardio had worked extensively in preparation for the exhibit. As one would expect from the Crusaders, the marches were performed a cappella. They were hummed, in fact.

The marches played in random patterns for five and a half hour periods with the last half hour devoted to silence. Each cycle began with a background medley of ordinance explosions "from distant lands" - according a note from the artist - with the humming gradually becoming audible above that background. The installation included video projected on the gallery walls - a documentation of field research done in Costa Rica of the capture, classification and mounting for display of the butterfly population of the local forests, said to be among the most diverse on the entire planet. Like the Souza material, the video repeated in random sequences.

Last year my editor asked me to find Elouardio. I suppose he asked me because Gaston Garland, who usually covered these things was on "a leave of absence." Although I usually covered the science beat, I also filled in sometimes as staff photographer, and had occasionally asked the editor if I could "do an art assignment." In any case, he wanted to know what had happened to Elouardio. "See if you can look him up," were his directions to me. "Might be worth doing a follow-up article."

I looked up the last article Garland had done on Elouardio. A couple of the national slicks had given Elouardio a lot of space with the Hummer show, but only TSA, the little journal I work for, had made any mention of Elouardio's new direction. Speaking about this, Elouardio had said to Garland, "My work has evolved. I've taken it to the next step. The work starts off in my own mind, but now I'm leaving it there."

"What about openings?" Garland must have asked, because he quotes Elouardio saying, "I don't give a damn about openings! Besides, I'm having them anyway. All the openings I could ever want. [laughs] Hell, my last opening was one of the best I've ever attended."

"In your head, that's what you're saying?" Garland had asked.

"Are you listening, Garland?" was all he'd replied. In any case, Elouardio's name has not appeared since.

Meeting the Artist

It wasn't difficult to find Elouardio. It turned out he lived at his old address in Azusa. Nearing his place, I found myself in a neighborhood of stucco apartment buildings and houses built in the fifties and sixties with the generic look of design based on the bottom line. It wasn't what I'd expected.

Pulling up in front of his address in the early afternoon, I found myself looking across a small front yard of white gravel with a unkempt little hedge of juniper. Along the edges of the walkway to his front door a few weeds had managed to get a foothold and, in places, black plastic underlayment was visible. A slightly de-laminated plywood sign was standing about halfway between the sidewalk and the little front porch. "L. A. Lawn Water - Over 50 Million Gallons Served Every Day." I didn't quite know what to think.

No one answered my knock at the door. I knocked again, louder, and as I was turning to leave, the door opened. The man standing before me had to be well into his seventies. He was white-haired and stood about five-seven or eight, but his aged features did nothing to diminish an immediate impression of personal force. That he stood before me wearing a bathrobe, an expensive, stylish one, further confounded my efforts to fit him into a type I might recognize.

"Yes?" he said, looking me over. To say he was friendly would be exaggerating. He seemed willing to give me a chance and, after my explanations, invited me in.

I was unprepared for what I saw. The interior of Elouardio's home bore no relationship to the neglect and cranky eccentricity of what one saw outside. Among all the objects and artworks standing, hanging and mounted on the walls, I was attracted immediately to a black plastic floor-to-ceiling panel about three feet wide. On its surface played a constantly changing pattern of chemical symbols, stock prices, Chinese characters, Hebrew letters and what looked like stone age ideograms formed by a substrate of red-light emitting diodes. As the stimulus overload subsided a little, I noticed a muted chiming in the background, suggestive perhaps of some far-off ceremony.

To a comment about the diode display, Elouardio told me he'd seen something similiar once, another artist's work, and liked it so much he wanted one for himself. "Don't tell anyone," he said, looking at me with an ironic expression.

"What about the chiming?" I asked.

"Nice, isn't it?" he replied.

"Yes. Is it something of yours, I mean, something you made?"

"That's right. I made it. Do you like it?"

"It's beautiful. Could you say more about it?"

"I could, but will I?" He paused, watching for my reaction. I nodded my head, a little uneasily, hoping he'd go on.

"Maxwell, right? That's your name. Am I remembering that right?"

"That's right. Maxwell Maxfield."

"Interesting name. Maxfield. Maximum field. Is that it?"

"Well, I suppose so."

"Good name. Let's go out to my studio. With a name like that, you can ask me whatever you want to ask."

Elouardio's Studio

He led me through a dimly lit hallway in which the faint sound of the chiming was a little easier to make out. I stopped for a moment to listen, but Elouardio had turned a corner and I hurried to catch up. A door stood open to the backyard. Enclosed by a high stucco wall, it was much larger than I would have guessed. A quiet fountain stood in an open area of compacted sandy earth and around it was a perimeter of agaves, yuccas, palo verde, an ocotillo and some prickly pear cactus. Toward the back of the yard, lemon, fig and pepper trees caught the sun. A number of cacti I couldn't identify were scattered here and there, and lower-growing succulents filled in where space allowed. I wanted to linger, but Elouardio motioned me to follow him into his studio.

I expected a new visual overload, but the large open space was orderly and had a completely different feeling from inside his home. There was a wood burning stove, a sink with counter space, some bookshelves and couple of over-stuffed arm chairs. The cement floor had been painted a high gloss gray and was spotlessly clean. A single large window opened to the north filling the space with soft light. Outside, garden trees and other plants were visible against the high stucco wall, and beyond that one could see the San Gabriel mountains in the distance.

A couple of large paintings leaned against one of the walls. In one, a boxy truck stood in a desert landscape. A line of people stood leading up to the back of the truck in a three-quarters view. One could see that an ATM machine was mounted in the rear door of the truck. At the front of the line, a man was withdrawing cash while the others waited their turn. ATM truck, a mysterious line of people and a few desultory cacti, rocks and creosote plants and the line of a distant horizon. I walked over for a closer look.

"Desert Banking Service," said Elouardio wryly.

The second painting featured a cherry picker with bucket raised aloft, the kind of thing you see when a crew is working on overhead transmission lines. On its side was written "A1 Rents." The tires were flat. Like the truck, it stood in a desert landscape. A naked man, very tan, and with disheveled hair leaned over the side of the bucket and was hauling up a package on a rope. A closer look revealed the package to be a bag with the McDonald's logo. A man stood below, looking up, apparently having just delivered the package.

"Lunch," said Elouardio.

I looked at him hoping he'd elaborate.

"George of the Desert," said Elouardio. "That's the title."

"George of the Desert?"

"Simon Stylites. You know," he said, expecting me to get it.

"I didn't know you painted."

"Only when I can't help it. How about some tea?" he said.

"Sure. What have you got?"

"You like Mogul Black?" he asked, a tiny smile threatening to break out.

"Mogul Black? Never heard of it. Where's it come from?"

"Got it down at the Mogul depot," he said straight-faced. "It's like English breakfast, only with a mogulish touch."

This silliness had a relaxing effect on me.

"Have a seat, Maxfield. You wanted to talk?"

Clouds

I was starting to like this man. No doubt that was why I became more candid. "Mr. Elouardio, do you think it's necessary to be trained in art history and theory, and all that, in order to relate to current art? And I suppose I'm implying, being able to talk intelligently with you..."

"That's a big question Maxfield - two questions, maybe. First, can you talk intelligently? Second, can you talk intelligently about art? Is there a difference? So that's a third question."

"Yes. How about the third one? Or any of the them."

"Look, I don't want to get into that. Knowing the history and the theory can't hurt - if you don't get swept up in it - but that's the problem. People get swept up in it and lose sight of important things. In a way, I suppose you could say I've gotten swept up in it myself."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I've been continuing with my experiment. You could say it's related."

"The project in your head?"

"That's right."

"How's that work, exactly?"

"Well I get to thinking about something, or something just comes to me and - if it's interesting - I take time with it. Entertain it. Invite it in. Explore it. Walk around it or walk around in it. View it from different angles. See what's there. Maybe I rearrange it. Add things. Start seeing differing scenarios. That can take a while, and when it seems to be getting somewhere, I trouble-shoot it."

"What do you mean?"

"I have to think about how to make it. Could I make it? That's one level, then how would it work when people saw it? That's another level."

"But if it's just in your head, why do those steps matter?" I asked.

