

## Nostrum Speaks Out on Teletubby Issue

As a special celebration of current events (Easter for Christians, Passover for Jews, Id al-Adha for Muslims, DST for pagans, Dismissal of PCB case for FOBs, Dow > 9000 for Capitalists, and the election of Mary Bono to carry on her husband's political legacy for Californians -- that should include just about everyone except Leo DiCaprio fans), Nostrum is publishing two -- 2 Count "em 2 -- new episodes this week at

<http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/6298/index.html>

We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression brought on by a visit to the local mall last weekend. After being sucked into both a Disney and a Warner Bros store, the lad began bemoaning the lack of Nostrum merchandise available to the general consumer. According to the Mite, there would be a big market out there among our true fans, as well as those who would just like to look like our true fans. Nostrum Fan Wannabes, I guess. In addition to the obvious goods -- Nostrum hats, Nostrum tee shirts, Nostrum sweat shirts, a line of Nostrum toddler items like sleepers and training pants, a complete range of Nostrum lingerie (nicknamed "Nostrumite's Secret") and various specific items like Nostrum coveralls for farmers and Nostrum hardhats for construction workers, we could also sell character-oriented merchandise like Lisa Torte "Narrative Isn't" coffee mugs and our own brand of Seth B. Obomash Potato Chips ("They're better than Lays") and Mr. Lo Pat wheelchair batteries and Cartier Diamond sports car replicas and Camelia Maru "Girl Detective" Kits. We could have videos of the British series on which Nostrum is based (of course, the series doesn't exist, but we need something to appeal to the PBS set), we could have original cast albums (we're thinking of releasing the Round Robinski version of "New York, New York" as a single prior to its publication in Nostrum in a few weeks), and, of course, a line of books based on the series (Nostrum: The Novelization). We'd also sell forensics products like Nostrum flow pads and Nostrum pens and Nostrum timers, and we'd stock relevant books like "101 Monologues for Confused Teenagers" and "The Dummy's Guide to Locke" and "Chicken Soup for Fast Talkers." More than anything, we'd sell countless "Welcome to the Bahamas" buttons to Objectivists from Lexington who are tiring of their "Who is John Galt?" materiel.

The Mite is pretty enthused about all this. If you're interested in obtaining a merchandising license, you can contact him directly (nostrumite@cloudcuckooland.com will probably reach him just fine).

Jules

## Nostrum Loses Pulitzer Prize. Again.

The latest episode of the only fiction we know of that regularly addresses high school forensics (which, we understand, was Leo Tolstoy's second choice right after the Napoleonic Wars), is now available at <http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/6298/index.html>

We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression because the Pullet Suprises were announced yesterday and, once again, Nostrum was not on the list. Like Philip Roth really needs another award, the old reprobate. I'm sure Claire Bloom would be much happier if the Mite and I were to take the journalistic tin. I wonder if she's one of the judges? Speaking of judges and lists that Nostrum isn't on, the Mite is also upset that Kenneth Starr's subpoenas to determine Monica Lewinsky's favorite reading does not include the possibility that right now she is stretched out on the chaise longue with a box of Godivas and the latest episode of Nostrum on her laptop. Starr is definitely looking in the wrong direction if you ask us. We know that Nostrum is primo reading material at the White House, and we're pretty sure that WJC uses it as bait to attract the babes in the first place. And speaking of looking in the wrong direction, the Mite is especially depressed over some recent correspondence with our favorite LDer from Collegiate (for those of you who don't know the school, it's like Dawson's Creek without the girls) who has suggested that neither I nor the Mite actually exist. His suspicion is that the M and I are, in fact, a couple of old debate coaches! The Mite, whose secret identity is in fact Bruce Wayne, was appalled at the idea. Of all the people he doesn't want to be, old coaches are easily number three (right behind old pederasts and Republicans). We here at the Nostrum Empiricists League are beginning to wonder if Collegiate actually exists...

We live a complex and rewarding backchannel life.

Jules (aka Clark Kent)

## **The Other Medium is the Message**

It has come to our attention that there are people out there that 1) are not reading these letters, and 2) are reading these letters but not reading Nostrum. If you fall into the first category, and are therefore not reading this, but instead erase all JulieCBS messages from your mailbox without even opening them, we can only say, Je regrette rien, which is absolutely meaningless in this context, but since you're not reading this anyhow, so what? If you fall into the second category, and read these letters but don't partake of their raison d'être, then you are just like --

But words fail us. Reading these letters without reading Nostrum is like... what? The Nostrum Analogy Institute (our slogan is, "Try Us. We're Incomparable!") is at a loss. Like reading the back of a cereal box without scarfing down the Cocoa Puffs? Sticking your thumb into the bottom of the chocolates to determine which are the cherry cordials and which the nougats and then carefully putting the mortally wounded bonbon back into its little black pantaloons? Going into a Dunkin' Donuts and licking off the white sugar but then putting the little dough rocket back on the shelf? None of these actually fit the bill, obviously. But we know that you're out there, greedily reading these letters and occasionally playing them backwards to find references to the devil, we even get letters from some of you, including one of you who is a virtual legend and whose life you claim we have changed (not just your life, your universe!), but we know that when you face the mountain that is our true oeuvre, you shiver and shake and run screaming from your microprocessors.

