

MYTHOLOGIES

#2

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"Let us compare mythologies;
I have learned my elaborate lie."

--- Leonard Cohen

MYTHOLOGIES is a personally oriented fanzine dedicated to the proposition that there is no such things as reality or objectivity.

MYTHOLOGIES will appear as often as I can spare the time and money. Next issue will probably appear in January. Print run this issue will be 80.

MYTHOLOGIES may be had for loc only. Contributions will be considered but are not solicited.

All contents by the editor unless otherwise specified.

Cover this issue is by:

DAVID MACAULAY

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Readers might be interested to know that Macaulay's first book, CATHEDRAL, is a selection of the Book of the Month Club, in their Xmas Children's Catalog.

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MYTH

I have long considered Theodore Sturgeon to be the author to whom I am most closely attuned, as though his stories were being related directly to me rather than through the clumsy medium of the printed word. When I recently began attempting a personal definition of "maturity", it was only logical that I look up his classic 1947 novelette of the same name. There must, I felt, be a better definition than the dictionary's vague reference to having reached a stage of full development, which seems to me to be defining the word in terms of indeterminate measurement.

The novelette centers on Robin English, a young genius who becomes involved with Dr. Margaretta Wenzell, an endocrinologist, who diagnoses his erratic behavior as a malfunction of his endocrine system, retarding his normal maturation: "Robin, Robin, you're such a child!" Despite his manifest talents in a wide range of areas, Robin remains financially unsuccessful because of his inability to deal pragmatically with his world or his talents. After submitting to treatment, he becomes far more preoccupied with his own nature, and spends the balance of the story seeking the true meaning of "maturity". His ultimate decision that "Enough is maturity" clearly implies that it can only be defined in limited, relative, personal ways, that what might be termed mature in one person is not in another, and maturity within an individual is uneven and perhaps indefinable. So I was left without a pragmatic definition, though I did have some new directions in which to look.

Keeping in mind Sturgeon's warning that "most people describe maturity as an extension of themselves", I decided tentatively to define it as a measure of the willingness of individuals to accept responsibility for their own actions. This struck me as far more specific and useful than the various definitions offered by characters in the Sturgeon story. A psychiatrist, for example, defines maturity as "the condition achieved when sanity exists within an organism at its ontogenetic peak", leaving "sanity" undefined. Others use similarly subjective terms like emotional balance, full development, and adaptability.

I initially applied this tentative definition to one of the more controversial subjects of late, amnesty for the draft resisters. Obviously those who chose to go to jail rather than into the service were acting in a mature fashion, by my definition, although this does not necessarily imply that those who fled to Canada or elsewhere did not. But those who now insist that they should be allowed back into the U.S. without suffering the consequences of their actions are behaving immaturely. The rightness or wrongness of the draft system and the war itself are immaterial; the consequences of their actions were clear from the beginning, and they chose expatriation. On the other hand, members of the military who -- like Lieutenant Calley -- insist that they have no personal responsibility for their actions because they were just following orders are no more mature than the welfare mother who continues to have children, even when it is clearly detrimental to both herself and her family. Implied in the foregoing is the total organization of the military around the concept of voluntary immaturity.

I was recently exposed to a more graphic example. Joe Walters is the local repairman for Monroe Calculators, whose equipment is used extensively in my office. On his last visit, Joe spun us a tale of woe about his wayward, 22 year old son, who has left home and wants nothing further to do with his father. Joe described to us the various measures he had taken during the boy's adolescence in order to discipline him. He had made several trips to the local school, urging the teachers not to let his son get away with anything. When he learned that the boy had stolen a car for a joyride, he personally called the police, reported it, and refused to appear in court with his son. When the boy graduated from high school and refused to get a job, Joe made a visit to the local draft board and demanded that they induct him. "They'd either have made him a man or broken him." Unsurprisingly, nothing seems to have worked, but I'm not certain which of the two is the more immature. The son may have a record of delinquency as a juvenile, but the father stands indicted by his own statements of adult delinquency, of disregarding his responsibilities as a parent by attempting to shift all the obligations of discipline to other shoulders, the school, the police, the courts, the draft board. And, to greater or lesser degree, Joe Walters is a typical parent, particularly in relationship to educators. The tendency to make teachers responsible for the discipline of our children has done inconceivable damage to the educational process in this country, and is one of the major reasons I am no longer a member of that profession. To be denied a teaching job on the basis that one is too diminutive in stature to effectively discipline one's students is a devastating blow to one's view of our educational institutions.