"Otherwise what is it? To tell you the truth, sometimes I bypass certain problems. Maybe the piece is too difficult to build real-world wise. So then I just move on *as if*. I follow it not knowing how I'd actually make it because following it out a few steps might lead to some interesting things."

Listening to Elouardio, I was quickly lulled into the feeling the ideas being discussed were perfectly normal.

"Somewhere along after those steps, I try the piece out by having an opening. The people come in and I watch how it goes, watch their reactions. Listen in on their conversations."

Again I nodded my head, but involuntarily a new question made its way to the surface. Was I hearing the signs of mental disorder?

"That's amazing. I mean... the way you describe it, it sounds real."

"Mmmhmm," Elouardio responded nodding his head. Then turning his face away and looking out the window, he added. "I don't serve any wine though. No cheese and crackers, either."

I couldn't see his expression and decided to wait.

"No wine?" I finally repeated, feeling a little uneasy again.

He turned toward me with a look on his face that was difficult to read. After a pause, in which he seemed to be weighing some inner question, he continued, "I put a cloud in one of my exhibits, Maxfield. It was an opening at the San Francisco airport, the new international terminal. I'd been up there and liked the space. Thought I'd try some airport art. You know how they like to put artsy stuff in the airport." he said, chuckling to himself.

I nodded.

"Well, the terminal's a big space. Ceiling's about sixty feet high or so and it must be hundreds of feet wide. I put a cloud up over the ticket counters. Beautiful little cloud. It caused a real mess."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, everyone just stopped and gawked. People forgot about getting their tickets. A lot of people thought that maybe the cloud was smoke. Then someone shouted something about terrorists. People got in a panic. I had to make some announcements over the PA system. Took the magic out of it. The administrators were very upset about the whole thing, but it did get a lot of publicity."

"This is all in your head, right?"

"Like a thought experiment, see? After the panic scenario, I ran the opening a different way. Just like the first time, people stopped and looked up amazed. What was it? A cloud? Here inside the building? And this cloud was very well lit. It really had that atmospheric quality. The technical aspects were difficult to handle. I had to spend a good deal of time trying to figure them out and never was sure I really did. But I wanted to have the cloud anyway, so I just went ahead and put it up there exactly how I wanted it to look."

I tried to imagine the cloud he described. "What a great idea!" I said as an image appeared in my mind's eye.

"In the second opening, I added a little voice background. It was like a poem about the atmosphere, simple, just a few words, but enough to tip people off. I saw that I had to do that, had to stop the smoke and terrorist business right away so people could let themselves see the cloud as a cloud. And again there was a buzz of excitement. Everyone was pointing. Seeing a real cloud inside the terminal was completely unexpected. Strangers were talking to each other, but after awhile people started going about their business again. After a while they realized it was just some art stuff that's always getting set up in the airport."

"They just went back to normal, you mean?"

"That's right." Elouardio was looking at me to see how I was taking this all in.

"Yeah, I guess that's how it is," I said, and looked down at the floor for a moment.

Elouardio said nothing for a little while, and I waited in silence.

I think he appreciated this, because he then spoke in a way I felt was more direct.

"I'll tell you what I've been working on lately." He paused for a moment. "Silence," he said simply, and then nodded his head.

"Silence?"

"That's right. For some reason, after the airport show, I started thinking about *The Silence of the Hummers* again, but this time I was thinking about the silence part. You know, the effect of the silence is hard to explain. In that piece, it was a pregnant silence, if you'd paid any attention. I started thinking about silence. What did I understand about it? Not much. Then the idea came to me, What about doing an installation of *silence*?" He stopped, watching my face.

"An installation of silence?...What have you been finding out?" I asked hesitantly.

He nodded. "Good question, Maxfield. Good question." He paused for a moment, and then confided, "I'm still working on it." He paused again, and then added, "It's been interesting; I can tell you that. It's not so easy to install silence. I never would have guessed that. Really, I had no idea. First I thought all I needed was the right space for it. Then I wondered, why would one space be any better than another? So I started trying out different spaces and I ran into some problems I didn't expect." He looked at me.

"Yeah?" I said, tilting my head a little. "Like what?"

"In the world, I could make a space and sound-proof it. It'd just be a matter of doing the work. No problem, really. But I was doing it in my mind, you know. I planned to install the silence *there*. That's where I ran into the problem. No matter what space I set up, none of them could hold the silence for long. I see now that it's a different problem."

"I'm not sure I'm following you," I said.

Elouardio looked at me. His gaze had become abstract. "Try it sometime," he said, and as I sat there not quite knowing what to say, somehow, I knew our conversation was over.

"Listen, Maxfield," he said. "I've got to get back to work now." Sitting there with my cup of tea half gone and grown cold, I felt my investigation had only begun.

"Got to kick you out, Maxfield - sorry - but it was good meeting you. Maybe you can come back sometime and we'll talk a little more."

I was in an odd state as I stood up. This article wasn't going to be so easy to write.

Although Maxwell Maxfield is an untrained artist he was also the science writer for The Secret Alameda, an underground journal published for several years from Alameda California. Perhaps Maxfield's best writing dealt with the Big Bang, "the really big one," as he liked to say. He observed that "At that moment just before the Big Bang happened the entire universe including Wallmarts and Home Depots was so small it could fit not only in the refrigerator in your kitchen, but even in its butter compartment!" For further information contact his former editor who is now editor at works+conversations, <http://www.conversations.org>.



Geoff Fernald

Orchard Two

Low afternoon sun between perfected orchard rows,
Almond to almond interstitial,
Reveals purest iridescent green hallways
Of emergent grass, new grown.
Radiant tongues.



Kathy LaFollett

Domestika

Chicago Cutlery

The pain didn't show itself at first, slicing through the bread, the knife blade found my left pointer finger with ease and finished the job quickly.

At that moment, for a second, my brain registered a "not right" alarm. As in something isn't right with my finger! Raising my left hand up to inspect that oh so not right area, the evidence was clear. Blood, and a gaping small wound clearly defining the area where the Chicago Cutlery had found its mark.

"Damn", my first verbal reaction.

"Whoa, mom", my son's first verbal reaction.

"Honey!" My husband's first verbal reaction, said in a tone of dread but no surprise.

After 6 years of being together, Cali was well aware of my ability to slice and dice myself with sharp kitchen utensils.

And so the tradition continued as I hightailed it into my master bathroom, son in tow, to self-treat the bloody wound. Of course, another trait of my personality was brought to bear at that moment. We had no band-aids.

Why? Simple. I would shop at the local Target, standing in the band-aid aisle, staring at the myriad proffered dressings, deciding what brand and what adhesive would be best to bring home. But ultimately scoffing at the price and walking away from the aisle indignant at spending \$3 proactively gambling on someone needing a band-aid once in while.

And there you have it. I saved \$3 but stood bleeding like a stuck pig in my master bath while my son stood by shaking his head in worry and dismay.

Hurrah! Fate played a part in solving the problem at hand. Earlier that year my husband had surgery that required dressings and tape to re bandage his surgery site. And there, under the sink were 2 boxes of heavy 6 X 6 dressing bandages and ½ inch tape.

Chris took out the boxes and helped with the emergency master bathroom event. We cut the large swaths to size, wrapped my bleeding example of flightiness. And, around that, wrapped the 1/2 inch tape to hold it in place.

I left the bathroom victorious at having bandaged myself without spending the \$3 earlier!

Granted the bandage was the size of 2 fingers, a large lump of taped white mass hanging off the end of my pointer finger, but nonetheless, the injury was covered.

Chris and I went back into the kitchen to help finish preparing the fine meal of steak and restaurant bread which we had ordered out from a local steak joint. It was this very loaf of bread coupled with Cali's favored Chicago Cutlery that has brought you, the reader, to this tale.

Yes, I must admit, I won't spend \$3 on bandages, but by god I'll drop \$40 to eliminate the need to cook! And quite frankly, I think the family appreciates the fact that I do not hold pretense as a cook. Betty Crocker I ain't. It has been rumored and a favorite tale of our family that I make great dinners; spaghetti and chicken. So infamous is my talent at preparing these fine dishes that close friends of my children oft inquire, "What's for dinner? Chicken or spaghetti?"