We are not amused. Is it any wonder that we almost don't make it every week? Is it any wonder that the Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression? Is it any wonder that the three remaining people who are truly saintly know that since this is Wednesday now is the time to consult

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/index.html>

The only thing left to cheer us up is the knowledge that even Bill Gates can't get Windows 98 to run correctly. And by the way, if anyone has an extra room available in Kentucky, would you please keep it to yourself?

Jules

Let's get this over with.

Nostrum.

Read it.

<http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/6298/index.html>

Did we almost not make it this week? Of course.

Is the Nostrumite in a state of permanent depression? Of course.

Is Francois Lyotard dead? Of course.

We get shivers just thinking about it. The Mite was pretty happy when the week began, especially after learning about the crying baby contests in Japan, where the screaming contestants are held in the firm grips of Sumo wrestlers. Such occurrences make you realize that there really is more than one culture in the world, and somewhere out there, there are still some people who haven't o.d.'d on "Bay Watch." The Mite is, in fact, quite the Sumo fan, and never misses a tournament on ESPN2, the home of Sumo in America. Then again, the Mite never misses a dirt-bike race either, so maybe he's not the best one to consult about these things.

But anyhow, Lyotard dead? Talk about your postmodern conditions! We were not aware until we read his obituary that the good monsieur was teaching at Emory, but maybe that explains the mysterious seven hour wait between LD rounds two years ago (and that was the tournament that was called on this listserver exemplary, which may give you some idea of the standards to which we all adhere in tournament management). If the hermeneutics of judging are themselves judged, and knowledge of the round is subjected to the postmodern condition which is the discontinuous reference of the knower, and the signifier of the value premise is in fact the neumon of neumons (or Newman, as the old Kantian construct is referred to on Seinfeld), no wonder everyone sits around playing spades all day!

Why are we doing this?

Jules

Many weeks ago Nostrum presented the Babelfish translator, printing an episode in our impeccable if idiomatic English that had been scrupulously evaluated by our Nostrum Copyediting Bureau, then printing Babelfish's French translation, then printing Babelfish's English translation of the French translation. Our linguistic division is still chuckling over the results. We did, of course, acknowledge Mark Twain's similar (if human) exercise with the French version of "Jumping Frog." We were therefore disappointed last week when the New York Times performed a similar exercise without acknowledging Nostrum. All the news that's fit to print, indeed. Next thing you know, they'll be running entire Nostrum episodes on the Op-Ed page and claiming they've been written by Frank Rich. The nerve of these people!

Anyhow, we almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over hearing one too many Viagra jokes, and he has sworn a solemn vow that no one in the Nostrum universe will ever fall prey to such base commonality (although I did notice his calling his broker to increase his position in Pfizer). On a brighter note, as the school year comes to its usual end, we've decided to revise our pages somewhat. The thing is, as people go off to college (some of you are going off to college, aren't you?), you may wish to keep up with the adventures of the Nostrumians, but you may not wish to maintain subscriptions to the LD listserver (except for Pete-Eye the Eli, who obviously is only in it for the filled mailbox). The problem with this is that you will no longer get these particular messages from me and the Mite (which we understand are received by some as the voice of the deity, only with spell-checking, while others perceive them as something akin to The Portable Ayn Rand). To prevent this possibility, we have created the Nostrum Communication Center at the web site's current.html location, and added a new page for the weekly episode, creatively titled episode.html (we've got a million of these snappy solutions to everyday problems). Those of you who know how to do so and have any interest in this whatsoever might wish to adjust your browsers. Those of you who don't know how to do so should ask your little brother for some Netscape training. Those of you who have no interest in this whatsoever shouldn't still be reading this.

Jules

**Nostrum Makes Unrefusable Offer:**

Here's the deal. You could sit at the edge of your chair every Wednesday, impatiently waiting for this piece of e-mail to arrive in your mailbox, telling you that the latest episode of Nostrum is now available at

<http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/6298/index.com>

or, you could subscribe to our brand new service, and put yourself on the cutting edge of Nostrumia. Yes, folks, subscriptions to Nostrum are now available at no cost to you, or, for that matter, anyone. Simply send an e-mail to us at [nostrum@geocities.com](mailto:nostrum@geocities.com) and request a subscription, and henceforth, when you're sitting at the edge of your chair every Wednesday, you will be receiving not merely empty blather but also the latest episode of Nostrum as an html attachment, ready to pop into your favorite browser or toaster oven, with absolutely no assembly required, so easy a child of three could do it (but try to find the three that have a child, if you know what we mean). To cancel your subscription... well, there's got to be some way to cancel your subscription, but why you would want to is beyond us.

Anyhow, we almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over India testing the bomb, which he feels is a pathetic attempt by the subcontinent to grab some headlines away from the final episode of Seinfeld. Could they have come up with anything any smaller minded, he wonders. What are they going to do when The Simpsons finally goes to that residuals heaven in the sky? Declare war on the Maldives? The problem is, once India starts testing, all the other subcontinents are going to want to start testing too, and the next thing you know, you'll never be able to find a seat on the subway, much less a decent baguette under ten dollars. Not that the lad is inclined to trivialize geopolitics, mind you, although he does refuse to read any road signs whatsoever until a certain company renames itself Myanmar Shave. But he is capable of seeing connections that others either miss or dismiss. In fact, he's the original consilient, or at least that's the way he's been referring to himself lately. (Whatever that means; something to do with thinking ants, I think. What do I know? I'm just the messenger.)