The next logical step is to ask why such a large majority of people remain immature. If, as I think we are obliged to assume, the normal trend is toward maturity as the organism ages, there must be something which acts to inhibit this movement. Sturgeon provides another hint when Dr. Wenzell tells Robin: "Apparently the maturity you're getting is normal enough that you're developing a man-sized inferiority complex along with it." The fear of being inferior to one's fellows is a special case of the fear of being different in general. Fears about our place in society, fostered by the pressures of class consciousness, peer approval, family pressure, and other forces are probably the most important factors inhibiting individual maturity.

This fear takes many forms. Most of us are familiar with the fear of failure, whether it be on the job, at school, or in our personal lives. Many businesses are saddled with executives who are terrified of making the wrong decision, and on the occasions when they do, immediately seek ways to shift the blame to others rather than try to correct the situation. American Home Products, a hundred-million dollar conglomerate comprising dozens of companies including Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, Anacin, Ekco Cookware, Preparation H, and Primatene, was at one point negotiating to purchase the company for which I work. The final agreement had been drawn up and was sent to corporate headquarters for approval. Months passed. Out of curiosity, I asked one of the negotiators why confirmation was so long in coming. He said that AHP, like most modern corporations, made decisions by consensus, not fiat. A proposal floats around at high levels until a majority have come to a clearcut decision one way or the other, and then the appropriate steps are taken. It's a gigantic share-the-blame operation.

Schools are at least as bad, and the entire educational process is becoming increasingly perverted. While at Michigan State, enrolled in a course dealing with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. For term end, we were all required to prepare a paper on an allied topic, choice to be our own. Most of my classmates were immediately moved to total panic, insisted that the professor suggest topics, which he refused to do. I felt vastly superior for a while because I, like David Selig from Silverberg's Dying Inside, am a competent hack, able to regurgitate acceptably high quality papers with minimal effort. And there are few subjects that I don't have something to say about. So I played around with a couple of topics for several weeks, but found difficulty finalizing anything because I was so fascinated with Chaucer that I kept writing my own "tales", even rewriting some well known SF stories in iambic pentameter. Eventually I did churn out a paper on religious roles in the Nun's priest's tale or some such, for which I duly received my B. Then came the blow. The Professor, for whom I had immense respect, proceeded to tongue-lash the class mercilessly for presenting such an undistinguished, unoriginal, boring stack of term papers. "If just one of you had had the originality to, for example, try writing your own tale," he thundered, "I would have given that student an A, regardless of its quality, just because he hadn't sunk to the depths of mediocrity inhabited by the rest of you." I thought of that stack of tales sitting in my room, fantasized running up to the Prof with them, saying, "Here, see? I'M not dull and unimaginative like the rest of them." But I was.

To be fair, however, neither my classmates nor I were entirely at fault. Our public school system is designed to stifle initiative. We have assigned reading lists, censored libraries, assigned topics, rigidly structured classes and curricula, detailed lesson plans for teachers, class schedules, and the overpowering pressure for good grades, which means conformity, standardization, and giving the teacher what is wanted, not what the student is capable of or interested in. And despite all that, the vast majority of students are still incapable of reading and writing adequately. On the rare occasion when innovative steps are taken in school systems, we have building dynamited in the Carolinas, strikes in West Virginia, John Birch Society members elected to the school boards in California, and books burnt in the Dakotas and elsewhere. The result of all this is that we, presumably adults, find that we are often put to great difficulty to act in a mature manner and assume fully our personal responsibilities. We were even treated to the spectacle recently of having the President of the United States say that while the ultimate responsibility for Watergate was his, it was not his fault.

Even our fear of failing is simply part of a greater fear, that of being different. If everyone failed, we wouldn't mind our own shortcomings nearly as much; misery loves company. Sturgeon hints at this when Dr. Wenzell warns Robin that "You are going to find out that one of the prices you must pay for the privilege of becoming an adult is the control of the noises your mouth makes." To ensure that we are not different, we establish institutions to tell us how to behave -- churches to decide moral issues and governments to enforce them. Individuals abdicate their responsibility to make their own decisions in order to be secure in their conformity. The end result is such idiocy as censorship based on "community standards", posing as a case of majority rule, in actuality a case of minority rule inflicted on an unaware majority. George Bernard Shaw recognized this trend long ago: "Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it."