And yet, I challenge these inquiries with a counter inquiry. "Do you like watching me cut myself? I thought not. Any good cook knows knives are not necessary in preparing chicken and spaghetti dinners!" It wasn't lack of talent at all, but rather self-preservation that kept the LaFollett menu at toothpick's length.

It is the quiet unspoken understanding of family that allows self-preservation. It is the very acts upon that unspoken understanding that feed the laughter and personal familial jokes pervading every Thanksgiving Table in November. And so it is in the LaFollett house.

We have two sets of woodblock kitchen knives. The first set, old as the hills. A bent, dented wobbly no name set that sits proudly to the left of the stove. Proclaiming to all that understand, "I am safe and dull, and a good friend to the matron of this house!"

The second set, spawn of Satan and dangerous to even ponder using, sits safely hidden away in the bottom cabinet to the left of the stove. As if placed in hell's belly, below the kind and forgiving set. A Chicago Cutlery knife set so sharp and lethal, I dare not use it. The unspoken act of keeping the set stowed away, safe from my flighty quick grasp, only drawn out under supervision, validates its hellish roots.

The Cutlery set was a gift from my mother-in-law. A set that when unwrapped by my husband brought great joy and reveling to his heart. Cali, sharp as his new knives, had great uses planned for these knives! Cali, Betty Crocker's male alter ego, would no doubt wield these satanic cutting instruments with great flair as he presided over his many bovine driven grilling events. And so, he sat with great pride admiring the cold, hard steel, while I quietly sat back in my chair thinking, "NO WAY am I touching those!"

I suspect now, that Cali agreed with me telepathically as he looked over to see my resolute unspoken thoughts preside over my facial expression. "NO WAY are you touching these!" he seemed to think back in my direction.

But alas, time passes, care and precaution fade with the passing of days and I arrive home with our preordered steak dinners and fresh loaves of restaurant bread.

I cannot with true belief admit that I chose to use that Cutlery knife. To this day, I believe fate stepped in to remind me of the dangers of sharp instruments in the kitchen. I believe fate mandated I wake up from the fog of forgetfulness.

"Safety First!" it screamed.

We entered the kitchen to find the counter prepared with dishes, napkins, a cutting board and...one shiny stainless steel Chicago Cutlery knife lying dormant on the cutting board. Cali had prepared the kitchen for our arrival from the steak joint.

Giddy with the thought of not cooking, but eating well, I set the bags on the counter, washed my hands and helped unpack the delectable precooked bovine meals. Chris contentedly went about getting drinks, Cali unpacked the food to place on the plates, and I mindlessly laid out the loaves on the cutting board to slice evenly. A surreal Brady Bunch moment preceded fate's message. We three, happily going about the kitchen together, were laughing and discussing the fine points of steak. It was a moment that captured a quiet family's simple needs and pleasures. I don't cook. They get steak. We live happily ever after on a Friday night.

And yet as I, both mother and wife, bathed in the moment of family bliss, quickly grabbed the Chicago Cutlery knife a small voice softly spoke, "PUT THAT DOWN ARE YOU NUTS!"

I ignored the voice with a trite thought in response, "Shut up, Jiminy Cricket, I know what I'm doing."

With plates ringing, glasses filling, laughter, and the perfume of fine steak I didn't have to cook, I made the first slice successfully.

"HA!" I thought to Jiminy Cricket Small Voice, "Told you! NO PROBLEM."

Pride cometh before a fall, it says the Bible. It also comes before a nice slice and dice on my own finger.

"Damn!"

"Whoa, mom!"

"Honey!"

Our daughter lives out of town. I had called her later to tell her this story. Her advice was as sharp and lethal as a Chicago Cutlery knife.

"You really should stay out of the kitchen, mom."

The Fine Art of Nitzing

There's a fine line between housecleaning and nitzing. A grey area only truly known and defined by a 15 year old boy witnessing his mother rifling through dirty laundry, gathering empty

shampoo bottles in the bathtub, and attempting to "put away" paraphernalia that only the 15 year old boy can appraise as valuable.

Yes, it's a grey area rout by fear and trepidation for both the child and the mother.

And yet I persevere. As his age grows so does his disdain toward that grey area. It occurred to me recently as I was trying to decide why he needed to collect empty Sobe bottles, that the older he became the smaller the grey area became. At 15 there is very little room left for the term "housecleaning" and "nitzing" applies to my proximity to his room being less than, say, 30 feet.

"Where are you going?"

This is the question I get from Chris whenever I seem to be walking near his bedroom door. We live in an apartment, larger than most but smaller than a house to be sure. Square footage is premium and it is hard not to look like I may go into his room. His bedroom door is not far from the kitchen.

Although I do not cook, and the Chicago Cutlery keeps me from entering that linoleum-lined gauntlet, I do on occasion go in to feed myself, or do laundry in the laundry closet. Quite frankly, it's hard not to go into that room.

"Where are you going?"

I ignore the question and enter our daughter's bedroom, which is next to Chris'. She isn't living at home right now, and hasn't been for over a year.

This is my sanctuary of nitzing. When held back by other's attitudes, I can easily enter Katie's room and nitz to my heart's content. I can fluff pillows, move furniture, touch things, retouch things, move the furniture back. She's not here; she can't stop me.

The sanctuary provides a small level of satisfaction. Something akin to a half smoked cigarette to a heavy smoker. The problem with this type of nitzing area is once I've nitzed, no one will be changing my nitzing. I have no one living in the room to mess up my work, mandating a new session of nitzing. Basically I'm nitzing through the motions. Not much satisfaction, yet enough to keep me from breaking into Chris' room.

"Where are you going?"

I ignore the question, and head toward the split bathroom that connects to Chris' bedroom while opening across the hall to Katie's bedroom. Why? I consider it special ops. If he allows me to get THAT close to his bedroom, it's just a matter of time before I can hang a hard left through the bathroom and get into true nitzing territory.

I don't consider this covert work. This is unspoken understanding between a son and his mother. He knows I want in, I know he knows, and we both know neither will admit it.

There are only two ways for me to get into the coveted nitzing territory.

First, I can quietly slither my way in by multiple "drivebys". If I walk around over a period of time, Chris loses interest in tracking me. Soon he ignores his internal proximity warning system. I've literally bored him with potential nitzing problems that never panned out.

Or, I can go head first into the fray, stating clearly I need his extra laundry to make a full load for myself. Everyone knows I'm cheap, and he knows I think that a full load costs less money to run than a half load. This second attack is dicey. There are days Chris will see the benefit of allowing me access to avoid doing his own laundry, and there are days he knows I'm going to "snatch and grab" nitz on my way in and out. I'm currently running a 40% success rate with this attack.

This familial practice has taken place for a few years, starting at the tender age of 13. It was his 13th birthday that brought enlightenment on his autonomy. About the time he blew out his 13 birthday candles he also blew out the light of assumed doom.

As the last candle quit, I do believe a thought ran through his mind.

"No. I don't have to take this anymore. And yes, I WILL collect Sobe bottles for the rest of my life!"

"Where are you going?"

Today is his 16th birthday.

"Where are you going?"

I ignore the question.

Through my own version of the 12-step program, I've successfully beaten the need to nitz in his room for months now. But today being his 16th leaves me reminiscent of a time when he never asked me where I was going. I feel at this very moment he almost OWES me one last shot at his room.

"Where are you going?"

"Well," I say. "I was hoping to go into your room and see where you put your new stereo system."

"Oh!" he says with a smile. "Sure, and could you help me with something on my computer while you're in there?"

"Sure" I say.

And we go in, together. He knows that I could potentially nitz, but amazingly, seems not to be intimidated by the threat. I know I could potentially nitz, but amazingly, I don't initiate the threat.

And so the right of passage is completed on his 16th birthday. I stand in his room looking at his birthday gift while he tells me about his computer plans and problems.

Surrounded by Sobe bottles, items of unimaginable value only to a boy, and the knowledge that another corner has been turned in the life of a mother and son.

It is now me that asks the question, "Where are you going?"