Jules

This week's episode of Nostrum, concerning the two Don Procenios' journey to their final rest (or should that be two Dons Procenio's?) is now up and running at

<http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/6298/index.html>

Subscriptions to Nostrum remain available: send an e-mail to us at [nostrum@geocities.com](mailto:nostrum@geocities.com) and simply ask for it. Could it get any easier?

Anyway, we almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the passing of Francis Albert. You should see the lad's music collection. 14 Sinatra CDs ("with none of that Reprise crapola," as he likes to point out), a couple of Disney cassettes complete with read-along storybooks, "Rent," Julie Wilson singing Cole Porter (she's this grandmotherly chanteuse with a big flower in her hair -- if you've ever heard of her you've been doing much too much nightclub-hopping), a Dr. John album (not because the Mite likes Dr. John all that much but because the picture on the cover looks like RBS and the lad just couldn't resist the irony of the thing), and a collection of Halloween sound effects. He used to own a Haydn symphony album, but he got rid of it because, he said, he "doesn't like surprises." Obviously, the Sinatra is the only stuff he really cares about. One night he played me "A Quarter to Three" to demonstrate how a speech should build up from soft to a crescendo: "That's the way debaters should do a one A.C.," he told me. Whew! I mean, for the Mite, Sinatra reigns big-time, and now all the lad does is mope around the apartment saying, "No more comebacks. No more comebacks." It brings a tear to the eye, to tell you the truth. Not to my eye, of course, but that's another story altogether.

Jules

5/27/98

This week's most unusual episode of Nostrum -- our first musical -- is now up and running. Subscriptions to Nostrum remain available: send an e-mail to us at [nostrum@geocities.com](mailto:nostrum@geocities.com) and simply ask for it. Could it get any easier?

Anyhow, we almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over what he feels is the death of the musical form, which this week's episode is a poor attempt to revive. He has no idea why musicals have died, but he is sure that they have. According to his personal history of the form, they were born out of opera via operettas, popularized in the 20s with paper-thin plots carrying moonbeams of music from the likes of Berlin and Kern and Gershwin and Rodgers, finally reaching their apotheosis with shows like *Guys and Dolls* and *Gypsy*, which he considers perfect meldings of plot and music the equal of any Verdi work you can name, except you don't have to weigh 300 pounds to leave the theaters humming. But somehow the form has devolved from this peak back to operettas, where "everything on Broadway is pyrotechnic Puccini, and not even good Puccini, and I don't even like Puccini, so there!"

The lad, when he's in a lather, makes a lot of foam.

Anyhow, we know there are a couple of people who read these letters but don't read Nostrum. As a matter of fact, we know who you are, and we know where you live, but we'll leave you alone for now. However, just for you, we are offering a special version of this week's episode, stripped of its plot, with only the lyrics of the song "New York, New York" from Bernstein/Comden & Green's "On the Town," adapted for Manhattan forensics. Maybe -- just maybe -- you're mentioned in it...

<http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/6298/nyny.html>

Jules

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<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/index.html>.

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the announcement of the reelection campaign of Mr. George Pataki, whom some of you might know as the Governor of New York (those of you who follow politics closely might know him as something else). Returning to his home town of Peekskill this weekend, the announcement rally began with the blasting of the Rolling Stones' "Start Me Up," at which point the Mite is sure that George turned to Mrs. George and said, "I thought you told me Celine Dion was going to be here?" (The Mite sees GP as a Celine Dion fan from the old school.) Anyhow, this would all be of only marginal interest to people who, unlike the Nostrumite, do not have pin-ups of Betsy McCaughey Ross on their walls, except that the press is beginning to tout GP as a possible future presidential candidate. The mind boggles! It's not so much Senator D'Amato's assertion that he doesn't have to "micromanage" Albany in last week's New Yorker that bothers us, although we did think that Al had a hotline phone direct to the gov's mansion, and was giving orders on everything from who to strap to Old Sparky to whether or not to send Rudy home in a taxi, but that yet another empty suit will probably spend umpty-ump dollars on what will probably be just as reasonable a run for the rose garden as, say, Phil Gramm's a few years ago. Is this the best we can come up with? Isn't there anyone who wants this job that isn't a numbskull? Not that we're accusing the incumbent of being a numbskull, mind you; we doubt, in fact, that the man has a numb organ in his body, but we wouldn't mind if he actually did something as President other than consult with his attorneys. As the Nostrumite says, "He wasn't much in some respects, but at least Warren Harding knew how to play poker. Where are the heroes for the new millennium?"

Thank God the Mite didn't get started on Ginger bailing out this week. That's all we'd need.

Jules

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Subscriptions to Nostrum remain available: send an e-mail to us at [nostrum@geocities.com](mailto:nostrum@geocities.com) and simply ask for it. We might even send it to you, except we seem to screw up one way or the other every week. (If they expect us to do all this work, you'd think they'd pay us a living wage!)

We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the latest lawsuit, this time against Intel. As much as he considers Janet Reno absolutely dreamy, even a man of his moral lassitude has to wonder where it will all end. It is one thing to stop Bill Gates from making yet another gazillion dollars between the time he wakes up in the morning and the time he brushes his baby teeth, but Intel? Creators of the Pentium chip that worked most of the time? Are they not, the Mite wonders, by their imperfections the perfect example of the American way? Microsoft writes sloppy code, but they pretend it never happened, which the Mite considers not only un-American, but even worse, he considers it, well, practically French. But making bum chips and telling the world that, hey, they're not perfect, but they're, like, really, really close except for every other billionth calculation... Now that's good old Yankee ingenuity. How can the Feds sue any company with such a forthright approach to its products? What's next? Recalling every Honda made in the last three years over some bizarre ecological flim-flam in the jim-jams? "Whatever happened to business ethics?" the Mite muses. "People screw up royally -- nay, deliberately! -- then, while paying the fines for their actions, refuse to acknowledge any wrong-doing. Come on, guys, take your lumps, deal with it and move on!"