I wish that I could feel superior to all this and insist with justification that, having become aware of my own immaturity in these respects, I have corrected or will correct myself in the future. This is obviously untrue. I'm as much a product of my environment as anyone else, and while writing this might dispel some of my accumulated bad karma through catharsis, the fact is that I will continue to behave pretty much as I always have. In this respect, I think I have avoided Sturgeon's charge that "the more erudite and articulate a man gets, the more he feels that the rest of the world lacks what he has, and that therefore maturity is his condition, immaturity is the state of those less gifted than he." Unfortunately, like it or not, we all are ultimately forced to face the consequences of our actions, for, as Gardner Dozois points out in "A Special Kind of Morning", "We make our own heavens and hells."

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From ODD TALES #5:

"The house is no longer on its present site." Tom Collins

ARRANT NONSENSE #1

by Paul DiFilippo

At this moment, work is going forward on a plan to halt population growth, with or without the consent of everyone concerned. The scheme is funded by dozens of nations, and is directed by a commission composed of delegates from the participating countries.

The plan consists of seeding the present population with a large number of sterile clones, just as scientists have previously filled mosquito swarms with sterile mosquitos. The clones will be those of sexually attractive people and will vary among many aesthetic norms. Their attractiveness will be enhanced by a genetic manipulation which will cause the clones to sweat a combination aphrodisiac and affection-stimulant which will be irresistible. Normal males and females will be unable to compete sexually with the clones, and all breeding will occur on a normal to clone basis. Naturally, it will be fruitless.

Although, with the introduction of the clones, there will be an initial increase in the population, the numbers of mankind will soon drop. At first, due to the small number of clones available, not everyone will be able to mate with one, but their mere presence will turn normals off to sex with other normals. Eventually, as the population shrinks, and more clones become available, each normal will find a partner and be happy.

After about 50 years, when the desired level is reached, the clones (who will have been released at the age of 35) will have died a natural death, and conventional sexual relations will be resumed, although there might be considerable heartbreak. Humanity will have been saved from itself, without having to exercise any will power at all.

Next issue: If all the Red Chinese simultaneously jumped from high platforms to the ground, would the Earth be pushed out of orbit?

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A Modern Ozymandias

by Lee Carson

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said, "I saw protruding from the sea,
A brazen torch clutched in a lifeless hand
The same, like an Excalibur, as to demand
The Light from all Eternity.

"My findings saw an expedition planned,
Which soon unearthed a cryptic script," said he,
"From out that radio-active sea and sand,
In words of alien, long-forgot command
Inscribed, 'Statue of Liberty'".

FABLES: A is For Aandahl

Vance Aandahl is one of the most underestimated writers in the field of science fiction and fantasy, perhaps because of his low output, particularly in the last few years. Several of the stories which he has sold to SF magazines have not even properly been within the genre, but his stories are so rare and so excellent that it is not surprising that editors snatch them up, regardless of their classification. It is not a fluke that Aandahl sold a story to Playboy when he was only 19.

Aandahl's writing ability was obvious from the onset when, at 17, he sold "It's A Great Big Wonderful Universe" to F&SF. With an impressively economical use of words, the author paints a vivid setting -- a spaceport bar on an alien planet -- and two characters, one young and one old. The younger man inquires as to the contents of a small bag hung around the neck of the older. The latter explains that it is a sample of earth and grass from Earth, which was destroyed years earlier. The younger man then says: "All your life you've carried a bag of Earth." The older man replies: "No, boy. All my life a bag of Earth has carried me." This reverse of the curse of the Ancient Mariner accomplishes in a few pages what other writers have spent novels attempting, with less success.

This was followed by "Man on the Beach", a less satisfying but still pointed criticism of human pride. Using the same format, a vignette length glimpse rather than an involved plot, he presents us with Alan Bronson, an egotistic explorer from Earth, the sole survivor of a massacre on an alien planet. As he stumbles through the carnage, he becomes aware of the transience of human life, of his relative insignificance in the scheme of things. "I memories, when memories go, I go." His pride and egotism disappear, and he tells a passing sand crab, "Who to say I better than you?"