Kathy LaFollett resides on the shore of Tampa Bay in Clearwater FL, successfully negotiating life with the help of her Husband and two children. A political activist as well as owner of Visionized.com, she has been writing about the familiar human experience for the last 15 years. She enjoys the solitude of a day at the beach, embraces the challenge of diverse thoughts in a conversation, and the success of making a dinner reservation rather than dinner itself. Her success is measured by the joy found in the eyes of her family. Website: <http://www.visionized.com>



Mick Harrigan

The Moon Asks a Tough Question

Last night I saw the moon and Mars.
In L.A. the sky has too few stars.
Working late I'd stepped out for a glance
Not knowing this was my only chance.

Mars was low and West, the moon quite high.
And truth be told, so was I.
The moon said "Hi de ho" to me.
"Why must you distort your reality?"

I'd had enough; I went back in.
Too late the question below my skin.
I know I want to numb a pain
That lies within my injured brain.

Catch-22, there can be no healing.
Because what's needed is my feeling.
Happiness, sadness, anger, joy or grief,
On grounded feet only, will I earn relief.

In my condition, I can not see
The chaos and mess in front of me.
As the marine fog, a thick grey mire,
Buries the light of the moon and Mars.

Mick Harrigan lives in the Los Angeles area. He is published in a collection called "Seven on a Monday". Please contact the LHLS poetry editor for more information on that volume.



Kitty Johnson

Don't Panic!

My word, this THEATER is awfully CROWDED. Could you scooch just over a little bit? Say, I wonder what would happen if I happened to yell FIRE!!!!!!!!!!

Ooops!

Yes, class, today's topic centers around the trampling hordes of a post-ignition environment.

I'm not sure when the trend towards Big Books About Fires started, or even if it is a trend. But it sure does seem that every month or so a fire book pops up on the bestseller list (complete with chilling photos). Just look at the recent tomes on Peshtigo and the Triangle Shirt Fire.

I first became aware of fire books right after the publication of Stewart O'Nan's *The Circus Fire* (Anchor Books). That book reached the bookstores in early fall 2001, and maybe the pain in the air at that time awakened a certain curiosity about mass destruction. The Circus Fire was on a sunny July day in 1944 in Hartford, Connecticut with an audience of about six thousand under the big top (soaked with kerosene to make it waterproof). Then fate whispered 'now' and flames ate all that canvas and kerosene. 167 people died, about ninety of them children. Obviously it's not easy to write a book like this, but O'Nan hits just the right note of bug-eyed fascination at the awesome horribleness of it all: famous clown Emmett Kelly, still in costume, carrying a bucket of useless water! Trampled toddler bodies unidentified to this very day! And what, alas, we seemed to be getting used to: gorgeous photographs of annihilation.

Reading O'Nan's book made me fancy myself quite the connoisseur of books about fires. I must say, my dear, if you can have only ONE fire book, then make it *Don't Panic: The Psychology of Emergency Egress and Ingress* by Jerome M. Chertkoff and Russell H. Kushigian (Praeger 1999). In the introduction, the authors explain in a fetching academic way that they wanted a book that could be read by the professional fire-onomist as well as John Q. Morbid-Curiosity. And they got what they wanted. Not only is it a doozy of a book, but the title is great advice!

Although the Cincinnati Who concert (with its sixteen thousand marching and bloody feet) gets included, *Don't Panic* is mostly comparisons and contrasts of great American fires of the 20th century, starting with the Iroquois Theatre Fire in 1903. It was Christmas vacation in Chicago! All the schoolchildren went to the Iroquois! The theater was supposed to be fireproof, but the asbestos curtains caught on the aerialists' wire (the show had aerialists, see)! Over 600 perished! Including some aerialists! The dead were piled five and six deep in the doorways of this curiously designed theatre! (Chertkoff and Kushigian are now my new best friends because they include pages and pages of blueprints of these cursed sites.)

You'd think reading about the Iroquois fire would slake my thirst for hideous disaster, but you know what? I don't trust these 1903 (i.e. pre-mass-media) figures. 600 people before 1920 aren't the same as 600 people in 2003; does that make sense? (I mean, I have the same problem with the Bible. Don't you think '40' is just the Hebrew word for 'totally'? Like, for instance, the

Israelites were in the desert for totally years! This was after it rained for totally days and nights, man!)

That's why my favorite fire is the King of Fires, yes, the Cocoanut Grove, 1942, Boston, 492 dead in ten minutes, really dead, photographed dead! This fire was so gruesome that, according to one of the two books on the topic, "hardened Boston copy editors fainted when they saw the police photographs" (hey, where are these photographs! Oh, boohoo for you. What about my needs!) Some photos do turn up in *Life* magazine, including what is the classic big-fire shot: rows of covered bodies on concrete floor. (You can see similar photographs in *The Circus Fire*). *Life* is so horrible: I mean, *Life* magazine is. They have a photograph of a woman's corpse, her skirt charred away to show her burned garters, thus deftly blending cheesecake and apocalypse in the patented media way.

Even so, the Cocoanut Grove fire is the stuff of nightmares. The fire started in its basement annex, The Melody Lounge. Over two hundred people were down there! There was only one exit door! And it led to a LOCKED DOOR! Don't panic! Plus: the lounge was lined with tear-gas-impregnated 'leatherette'!! Wow.

Say [dreamy voice] wouldn't that make a fantasterific pop opera, you know, like "Floyd Collins" or "Nixon in China"? You could call it "Melody Lounge" and have all sorts of Big Band music. But I digress.

There are two books on the Cocoanut Grove fire. The first one, *Holocaust* by Paul Benzaquin (Henry Holt, 1959) is by far the better book Edward Keyes' *Cocoanut Grove* (Atheneum, 1984) doesn't have any photographs, any new information, or even an index! Overall, these two books barely register tepid on the 'great fire' scale, which is actually a shame, because it is a fascinating disaster.

Don't Panic also discusses another great fire with insignificant book coverage, the 1977 Beverly Hills Supper Club fire in Southgate, Kentucky with 165 dead. Oh, Chertikoff and Kushigian really kick out the jams on this disco inferno, and, man, they are pissed. This fire was SO preventable. With a few more marked exits, everybody would have lived, and besides couldn't those 165 Kentuckians have resisted their urge to see John Davidson live! (Well, guys, it is Kentucky, not Montmartre.)

By the way, the *Don't Panic* boys don't discuss one of the turning-point fires of my childhood, the school fire at Our Lady in Angels in Chicago (95 dead), but there is a wonderful book about that disaster, *To Sleep with the Angels: The Story of a Fire* by David Cowan and John Kuenster (Elephant Press, 1996). This fire took place in 1958, yes, the broad-shouldered days of MY schooling, when you could have sixty kids to a class room with wooden walls dry as kindling and absolutely no way to contact the fire department. Don't panic!

Most of these books are out of print, but there are lots of used copies on the Internet, or you just can do what I do, which is use your local inter-library loan. Yeah, the librarians will give you nervous looks, but it's not like *that* hasn't happened before.

However, these books do not merely pander to the morbid imagination; they are also valuable guides to life. Among other things, we learn to:

1. Be circumspect about going to mob-owned nightclubs, or else pay the babysitter in advance.
2. Always know how to get out. (This is such good advice: Going to a mob-owned nightclub? Know how to get out. Thinking about signing a ten-thousand dollar contract for dance lessons? Know how to get out. Maybe you're just getting married? Know how to get out.)
3. Make every moment count. Surprising what spectacles people allow themselves to be charred by. At the Iroquois, Eddie Foy was on stage in drag as *Bluebeard's Wife*. The mellow palm tree sounds of Teddy Alpert's band were playing at the Cocoanut Grove. "Wall, Pappy went to see John Davidson and now he's daid." You never know what nightclub act may be your last.
4. Then, if all else fails and you start sizzling, then do the right thing. If you're going to die (hey, what are the odds of that happening!) then die a hero. Save kittens/puppies/children. Use your soon-to-be-worthless carcass to soften a singed Catholic schoolboy's spinning trip to the concrete, lead blindfolded horses to uncharred grasslands, or just let Grandmaw cut in line on your way to oxygen.

And, above all, don't panic.