All right. I'll admit it. I don't understand the Nostrumite any better than you do. Maybe if he gets a job again this summer some of this unfocussed angst might go away for awhile. Unfortunately so far it's been one closed personnel door after the other. Here's hoping. The lad obviously needs an outlet for his unbridled cogitating. An honest day's work might do the trick. But then again, the whole idea of marriage as redefined by the Baptists yesterday has been cheering him no end. Apparently he really wants to lead women. He says he's "even thinking of converting from Ethical Culturism," which I have to admit I didn't know was something you a) signed up for, or b) converted out of. Live and learn.

Jules

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over having to work for a living, or at least having to get the annual summer job and pretend to work so that he make enough mazumah to get through the upcoming school year. After scouring these mean streets and knocking on every door from A to B for maybe an hour, he has finally secured a position at the Cambridge Ma 'N' Pa Video Bazaar. Ma 'N' Pa, an Indian gentleman who also owns a jewelry store, a hair-dressing establishment and two Ben & Jerry franchises, pretty much lets the members of his organizations work on their own, so the Mite claims he's already risen to night manager. It is not an exciting job, consisting as it does telling one person after the other that they're out of "As Good as it Gets." Although why everyone wants to see that particular movie completely escapes the Nostrumite. "So Helen Hunt has her choice of either this grumpy old psychotic guy or this beat-up young gay guy," he says. "No wonder she squints throughout the entire picture." I insist that it just looks as if she's squinting and she looks the same way on television, but he asserts that what she needs is a real man to open her eyes, and then he mumbles something about not minding giving her an Oscar himself, but by this point he is mumbling meaninglessly and I don't pay him much attention. I could use a summer job myself.

Jules

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The Tango Incident, which like all of Nostrum is "based on a true story," is the subject of this week's episode. We put "based on a true story" in quotes to reflect a touch of grammatical irony. We could have even been more ironic and said, Based on a "true story." Or even, Based on a "true" story. Or best of all, Based on a true "story." Our favorite quote marks are in the phrase: Out of "Order." The irony added to the word order is, as far as we can determine, a hermeneutic commentary on the postmodern state of existence, where the signified and the signifier can no longer be connected. "As seen on TV," for instance -- which hardly seems to be much of a recommendation for anything because what isn't seen on TV? -- becomes much more interesting when phrased, As seen on "TV." Or best of all, As "seen" on TV. Of course, there is a possibility that we are reading too much into this. After all, last week we saw a sign that said, For sale, Beanie Baby's. Beanie Baby's what, was our first response.

Punctuation, like handguns, should not be put into the hands of the untrained. Didn't Charlton Heston warn us that Hollywood is filled with closet grammarians?

Anyhow, we almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over his latest assignment at the Cambridge Ma 'N' Pa Video Bazaar. Apparently the owner, Mr. Ma 'N' Pa, read an article this week about how computers can now generate artificial speech well enough to conduct reasonable business conversations, and how a lot of big companies like United Airlines are doing just that. Not wishing to appear to be behind the technological curve, Mr. M. N. P. has appropriated the idea of speech synthesis, but unfortunately his organization does not yet have to means to appropriate the apparatus. The Mite's job now, therefore, when he's not recommending "Home Alone 3" in person to some poor family with six kids in tow and what they really want to watch is "Boogie Nights" but they're all pretending to be church-goers so they ask for something with Pat Robertson's seal of approval on it, is to answer the telephone and take orders while pretending to be a computer. Seriously. According to the Mite, it goes something like this:

"Welcome to the Ma 'N' Pa Video Bazaar. " He claims he does all of his talking sounding like a mix of Hal 9000, C3PO and Cruella de Ville. "Hit the number one if you have a touch-tone telephone." The unsuspecting caller inevitably hits the number one. Who doesn't have a touch-tone phone in this day and age?

"Thank you," the Mite says. "Would you like to reserve a video?"

"Damn it, what number should I hit?"

"You do not have to hit a number. I can understand you if you talk slowly and don't mumble and you don't have some un-American foreign accent."

"Okay. I'm down with that."

"Yo, phat, dude!" The Mite likes to keep the lingo current.

"Yeah. Right. Anyhow, do you have 'The Searchers' available?"

"Was that 'The Searchers' or 'The Surgeons'?" If the Mite sounds too human, no one will believe he's a machine.

"The Searchers."

"Excellent choice." The Mite stares at the shelf in front of him while the caller thinks he's surfing his internal database. "We do not have that film in stock. May we suggest a similar film?"

"Sure."

"Did you say 'sure' or 'shirt'?"

"Sure."

"We do not have shirts."

"I said, sure."

"Yes, sir. Shirts. Sure." Pause. "May we recommend, for those who like 'The Searchers,' 'Babette's

Feast?"

"Babette's Feast? As a substitute for 'The Searchers?' What are you, nuts?"

"According to my data, they are very similar movies. Please hold." When in doubt, you can never hold too much. "Yes. According to my data, John Wayne, Denmark, very similar. May I reserve this film for you."

"Forget it. How about 'Citizen Kane?'"