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Geoff Fernald

Two-Loon Blessing

Just before dinner seating
we are called quietly to the porch
back far enough avoiding disturbance
we see them calmly
a blessing on us
they float in profile
bills toward each other
though apart .
We six unmoving in this moment
twenty feet from the waters edge
they 3 feet out in the water.
As we whisper their beauty
They are distracted
And turn together
into the lake.

Geoff Fernald's has been writing poetry for 40 years. He works as an engineer and lives in the Los Angeles area: He is published in a collection called "Seven on a Monday". Please contact the LHLS poetry editor for more information on that volume.



Donatella DelBono

It's in Your Head (Part 2)

"it's in your head"
An analysis and guide

Part II

Opening Scene

Since this scene establishes the structure of the film, it has already been discussed in length in Part I. So in fear of redundancy, I'm not going to add much more.

The "Even" Scene: Most prefer the "Kissing" scene

This has been discussed as well, except for one small detail: have you noticed that all four guys are on different levels? The girl kisses Micky first, who can barely be seen because he's sitting so low on the couch (and he's behind a tank of water). Next she kisses Mike who is sitting up a little higher than Micky, in a chair. Then over to Peter on a higher level than Mike, in the barber chair. Finally, she walks up the steps to get to Davy who is standing, though she still has to bend her head down a bit because she's taller than him, which means she is on the highest level of them all. So what does all that mean? There are also different sounds associated with each guy: bubbling water for Micky; chimes for Mike; a squeaking chair for Peter, and harp music for Davy.

Micky is first, but he is at the lowest level. When the girl reacts to his kiss, she turns back to him and gives him a thoughtful, somewhat surprised, and almost saddened look. Mike gets an opposite reaction from her. She looks at him as if he must be joking, though his kiss is very serious, and executed to the best of his ability apparently, she doesn't agree. She turns Pete around in the squeaking chair, kisses him, and turns him back with very little reaction, as if she's saying: "not bad" or "OK". Davy gets no reaction from her at all. She simply grabs her coat to leave; even though during their kiss windows swing open and doves fly by, but that has nothing to do with her, she wasn't impressed. This one is easy because we all know Davy was the heart throb and every teen wanted to be in her place, but in reality he's nothing special. So what's he doing up on that pedestal?

Why does Mike think so highly of himself, while others find him more mediocre? And why does Peter almost disappear without a thought, while Micky gets all the sympathy? If this is the filmmaker's perspective, then this is how the audience thinks of these four people; but that isn't true for Mike and Micky, only Peter and Davy (the least and most popular). If this is Micky dreaming of his place in the foursome then what is he doing on the bottom of the Monkee ladder? He was the lead singer and very popular with the fans. Did he think that little of himself? Was he really that insecure? The fact that he is almost hidden from view (also in a later scene during the song "As We Go Along" he is completely concealed) suggests that there is another side to Micky that no one ever sees, and is only slightly revealed in his dream.

And what does it say about Mike? Not a very flattering picture. In Micky's dream, Mike thinks much more highly of himself than anyone else does. His wind chimed background, is a reference to his Aquarian personality. He thinks of himself as intellectually superior to everyone else around him; but his lesser popularity in the group, and "pain in the ass" troublemaker reputation give him the low status on the Monkee totem poll. Peter could also be a bit of a troublemaker, but he was well liked and a nice person, and Micky thought very highly of him, so he enjoys the higher status even though he was the least popular Monkee. His squeaking chair could be a reference to his voice, which was almost never used for recording lead vocals.

W.A.R. Scene

This scene starts as the concert scene, with the Monkees backstage preparing for a concert. All dressed in pure white, they head down a dark hallway presumably on their way to the stage. Instead we find them emerging into a sports arena (football stadium), where they are the cheerleaders for W.A.R. in front of an enthusiastically roaring crowd. This cuts straight into stock footage of the very real war taking place in Viet Nam, and then dissolves into the next scene: The War Scene:

The real war footage dissolves into Mike in army fatigues, cracking bubbles with his gum (the bubble-gum Monkees in war). Davy can't see because he's too short (how ridiculous for these four very ordinary guys to be put in this situation), so Micky gives him his helmet to stand on. Micky doesn't want to wear it anyway because it's uncomfortable. Peter tells him he could get shot in the head; but Micky argues "why a shot in the head, why not an arm, or leg, or chest?" More attempts at political commentary. How could the military send the boys in to fight with only a helmet to protect their heads? What about the rest of them? Why should Micky wear a helmet to protect himself anyway? He just jumped off a bridge and killed himself: what does he care if he gets hurt? Next, Peter volunteers to get the ammo, and is briefly interrupted by a cameraman snapping his picture

"Hold it, this is for *Life*". The caption on the magazine reads "So War Goes On", despite the concerts, the teenagers, and Hollywood. Peter then finds a football player in the middle of the war. Well, obviously, football is like a game of war, only for entertainment purposes, and the Monkees are entertainers, not soldiers. Mr. One (as Peter calls him) keeps trying to tackle Peter while Peter just wants to know where the ammo is. Mr. One represents the gusto with which Americans will go to war. Americans love a good game a good fight a good war. Peter, along with his friends, is very out of place here. Like many young people of the time, their views on war were considered un-American.

Peter gets the ammo, and Mr. One's football helmet which he gives to Micky, who is thrilled to wear it. But why is it OK for Micky to wear the football helmet, and not the military issue? Because Micky is not a soldier, he is in the entertainment industry like the football player. Entertainment deals with only fake wars, but the real thing is too much for the entertainer, and he has no business being there. I think the whole film is much more of a comment on the entertainment industry than the political scene or at least I hope so. Since these guys were duped by Hollywood, they have every right to complain and criticize it; but when it comes to politics they are out of their league, which is why the film becomes pretentious when they attempt it.

The Concert Scene

This scene starts with the boys running through the dark cave from the previous war scene, to emerge dressed in their pure white costumes back in the dark hall leading to the concert stage. When they reach the stage they look happy to be there and seem to enjoy all the screaming teenagers. The song they sing is "Circle Sky", which takes on a very different meaning when juxtaposed with the double imaging, war footage, and idolized teens edited into the scene. It was shot as a real concert with a paying audience, but it is in no way genuine. The scene is forcefully manipulated with a montage of quick and clever editing, which only distorts the various perspectives into irony. The double imaging is a reflection of this real vs. unreal awareness. They may look like a real band in concert, but the film is contrived to show us, the audience, how Hollywood worked to manufacture the image. This is only a filming of a concert, not the concert itself, and in the translation it becomes something else entirely. It is a commentary on the times, the war, Hollywood, and the Monkee machine that had generated millions of dollars.

This could be nothing more than any other concert scene shown in dozens of films, except for all of the political implications. The scene leading into this is the war scene, and during the song there are images of Vietnam from stock footage. Now, I just can't believe that they are making any kind of comparison from giving a concert to real war, because that would be too ridiculous, and I hope they weren't that shallow to dream up such a thing. So, what does it mean? It could be a comment on their audience: they are quite harsh on the thoughts of their fans. There is a war going on, and all the audience can think about is an escape from the Monkees concert. The teenage girls don't care about the men being killed in Vietnam; they only care about the men singing to them on the stage. But they are nothing but shallow little girls, and you can't help but think about how these four guys were lucky enough to be singing instead of fighting. Like it or not, they do compare what they do for a living with war, that's why the fans become life-threatening to them. Going out to give a concert on stage is like going into battle, at least to them. So what does that say about these guys? While I don't think this is the main point to the scene it is a part of it. I think it represents a shallowness on all sides; the audience, the Monkees, and the entertainment industry for making it all happen. The dummies at the end of the concert scene represent the fabrication of the Monkees. When their fans try to grab the real guys and tear them apart, they only get fakes dummies. The odd part is that the fans don't seem to mind the deception. They proceed to rip their clothes off as if they were still the real things. Fabrication or not, the public gets what they want and what they deserve; they just don't care, so the audience becomes the real dummy.

The TV Scene

We realize here, that we are watching a film being watched on TV: another film within a film. The first thing we hear is, "I've given him a very strong narcotic, he will be out soon". Pretty self explanatory, television = bad. There are various film, TV, news, and ad clips to reinforce the idea of a mind-numbing, passive, and even evil box which the television represents. Have you noticed the 666 on the Ford ad? That wasn't a coincidence. A little side note: interesting how Ronald Reagan is included in the clips.