"Please hit 2 on your touch tone telephone."

The unsuspecting caller hits 2. This serves no purpose whatsoever, but it does satisfy the craving for physical activity.

"We do not carry 'Citizen Kane'," the Mite now says.

"What? It's the number one movie of all time. How can you not carry it?"

"It may be the number one movie of all time, but no one has ever seen it, no one wants to see it, and we do not carry it. We do however have a large supply of copies of 'My Stepmother is an Alien' if you would like to change your request."

"Rosebud!"

"I'm sorry. I am not programmed to accept vulgarities." At which point the Mite hangs up.

Needless to say, he hasn't cut too many deals yet in his digital persona. As you can imagine, the Mite is not cut out for this sort of thing.

Jules

For those of you tired of wondering when the millennium begins and ends, this week's episode of Nostrum -- an apparently infinite entertainment with neither beginning nor end -- is now up and running at

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the American Film Institute's 100 greatest film list. Well, actually, the Mite himself isn't in that much of a furor over it, as he knows in his objectivist heart the difference between reality and "survey says," but the customers at the Cambridge Ma 'N' Pa Video Bazaar aren't too happy with the way things worked out. The store has been attacked for a week now by various cinema-buff contingents, and it is up to the Mite to deflect the criticism which, needless to say, is no fault of either him or of his boss, the increasingly elusive Mr. Ma 'N' Pa. The most vicious assailants have not been the Buster Keatonites or the other members of the silent minority, as I personally would have predicted, but the Fred and Ginger fans, which I guess should have been expected, given the relative numbers of both groups.

There may be trouble ahead,  
But while there's moonlight, and music, and love and romance,  
Let's face the music and dance.

Before the fiddlers have fled,  
Before they ask us to pay the bill, and while we still have the chance,  
Let's face the music and dance.

That's the Nostrumite's favorite F&G number, so he says. "Pure bliss on celluloid," he claims. Can't say as I blame him. Love that rhyme scheme. Love that dance, too. And those feathers! Although we do feel that the Irving Berlin story where he was arrested for drunk driving and he told the judge, "You can't throw me in jail. I wrote God Bless America!" may be apocryphal. Still, by all accounts, Izzy was quite the crank. But we can live with that. Hell, he wrote the words AND the music every time out. Not many can say that, and none could ever say it as well. Sorry, Cole. Sorry, Steve.

Soon we'll be without the moon,  
Humming a different tune,  
And then...  
There may be teardrops to shed.  
But while there's moonlight, and music, and love and romance,

Let's face the music and dance --  
Dance!  
Let's face the music and dance.

Next week, we continue unraveling day two of the Vaganza, with Hans & Clavdia, Seth & Tara, and Griot & Jasmine. Marvelous dance teams all...

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over Mr. Ma 'N' Pa's suggestion that he might have a position for the Mite in a new store Mr. M.N.P. is about to open. The Mite is quite content working at the Video Bazaar explaining to customers that Albert Payson Terhune had nothing to do with "Wag the Dog," but Mr. Ma 'N' Pa apparently recognizes the Mite's innate managerial skills, and wishes to place him in a position of authority in the latest operation of the M.N.P. conglomerate with some real dogs. In a word, the new operation is a pet store, with the unlikely name of Pet-a-Porter (except, of course, with accents, which I know would never make it unscathed in HTML). "Is for buying puppies ready to go, very fast, off the rack," as Mr. M.N.P. puts it. "Is playing on words," he adds, in case we didn't get it the first time out. You've got to hand it to the old bird; he may sound like he just got off the boat, but he's probably the richest working man in Massachusetts (as compared to Teddy Kennedy, who hasn't worked yet), he speaks nine different languages (between us, the Mite and I can barely scrape together one), and he can make puppy slash fashion puns in French that wouldn't have made any sense to us at all if we weren't big Elsa Klensch fans (especially the Mite: here's a man who appreciates a runway). Anyhow, the lad is at the moment unwilling to trade "Scream 2" for a Shih Tzu, but he may not have any choice in the matter. We'll see.

Jules



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*From the Epistles of St. Jude to the Forensicians:*

7/15/98

**Nostumite recognized in three frames of Zapruder film**

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the announcement that David Remnick is replacing Tina Brown, primarily because the lad thought that he ought to replace Tina Brown himself. On the presumption that Metro New York -- I mean, the New Yorker -- has already spent the last five years going to hell in a handbasket, he feels he can't make it any worse. His first official act would have been to hire movie reviewers who like movies, and his second official act would have been to find funny cartoonists. I understand his concern, being an old Thurber and Benchley fan myself, and longing for the years with Ross, the round table, martinis, etc., etc., etc. The Mite's concern is not alleviated by the fact that this is his last day at the Cambridge Ma 'N' Pa Video Bazaar. Mr. Ma 'N' Pa has definitely decided to make the Mite manager of what he is now calling the Cambridge Ma 'N' Pa Pet-a-Porter, which we do feel undermines some of the original wit. The fauna starts being herded in tomorrow, and the shop throws open its doors for business next week. I guess I should be happy scooping Phish Food into sugar cones as a summer gig; it beats scooping puppy poop.

*Jules*

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*From the Epistles of St. Jude to the Forensicians:*

7/22/98

### Nostrumite Mispronounces Shibboleth

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over Random House's announcement of the 100 Best Novels of the 20th Century. "Ulysses?" he asks, narrowing his eyes. "Yeah, right. There's a bit of beach reading for you. Like any of these people on that committee ever read the damned thing from start to finish. They're only trying to sell their overstock from the last twenty years. They should be feeling the agenbite of inwit this very minute." He bears down on me. "Have you ever read it?" he asks. Well of course I haven't but his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. But I probably won't. I was more intrigued by number 59, a little number called Zuleika Dobson. The Mite's eyebrow arched. "Now you're talking," says he. "Although I'll bet that book's had fewer takers than Jimmy Joyce. The incomparable Max!" What's a zuleika, I ask. "Last seen heading for Cambridge, my boy." He sighs. "The poor devils don't know what they're in for." Of course, I have no idea when the Mite gets to read all these books, but I think he actually does; there aren't any Cliff Notes for Max Beerbohm. Lately he's been spending sixteen hours a day getting the Ma 'N' Pa Pet-a-Porter shop ready for business. The parakeets, geckos and tetras have all arrived, plus a couple of Siamese cats and a three-foot long boa constrictor that keeps getting out of his display and giving the gerbil cage a run for its money. The Mite calls the boa Cassius because, he says, he has a lean and hungry look. Mr. Ma 'N' Pa, whose love of pets ends, I think, with renting the movie of Lady and the Tramp, has been bitten at least three times in places he doesn't want to talk about, and seems to be showing second thoughts about the whole enterprise. The dogs, the last new arrivals, will be showing up Wednesday morning, opening day. Drop by. Pick up a balloon. Or a Corgi. Whatever turns you on...

By the way, the Mite saw his first episode of Dawson's Creek last week, which is my fault, I guess, because they were rerunning the premiere installment and I thought, what the hell. I was wrong; much the hell. The lad promises not to let the show influence his judgment, however (he

makes no promises, though, about having it influence his hormones; "Isn't there anyone on that show," he asks, "who isn't in estrus or musth or whatever it is that turns everyday empty-headed characters into sex-crazed empty-headed characters?"). He has managed to program the cable box so that there is no way we will be able to watch any future episodes, so I don't think it will have a lasting impact.

*Jules*

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And you thought you could avoid Jules's aimless musings...



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*From the Epistles of St. Jude to the Forensicians:*

7/29/98

### **Nostrum Clones Hawaiian Mice**

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over leaving his job at Cambridge Ma 'N' Pa Pet-a-Porter. Mr. Ma 'N' Pa wasn't that happy about it either. I mean, whodathunkit? One day the Mite's going batty complaining that he wasn't born to be a master of the hounds, and the next day he brings home a black cocker spaniel puppy and announces that he can't take being the jailer to all those poor pooches and he's liberated this one using his employee's discount and the next thing you know there's now three of us in the apartment, the Mite, me and the Nostrumutt, and two of us are unemployed, present company excepted, and one of us is a piddlin' fool, to put it mildly, present company also excepted.

I hate dogs.

Anyhow, the Mite is heading for the family manse for a few weeks to train the Nostrumutt -- he says -- leaving me to guard the homefront and keep that Phish Food moving. It's going to be a long August, with just me and the apartment all to myself... All right! Anyhow, as a result, we're going into our annual summer suspension, and there won't be any new episodes of Nostrum until September. Maybe the Mite will return without the Nostrumutt. I certainly hope so. I don't think I could take the three of us for an entire school year.

*Jules*

And you thought you could avoid Jules's aimless musings...

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## Nostrum Bulletin Board

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Message Number 64

Access 1

Date 1998/08/26 (06:03)

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### Initial message to CX-L

What is Nostrum?

Good question. I'm glad you asked. Go straight to <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/index.html> if you want to find out for yourself.

Nostrum is a work of serial fiction devoted to the world of high school forensics. New episodes appear weekly, and they cover virtually every aspect of speech and debate. More to the point, they cover the people who participate in virtually every aspect of speech and debate. Many of the denizens of the Nostrumian universe seem more real than the people you face in tournaments on the weekends; many of them, in fact, are.

Nostrum has been serving the forensics community for almost two years. It is conceived and delivered by the two gentlemen known as Jules O'Shaughnessy and the Nostrumite, whose own personal adventures occasionally outclass the fictional adventures they create. To keep Nostrum in the public eye, Jules sends a weekly epistle like this one to forensics arenas where there might be potential readers. Access to Nostrum is free, and it is even possible to subscribe and have the episodes delivered straight to your electronic doorstep. Consult the web site for further information.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/index.html>

We strongly recommend that you start reading Nostrum now. Start at the beginning, because otherwise it will make no sense whatsoever. Most first-water universities insist that prospective applicants have an intimate knowledge of every twist and turn of its multiple plot lines, so if there's an institution of higher learning in your future, you will not regret the effort. Many high school debate coaches use it as course curriculum. Summer institutes are beginning to demand complete mastery of its thematic intricacies. Truck farmers swear by it. Four out of five dentists surveyed recommend Nostrum to their patients who chew gum.

Nuff said? Welcome to the Bahamas.



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*From the Epistles of St. Jules to the Forensicians:*

9/2/98

### Nostrum Returns; World Breathes Easier

Nostrum, the high school debate soap opera, is back with two -- 2, count 'em, 2 -- episodes at

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/index.html>.