The channels are clicked through one by one, till we get to Micky in the desert scene.

Desert Scene

This scene is such a mystery. I suspect it has some personal significance to Micky Dolenz, especially if it's his dream to begin with. Perhaps if I were a Monkees fan back in the sixties it would be more obvious. But let's give it a shot anyway. The only thing that is clear here is that Micky is drowning in water while he dreams he is dying of thirst in the desert. The coke machine (representing corporate America, commercialism, Hollywood, and an American icon) isn't giving him what he wants - a coke. Just like Hollywood isn't giving him what he wants. He gets angry at the coke machine for deceiving him. Eventually, he gives up, he says he can't. He can't what? He can't fight the coke machine, the system, Hollywood. A voice says, "pathetic". The voice in his head is his own voice his conscience. He calls himself "pathetic" because he is being weak, or has been weak; and now he feels guilt for not fighting Hollywood. He fights with his own conscience by telling the voice to "shut up". When the voice goes away, he becomes deaf. Then a second voice says twice, "Quiet, isn't it, George Michael Dolenz." This is what makes me think it is something personal. Maybe something to do with his name. Why does he hear the voice say his full name twice, while he is deaf? His conscience has left him because he was weak and the second voice rubs in the guilt. Where is all this guilt coming from? What did he do, or not do?

Next, a man on horseback rides up to him and says, "Pssst", something you say to someone when you want to get their attention. Then an Italian tank enters the scene. An Italian man emerges from the tank and asks Micky if he is American. Micky says yes, and the man surrenders to him. I could never understand why they had to be Italian. I always thought it would be funnier if they were French - an old joke, because the French aren't known for their battle skills, they would surrender without a second thought. Then I discovered that Micky is half Italian, so French wouldn't make any sense, and that's why it must be something personal. But if you read the articles and promotions from the sixties for the TV show, Micky usually claims to be American Indian, not Italian.

Is that it? Did corporate Hollywood downplay his Italian roots to make him look more American and less ethnic? I've also read that they changed Peter's age to make Mike look like the eldest of the four. Why would they go to so much trouble for such small details? Did it really make that much difference in their image? If this is true, then the scene suggests that Micky is sorry he let that deception happen, and he reclaims his Italian roots by blowing up the coke machine (corporate Hollywood) with the Italian tank. Now that he has righted the wrong, his guilt is relieved, and he smiles with satisfaction though he still doesn't get his coke. His smiling face fades into the next scene, where that smile takes on a different meaning.

The Harem Scene

This is another pretty obvious scene, and was discussed in part I, but here are a few more details. Sex, drugs, and rock & roll, set to "Can You Dig It?" These must have been the benefits they reaped just for being the Monkees. At least part of the time their lives must have seemed like living in a harem. Side note: Micky gets hit in the face with one of the girls' veils.

This scene ends with Micky's hand holding the pipe, fading into the next scene with Teri Garr's bleeding finger at Micky's mouth.

The Western Scene

How convenient that this scene is placed so closely to the desert scene; since I believe it is closely related. The only thing that separates them is the harem scene, which begins and ends with Micky. Here he declares he "doesn't want to do this anymore" because it's all fake; nothing is real. Is this scene as straightforward as that, or is there something more here? Micky doesn't see any need to help Miss Garr because she's just acting, it isn't real. Yet he leaves her to go over and help Mike with the fake arrows. Why? "Quick, suck on it, before the venom reaches my heart," she says to Micky, referring to her finger. Mike responds, "What heart?" Mike and Teri try to get through the scene even though Micky is being uncooperative. Meanwhile, there are savage Indians all around trying to kill them, which they pretty much ignore. Micky seems to accept Mike as more "real" than Teri, even though he has fake arrows sticking in him. Is it because he knows Mike and trusts him more? Teri is an outsider here and less trustworthy; since she is an actress hired by the enemy: that's why she has no heart. Whereas Mike is in the same boat as Micky. Furthermore, if Micky sucks the blood of the enemy then he becomes one of them. He looks like he may be tempted, but decides otherwise. Micky is constantly being pulled in opposite directions throughout the film. He always has a decision to make: should he go along with the machine, or should he stick by his friends, and personal morals?

The scene is also somewhat of a satire of a "western film genre", but it really isn't much of a satire; and because of its placement near the desert scene, I think it may be a continuation of that theme. Why else would they choose Indians to be fake? Coincidence? If so, then someone else should have done this scene other than Micky. He certainly had enough scenes to do, why put him in this one too? That's why I think there is something more than just the obvious going on. There is another ethnic group here; which just happens to be related to Micky like the Italians in the desert scene. Only here they are fighting, not surrendering. The general theme is that everything is fake. So it suggests that Micky's Indian roots are either faked or maybe exaggerated. It's pretty hard to believe that they changed such details to project a certain image.

If all this is true, then it's no wonder that these guys were so pissed off: that's an outrage! It's one thing to pretend you're playing instruments as a television band, but quite another if you're asked to change your "real" personal identity for the sake of marketing a TV show! That certainly blurs the line between fantasy and reality, which just happens to be the main theme of the entire film.

Micky storms off the set through the backdrop and onto the stage lot, followed by a confused Mike. They walk to find Davy, who is faking the violin on an old fashioned street scene, and take him along with them to the next scene; where they have their first encounter with Lord High n' Low, who talks about making millions through products. The boys walk away from him through the lot to the next scene, where everyone is given an elaborate warning that "they're" coming.

The Café Scene

Once they arrive at the café, the place clears out fast because they "don't want to be around these stinking kids". The crowd here is older, or hipper, not like the audience in the concert scene, so their reaction is very different. They represent the "establishment", the critics, and in general, everyone else who didn't like the Monkees. The waitress is very hostile toward them, telling Davy to "order some talent". But the scene is a bit more straightforward than the previous scenes. Peter is sitting with a melting ice cream cone that he can't bring himself to throw away because of the starving people in China: we've all heard that one before. The other three order nonsense food that they would never eat, like typical, wasteful Americans. Only Peter cares about the starving Chinese, but it's such a silly saying meant to make children eat all their veggies. So, it represents a kind of futility in the very mention of the starving Chinese. To look at this in any real political context though, makes it seem too pretentious because after all we're talking about the Monkees here; and the political realm is a place where these guys have no business being, especially since they all managed to stay out of the war. Which brings me to...

The Boxing Scene

Much of this scene is discussed in Part I, now here are the details. The obvious point to this scene is that petite Davy is trying to be a boxing champ. Unfortunately for him he's only taking punches to his face. This is nothing more than irony. The mystery to this scene is: what is the significance of everyone being the "dummy"? Davy is getting his million-dollar face badly damaged, but refuses to stay down. Micky keeps telling him to stay down and Mike says, "he'd better, the money says so" - no mystery there. Then, a very studious looking Micky, (wearing glasses), calls Davy a dummy because he won't stay down; and a very scary Mike yells at Micky that he is the dummy. Micky gets very upset at this and insists he's not the dummy Davy is. Micky then knocks everyone out with one punch each, and Peter appears in a cloud of mist. He tells Micky that he isn't the dummy because Peter is, he's always the dummy. What in the world is that all about?! Everyone becomes the dummy except Mike; apparently no one thinks Mike is stupid. But Micky thinks Davy is, and Mike thinks Micky is, and everyone thinks Peter is though Micky thinks of himself as being quite smart, that's why he's wearing those glasses. I think the glasses are the clue here. Why else would they be so prominent? He even takes them off briefly and puts them back on. Peter doesn't seem to really be with them at all. He is somewhere else, probably in Micky's imagination. If Mike really thinks that Micky isn't very bright, and Micky is upset by that, then he imagines Peter telling him he isn't the dummy, because Peter is (at least on TV) and that makes him feel better. If this is Micky's dream, then Micky may think Davy is a dummy because Davy doesn't question Hollywood. Davy does what he is told. This is what he tells Annette, and the reason he has to fight. Mike may have never told Micky what he thinks of him, but this could be Micky's perception of what Mike thinks of him; which could be why Mike scares him in the first place. If Micky fancies himself some kind of intellectual, but Mike doesn't agree, then that would be quite upsetting to Micky. But why is this happening in Davy's scene? Is it simply a segue into Peter's scene, or is it because this is Micky's dream, or both?