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the fact that we take a wee sma' break for a lousy month, and the world pretty much goes to hell in a handbasket as a result. The stock market collapses, the only person left in Russia with a job is Lenin's corpse, our Commander-in-Chief admits putting his hand into the naughty-bit cookie jar while Mrs. Commander-in-Chief is lionized for yet again standing by her man (there is another Tammy Wynette song, D-I-V-O-R-C-E; somebody might want to play it for the First Lady while there's still time), and if that isn't enough, at least two of the remaining Spice Girls are pregnant. We can't leave you people alone for two minutes! Get a grip!

Anyhow, we're back now, the four of us: me, the Nostrumite, the Nostrumutt, and a new arrival, the Nostrumite's mustache. If it isn't one thing, it's another. A mustache? I mean, talk about going out of style with the leisure suit. The only people in the world who still have mustaches are policemen, baseball players, and Saddam Hussein's cabinet. What is this boy thinking, anyhow? He looks like he should be standing at the edge of the grammar school playground selling heroin to fourth graders. He claims he's been so busy training the Nostrumutt that he hasn't had time to attend to his tonsorial chores, but I know a deliberate cookie duster when I see one. And I won't even go into the subject of the cocker Nostrumutt who does, by the way, finally have a name. Unix. For two reasons: the Mite likes the operating system, and it will plant a subconscious idea in Unix's mind of the eventual fate of certain aspects of his anatomy. I shiver at the thought.

School's open; drive carefully. Especially if you see a mustachioed drug dealer walking a cocker spaniel.

*Jules*

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/current.html>

9/2/98



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*From the Epistles of St. Jules to the Forensicians:*

9/9/98

**Nostrum Opens Alydar Memorial Also-Runners Institute**

**And Sammy Sosa is our first patient...**

**The latest episode of Nostrum, the high school debate soap opera, is now available at**

**<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/index.html>**



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**We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the recent passing of Akira Kurosawa, not so much because AK will never make another film -- he was, after all, 123 years old -- but because the Mite assumes that the death of this giant of the cinema will be absolutely meaningless to, well, all but two of the people reading this message. "It's the sorry state of film appreciation in America today," he says grimly. He complains while twirling his mustache that people can rattle off the name of every Arnold Schwarzenegger film ever made, and they worry about Arnold's heart operation, and wonder about the mechanics of his marriage to skinny little Maria Shriver, but the names Yojimbo and Rashomon and Ikiru mean absolutely nothing anymore. "Arnold has never been in an action picture as good as The Seven Samurai -- no one has -- but who nowadays actually watches The Seven Samurai?" the Mite grumbles. "Just because it's in black-and-white, and it has subtitles. It might as well have scabies!" There is a loss of legacy, of a sense of history, he says, when one only involves oneself in the trappings of one's immediate popular culture. "There is also a loss of creative energy when one's imagination is fueled only by the accidental encounters of the moment rather than the serious study of the scholar." This from a guy who's never scheduled a class before one p.m. and who has a more complete library of Cliff's Notes than Cliff himself. I think he's spending too much time walking Unix the Cocker Nostrumutt; all that empty-headed strolling allows him to overcogitate. The lad tried to get me to watch Yojimbo with him last night, but I fell asleep three times; too many black-and-white subtitles, I guess. All I remember is something about mush and a long life being the best, whatever that means. But of course, we have done our own Rashomon bit in Nostrum, so even I can't claim to be entirely immune from the influence of AK. And the Mite is right about The Seven Samurai. You should rent that movie. Tonight. You can skip this week's rerun of Dawson's Creek, can't you?**

**<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6298/current.html>**

9/9/98

**Jules**

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*From the Epistles of St. Jules to the Forensicians:*

9/16/98

**Nostrum Bids Sad Farewell to Betsy McCaughey Ross**

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over going back to school. The anticipation of the acquisition of new knowledge, the excitement of fresh notebooks, the mystery of this year's professors -- that lasted about two days. Now the reality has settled in. As a lit major, he is as usual weighed down with literal buckets of assigned reading, although from my point of view all those novels look like a lot more fun than your average organic chemistry text. He had to enter his first academic weekend attempting to sail past what he perceives as the Scylla and Charybdis of the zeitgeist. For a class this Monday he was supposed to be reading Middlemarch, which originally attracted him because he thought the author was a transvestite until he read the introduction more carefully, but how was he to avoid the obstacles of the Starr report on one side, and the Titanic video on the other? He had sworn that neither would suck him in, until the newspaper arrived Saturday morning with the Unexpurgated Starr, and then in the mail that day the Mite received a surprise present from Mr. Ma 'N' Pa from the video store, thanking the lad for his work this summer and, coincidentally, sending him a complimentary Titanic set because, as Mr. M.N.P. said, he has them coming out his earballs, whatever that means. The Mite resisted for a while, but by Sunday night he was reading aloud from the footnotes while the old boat was grinding away on the VCR making these really strange crunching sounds, and poor Dorothea was just lying there married to old Casaubon, and the Mite had to face his Victorian novels class on Monday with no idea whatever of what happens to these people. He does know, however, that the Titanic sunk, and that Mr. Clinton will apparently not sink, and that it should probably be the other way around.

*Jules*

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9/16/98

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*From the Epistles of St. Jules to the Forensicians:*

9/23/98

**Nostrum Visits PLO Casino for Rosh Hashanah**

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over his unrequited love affair with Claire Danes. He went down to Yale this weekend to pick up the odd piece of mazumah for judging, and apparently he ran into Ms. Danes about eight times, and not once did she collapse into his arms in the realization that he was just the man to make a dent in her so-called life. The Mite said that a lot of sophomore forensicians from schools that will remain nameless were nipping at La Danes's heels as she would innocently cross the campus to buy a newspaper or do her laundry or whatever it is that out-of-work actors do when classes are in session. As the Mite was sitting in the warmth of the sun one day watching Japanese tourists take pictures of themselves in front of one Yale building after the other (which is not, he tells me, a stereotype, asserting that it is a well-known fact that every photo album in Tokyo consists of nothing but multigenerational family photos with hints of famous landmarks in the background: here we are standing in front of the Eiffel Tower, here we are standing in front of Grand Canyon, here we are standing in front of Claire Danes), he got to wondering how Claire was doing in her drama classes. "I mean," he said, "is the teacher going to give her a C? 'Who told you you know how to play Juliet?' 'Would you believe Roger Ebert?'" Of course, CD is no Olivia Hussey (whatever happened to her, btw?) but she's dandruff shampoo above Norma Shearer (save your video rental money; Norma only got work by marrying the boss). Anyhow, by the time the Mite got back Sunday night he had shaved off his mustache (because look at Leonardo, he said cryptically), which was at least one positive result of the weekend. And apparently Yale was not a disaster again, but was actually a bit of a runaway success, which was disappointing from a who-wants-to-hear-good-news point of view. Of course, during his absence I was the one responsible for Unix the Cocker Nostrumutt, but I have to say that aside from one or two accidents, little Unix is becoming quite the student of housebreakology, and the two of us are even beginning to bond a bit. Will wonders never cease?

*Jules*

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**Back to the Nostrum Home Page**





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*From the Epistles of St. Jules to the Forensicians:*

9/30/98

**Nostrum to Sosa: Keep Practicing**

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the end of the fatwa against Salman Rushdie. Not that the lad has any animus against Mr. Rushdie (whose name, btw, is an anagram for Iran Mud Hassle), and in fact, he is happy to see the gent walking on the wrong side of the streets again, dropping by the local pub for a pint, putting flowers on Diana's grave, and whatever else it is that Brits do to pass the time of day. The real problem, according to the Mite, is what he terms the conservation of fatwa energy. If the fatwa ends against Rushdie, the energy among Iranians that goes into the general assassination of satiric writers will have to be directed elsewhere. From The Satanic Verses to the forensics soap opera -- somehow he has decided that this is the natural trend to be expected. So aside from walking Unix the Cocker Nostrumutt twenty times a day, the Mite is staying behind locked doors until this whole thing blows over. (*A note to our vast Iranian readership: don't flame me, I'm only the messenger -- J.*)

*Jules*

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Back to the Nostrum Home Page



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*From the Epistles of St. Jules to the Forensicians:*

10/7/98

**Nostrum Bids F.F. to Izzy M.**

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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over the demise of the house of Mizrahi. I wasn't aware that the Mite took any interest in *haute couture* (*schmattes* to you), much less was a supporter of Isaac the M, but with the Mite, you never know. We here at the Nostrum Center for Mass Market Diversification have, like Izzy, been unsuccessful at spinning off a cheaper version of our product for the general public, either as a pret-a-porter knock-off of our normal hand-made episodes, or as a license for something analogous to DKNY jeans, perhaps maybe a line of Nostrum limericks or sonnets, something with our name on the butt pocket but somebody else's butt in the pants (I think that analogy just got away from us). It's not easy reaching out to the inscrutable American consumer. But at least Izzy, while beaten, is not bowed. According to the New York Times, which put his demise on its front page (talk about your slow news day), "Mizrahi said yesterday that he plans to concentrate on his emerging career as an actor, screenwriter and film producer." Way to go, Iz. You could even star in, write, and produce a movie based on Nostrum. You could play Buglaroni, as a grownup, like Marlon Brando as Don Corleone. We'll get DeNiro to play him as a kid. It worked before, it should work again.

*Jules*



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Back to the Nostrum Home Page



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*From the Epistles of St. Jules to the Forensicians:*

10/14/98

**Nostrum Endorses Grandpa Munster for Governor**

The latest episode of Nostrum, the high school debate soap opera, is now available at

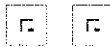
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We almost didn't make it this week. The Nostrumite is in a state of permanent depression over what he calls that New York state of mind (which, by the way, he marks as the last Billy Joel song worth listening to, period, let's not discuss it any further). He buys the Sunday New York Times every week because, he says, the provincials up here simply aren't worth getting ink stains on your fingers for. "This is the proof," he said as he read the newspaper of record aloud this weekend over bagels and cream cheese (which, needless to say, aren't as good as the ones back home -- this provincial business cuts deep with the lad). "'Roller-Coaster Fan in Line for Clinton Staff Chief,'" he quotes from the table. "Exactly the problem." The pages rustle. "'Alicia Parla, 84, Dies; Showed the World How to Rumba.' Now that's reportage! She almost gets as much obit space as Clark Clifford. 'That lovely Havana torso flipper, Walter Winchell called her.' That lovely Havana torso flipper..." He sighs. "They don't write poetry like that anymore." Rustle, rustle, rustle. Finally, from the World in Review section: "Aha! Listen to this: 'In France, discussing politics has always been the chief instrument of torture used at the dinner table.' What did I tell you? Can you find anything like this in the Globe? Feh!"

Feh, indeed. The Falutin sisters find this all pretty mysterious, and they're not all that happy either about a certain person's francophobia, but, I know, I haven't mentioned those particular ladies yet, so... Next week. I promise.

*Jules*



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