Donatella DelBono is a Monkees' fan, but otherwise a mystery.



Mick Harrigan

These Poets

I can't begin to tell you all
What you all means to me
You all is a group of guys
Who all write poetry.

We have this ill in common.
We meet most Monday nights.
We should be watching football,
But you should see our fights.

We play a very different game
With paper and with tense.
We wrestle with reason, wit and rhyme.
To charge our words with sense.

We bring our fragile creations in
And read the words from in our head.
Then we hack and slash and tear them up;
Until we're sure they're dead.

It is a most brutal of sports.
I've seen these grown men cry.
But these words come from within our hearts,
And so, they will not die.

We struggle to find some meaning.
We struggle with onomatopoeia.
We struggle with homophobia,
Or words of a Karmann Ghia.

I now know how the round peg feels,
When it finds the same round hole.
I don't like to shout this out.
It's an action of the soul.

I don't know much of words and rhymes.
And less, the wisdom of a tree.
But these brutal poets, somehow some way,
Coax a better poem out of me.



Ginger Mayerson

Naked Flying Babes

Pibgorn, by Brooke McEldowney, is probably the best illustration of the power and freedom a webcomic offers a good artist. It's got sex, violence, religion, the supernatural, pin-ups, naked flying babes, sci-fi, long and complex story arcs, and, lately, a Noir voice in the narration. It's drawn by a well established, truly talented artist who simply wanted to explore a few ideas without worrying about what an editor of a family newspaper thinks. And does McEldowney ever explore in minute, wisecracking detail and luscious, living color.

I can't imagine what a traditional newspaper editor would think of this strip. It's almost as if Antonio Vargas ended up in a broom closet with Maxfield Parrish and Mae West backstage during a symposium on the sexy parts of that wacky last gospel that might or might not be by a John, all of which is then described by Jane Austin and Saint Francis of Assisi to a Star Trek convention during a continuous screening of *The Maltese Falcon*. Dare I say *Pibgorn* is the product of 3,000 years of western civilization? No, I daren't, because it's much cooler than that.

The strip is named after the rebellious woodland fairy, Pibgorn (which is an ancient Welsh wind instrument), who bolts from her job of carrying moonbeams and dewdrops or whatever woodland fairies do for a living and takes up with, Geoff, a middle-aged choir director and his girlfriend, Drusilla, who turns out to be a succubus (more on her later). Because of this or in spite of it, *Pibgorn* is one of the most successful comics online at United Media. It is a web only comic and, like many webcomics, has a large following. The creator, Brooke McEldowney, does not bother with the cult of personality that lesser and immature webcomic creators indulge in. He needn't bother with Live Journal or other such fan managing devices because his work stands on its own merits and needs no apologies.

Born in Charleston, West Virginia, Mr. McEldowney grew up in Florida where he drew pictures and made music almost non-stop. While studying viola at New York City's Juilliard School, he honed his figure drawing chops the way Degas did, by drawing the dancers in their paces at the American School of Ballet Theater. He graduated with a bachelor's and a master's degree in music from Juilliard and a mastery in rending the human form with grace and power. After graduation, McEldowney lived in Central Europe and worked as a professional violist, music critic and cartoonist. That he could succeed in all four areas is an argument for a better allocation of talent in the world, but no one said life was fair, did they?

Pibgorn is full of tropes in combinations and permutations. In an early story line, Drusilla, the succubus character, must venture into a Hell that is now hostile to her to rescue the woodland fairy, Pibgorn. This has a definite Orpheus and Eurydice vibe to it. But with a happy ending, of sorts: when Dru climbs out of Hell after a, well, hellish experience you don't see Pibgorn with her. It's in the next panel that Pib (in her 9-inch fairy mode) crawls out of the unconscious Dru's mouth. There is a vague reference here to Saturn swallowing his children and later being forced to disgorge them. Getting Saturn in a three way with Orpheus and Eurydice is no mean feat and my hat is certainly off to McEldowney. Whether this is intentional or not, this kind of depth and breadth of storytelling is going on all the time in *Pibgorn*. Tugging at the unconscious or

flashing the reader with archetypes is not unusual. How many readers delve into what's behind the storyline is unknown, but it certainly keeps them reading. There is a comfortable level of "you know this, you know us" in *Pibgorn*. It's possible to be in on the joke, even if you're not sure what the joke is, you're still in on it.

In addition to mining the collective unconscious, *Pibgorn* owes some of its success to the fans of Mr. McEldowney's *9 Chickweed Lane* who followed the link on that page to the new comic.

I liked the drawing in *9 Chickweed Lane* well enough that I started reading *Pibgorn* on a regular basis. Because, like most readable media, webcomics are received in solitude, I figured I was one of a very small cognoscenti. Unlike other comics, webcomics are for solitary readers. If you read a strip in the newspaper, you know there's got to be other readers, if you buy a comic book in a comic shop, you see the other patrons (whether they're reading the same stuff is moot), if you order a book on line, you know there's someone filling the order on the other end. And because *Pibgorn* updates at 9:30PM in Los Angeles, there is the added factor that my neighborhood is relatively quiet at that hour, making it an even more intimate encounter, thus causing me to think I was the only one who knew about *Pibgorn*. It turns out I was the only one in my apartment who knew about *Pibgorn* and I live alone. The larger picture reveals that *Pibgorn* is something of a smash hit insofar as that can be applied to a webcomic. According to Debra Strougo, Associate Marketing Manager of United Media, ten thousand subscribers have *Pibgorn* emailed to them. She had no figures on how many unique visits the webpage receives, but ten thousand email subs is impressive enough for me.

The payoff for patience and loyalty to a webcomic varies with the skill and imagination of the creator. McEldowney has a consistent, polished style and a wide ranging imagination, unlike many of the younger webcomic creators, based on actually having lived. Yes, he probably watched a lot of TV - few escape from it - but he tells his stories from a much deeper and broader experience. He is also a master of color, composition and life drawing. His technique is so strong that, as stylized as his characters are - often graceful and elegant in the extreme - they are always recognizably human (or humanoid, as they say in Star Trek).

So, at first look, one wonders what hell is going on in *Pibgorn*. Yes, these are naked flying babes in body paint and the blonde one has gossamer wings. Just let that sink in for a moment. Then you learn that the curvaceous brunette is an omnipotent succubus and the pert blond with wings is a woodland fairy. Still with me? Then you find out they're both in love with a nerdy-looking and repressed choir director named Geoff. And the world might or might not be ending, but first the naked flying babes must time travel to rehabilitate a poltergeist from a vampire in Regency England. And now our trio is working in a nightclub in the big bad city and being stalked by a mysterious rifle-toting yegg with a Film Noir voice-over. Confused? Well, stick around, which is easy if you like this strip - all will be made clear eventually.

McEldowney has said that he's "...just white-knuckling it with the muse" in *Pibgorn*. If so, then this is a very organized and far-sighted muse. Of the reasons for pitching this strip to United Media as a web only comic, McEldowney wanted to explore complex story lines and characters. Convincing an editor of a family newspaper to run a strip with a sexy succubus and the occasional gory episode would have been impossible or, if not, would have tamed the strip beyond the artist's conception. This is hardly an X-rated strip, but there are plenty of things in it

I wouldn't want to try to explain to anyone under, oh, thirty. Or to anyone with a short attention span.

The strip recently finished a story arc that ran from mid-January to early August and was so complex, the creator finally put a "Story so far" crib sheet up for the new readers. I'm sure he was getting a slew of emails asking why Nosferatu and naked flying babes were sharing the landscape with Mr. Darcy and Miss Bennet.

It is a shame that United Media only keeps 30 days of strips in their archives. I really think they should make an exception for *Pibgorn*, because the story is building a world of its own and being able to read from the beginning would be very helpful, if not essential, to fully enjoying the strip. There are rumors of a full color book, which would be a lovely thing, and it would certainly be a bestseller in this apartment.

The newest story arc has definite Film Noir overtones in beautiful color. Drusilla the succubus has just been shot three times with supernatural bullets that caused her to immolate like lighter fluid-soaked piñata at a flamethrower test. No telling where this story will end up, but thus far the action, the dialogue, the coloring, and the costumes, or lack of them, are very promising. So, as far as your correspondent is concerned, there is something to look forward to.

"Pibgorn" can be found at <http://www.unitedmedia.com/comics/pibgorn/>

Ginger Mayerson is Editor in Chief of J LHLS and a comics - including webcomics - freak, among other things. Her essay on Molly Kiely appeared in the February 2004 issue of Sequential Tart. The Pibgorn essay is part of her "Whither Webcomics?" monograph at <http://hackenbush.org/webcomics/>.



Ginger Mayerson

An Interview with Brooke McEldowney

Creator of "9 Chickweed Lane" and "Pibgorn", cartoonist Brooke McEldowney very kindly gave Ginger Mayerson the interview below in late July 2003. At the moment, "Hallmarks of Felinity", a collection of "9 Chickwood Lane" strips about the cat, Solange, is the only book of 9 Chickwood Lane strips available. It is dearly hoped by this editor that someday there will a larger book of strips with all the "9 Chickwood Lane" characters and an eye-popping, wrist-breaking, full-color book of the "Pibgorn" strips. Ah! Someday! There is more information about Mr. McEldowney at "About the Author" on UnitedMedia.com This interview was conducted in the Fall of 2003.

Ginger Mayerson: As an artist, are you self taught or did you go to art school or a little of both? What do you consider your main positive and negative influences in your development as an artist and becoming a syndicated cartoonist?

Brooke McEldowney: I taught myself to draw, and I studied art in college (although the people who taught me were far more proficient at being art gas bags than artists). My most positive influences were, and are, the people whose work just knocks me down when I look at it: Holbein, Sargent, (this list is not awfully comprehensive; it's off the top of my head) Ronald Searle, Gerald Scarfe, Pat Brady (Rose Is Rose); these are the people who jump immediately to mind. The negative influences were the aforementioned gas bags.

GM: *9 Chickweed Lane* became syndicated in 1993, but when, where and how did the idea for this household of three female generations germinate?

BM: It germinated from ideas and characters in other strip ideas that didn't get so far. Edda has a previous existence as a magical, medieval lutenist named Luda. Another aspect of Luda now exists in *Pibgorn* (the strip and the character).

GM: Musically *9 Chickweed Lane* amuses me very much. Unless I've not noticed, Edda's piano repertoire seems to consist mainly of works from the Classical period. Are you ever going to let her play anything from the Impressionists to the present? If so, what would a short list of those works be?

BM: Actually, Edda has been glimpsed performing Bach, Mozart, Beethoven (I think), Chopin, Debussy, Ravel, and Rachmaninoff. Probably others have been alluded to, but I don't recall them at the moment.

GM: What are you doing in music these days?

BM: Chamber music for viola and piano, mostly. I don't have time to go out and perform, but I'd like to.

GM: Edda and Juliet are drop dead gorgeous. Are there any particular artists you look to for your drawings of women?

BM: No. I used to like to draw dancers from the School of American Ballet, back when I was a student at Juilliard, which was when the SAB had its studios in the Juilliard Building. Ballet dancers provide plenty of life-class opportunities.

GM: I'm always glad to see independent women in the spotlight, but why are there no couples, happy or otherwise, in the strip?

BM: I haven't had occasion to create stories or gags on couples, other than those that briefly form within the strip (Juliette and Elliott, Edda and Amos, Gran and Thorax). This is an intuitive matter. One's fancies go where they want, not where I tell them to go.

GM: Do you have any long range plans for these characters, such as graduating from high school, getting married, having children, becoming college presidents, or will the strip pretty much stay in its fixed time, with minor adjustments?

BM: I never have long-range plans. I know where the characters will go in the future outside of the strip, but those are matters that will probably never be examined in print. They all age, but very slowly, and upon whim.

GM: Are there any strips or cartoonists that you read purely for your own pleasure? If so, what is attractive to you in those strips or art?

BM: I read anything Pat Brady draws and writes. His art is free, flying, and full of fantasy. He's wonderful with perspective as well. I never tire of his work.

GM: Now, about *Pibgorn*. First, where did that name come from and what was/were the inspiration(s) for the strip?

BM: The pibgorn is an ancient Welsh instrument formed of a pipe, two sections of cow horn, and a single reed. It has a very rough, rustic sound. I named my character Pibgorn, however, just because it sounded like a good name. She appealed to me as a character after a long time percolating in my thoughts. I can't account for her lineage much more than that.

GM: How long has the strip, which is a webcomic, been running?

BM: *Pibgorn* has been available over the glowing screen, and in its present state, since March 11, 2002.

GM: You once mentioned that one of the reasons for going web-only with *Pibgorn* was that you'd never be able to get a succubus into syndication. I don't doubt it, but were there other reasons you went web-only with this strip?

BM: Mainly I just wanted to be free to draw and write as I wished without worrying over how features editors might react. My main wish is to see *Pibgorn* turn into a book.

GM: One of the things I'm enjoying is the long, complex story arc. Are you getting raves from the fans for that or are people confused?

BM: I get all sorts of reactions. People love it intensely, people consider it violent and evil, people don't get it at all. However, I draw it for myself only. I don't care what anybody thinks of it, and it is a joy to immerse myself in it without having to look over my shoulder for audience approval. All that said, I am told by my syndicate, which very kindly posts *Pibgorn* online daily, that it has gathered an enormous following.

GM: Drusilla's rescue of Pibgorn from hell had definite Orpheus overtones for me, was that deliberate? And was the muted eroticism of Dru swallowing her also deliberate or just one of those ideas that comes over a cartoonist now and then?

BM: There was nothing representative or deliberate in that particular sequence of *Pibgorn*. I just wrote and drew as the story rushed to meet its deadline. I never thought there was anything erotic about it. I still don't.

GM: You quote and draw from many sources in *Pibgorn* - biblical, classical, modern - I know I miss quite a few, is this planned out or are you just following the muse where she takes you?

BM: I'm just white-knuckling it with the muse.

GM: Part of the visual pleasure of the strip is simply looking at Dru and Pib (and lately the choir director guy, Geoff, in the alt universe [love those little reading glasses and muscles]), are there any artists or representations that inspired these two very individual females and would you consider them pin-ups?

BM: I know other people consider them pin-ups. They're just my characters, as far as I'm concerned, and mostly aspects of myself.

GM: The contrast between Dru and Pib is well defined: blond, innocent, almost unsexed, woodland fairy vs. raven haired, sexy, vixen, often cruel, succubus - I suppose that's how it is with succubae -is there an underlying message about sex and seduction in that, other than that blonds don't always have more fun?

BM: I just thought the two of them, being very different, would be particularly interesting, especially when Dru, despite her ability to seduce anyone and everyone, wishes only for Geoff to love her as she loves him, totally free of inducement.

GM: Because of the complex plot, I'd really like to have all the strips in a book. Are there any plans in the works for this?

BM: It is, as I mentioned before, my one true wish, to see *Pibgorn* between book covers. We're working on it.

GM: Do you color the strips or do you have an assistant or an outsource for it? The color in *Pibgorn*, and "9 Chickwood Lane" on Sundays, is lovely.

BM: I color everything (except the dailies of Chickweed, which, I am told, appear in some papers in color). I love seeing what I can do to evoke the progress of a story, or even a moment, with color.

GM: How long do you think you'll be drawing *Pibgorn*?

BM: As long as I possibly can. I have to admit, drawing it concurrently with Chickweed is pretty wearing at times. But I'll be at it til the end, I think.

GM: And one last question; who's sexier? Pib or Dru? Or Geoff?

BM: I guess, as far as blatant seductiveness is concerned, Drusilla wins hands down. It is, after all, her profession. Pib is alluring in her own, unaware fashion, which must gall Dru at times. Together they make a very complex team. Don't you think?

GM: Yes, very. Thank you.

BM: You are welcome.

Ginger Mayerson is an editor for the Journal of the Lincoln Heights Literary Society. This interview was conducted in the Fall of 2003 in conjunction with the essay above.