"Cogi Drove His Car Through Hell" is probably not a fantasy at all. Cogi is a white mechanic working in a black ghetto, who tries unsuccessfully to gain acceptance in the community. Many of his customers blame their troubles on the Devil, so one drunken night Cogi determines to go to Hell and tweak the Devil's nose. When he awakens the following morning with confused memories of the preceding night, he is greeted by his neighbors as a friend. The actual trip to Hell, if it did take place, happens off stage. The integrity of the piece, the delineation of the characters, is independent of the fantasy element.

"Darfgarth", a fantasy, is the most skillfully executed of Aandahl's stories. It was also the first of his stories to have an extended plot. Darfgarth, a wandering minstrel with a magic mandolin, is the central character. He is neither good nor evil, but both -- like all men. Aandahl emphasizes this in his description of the mandolin: "In this mandolin, evil and good were bound intimately together; thus bound, they uttered the song of life." Darfgarth arrives in a small village and deals with three people: a wild boy prone to violence, a young virgin named Sally Lentz, and an older villager named Lorr Quinn.

Darfgarth becomes infatuated with Sally, and uses his enchanted mandolin to lull the villagers into a trancelike sleep, during which time he deflowers her. This is the first instance in which he corrupts the innocent. His reference to the "God-like" nature of his music indicates his megalomania. Following Sally's seduction, Darfgarth befriends the wild boy and teaches him the three aspects of God: truth, beauty, and justice. Each time that Darfgarth speaks of these, he reflects on how they are qualities which he possesses.

Eventually Darfgarth surprises Sally and Lorr Quinn in bed together. Enraged, he uses the magic mandolin to transform them both into snakes, then flees into the hills with the wild boy. He tells the boy what he has done: "It was just. God is justice." The wild boy protests, "But you're not God." Disillusioned with his mentor, the boy kills him, justifying his own actions by saying, "It was just. God is justice." Thus his corruption is also complete.

"When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed" appeared in 1962. This is another plot centered story set after a nuclear war. Aandahl uses stock SF concepts: the splintering of society, telepathy, mutants. Robert Smith is drawn out of the ruins of his home city by a frightening telepathic voice. He is captured by a community that practices an altered form of Christianity. Ultimately, the entire community is destroyed by the telepathic entity, an organic computer complex. Aandahl is again commenting on the nature of good and evil. Smith refers to the voice as that of the Devil; the villagers consider it to be God. In the long run, it makes no difference. Aandahl tells us clearly that "morals had died with civilization".

Three minor stories appeared about this time, the early 1960's. "1492633 Marlon Brandos" deals with a telepathic projector who transforms all of the men in her city into replicas of her idol, Marlon Brando. "The Unfortunate Mr Morky" tells of an individual who is endlessly multiplied in time because of a timewarp. F&SF published another mundane story, "The Riddle Song", in which an old derelict's dignity is measured against the cruelty of a group of children. The story attempts unsuccessfully to portray the old man as representative of "everything that is romantic and imaginative in man".

"Adam Frost", from Playboy, is a realistic look at a romanticized SF concept. After a cataclysmic disaster, probably a nuclear war, mankind exists among the ruins of his civilization, reduced to competing with dogs for food. Aandahl's hero is the kind of man we all know, not a superman who singlehandedly sets man back on its feet. Adam Frost is a coward who allows other men to die for him, who feels that the best use he can make of a library is as a hiding place for his hoarded food, who suffers from radiation sickness which has already deformed him. When one of his companions notes that "we are all very weak", Adam replies, "We always were." Ultimately he fulfills the symbolism of his name by father a child, while raping a young girl. "Then sprawling on a heap of refuse, Frost madly gave life to mankind's first new child..."

"The Weremartini" is an amusing concept, deftly handled, of a college professor who periodically changes into a martini. "A Crown of Rank Fumiter" is the least successful of Aandahl's post-disaster stories. This time the intellectual Alston Piedmont Oliver III, who has never cared to be "a part of the human mob" discovers that his education and background help him not at all when civilization is destroyed by a plague. Eventually his innocence and naivete are lost as he is caught up in the death of a young girl.

Four years were to pass before the next Aandahl story appeared, and something had been lost along the way. Although the craftsmanship remains, the spirit is gone from the three stories which appeared in 1968-1969. "Beyond the Game" is a mainstream story about a young boy repelled by the cruelty inherent in a high school game that I knew as "Bombardment". "Drool" is a trivial piece about a future in which food is considered obscene. "An Adventure in the Yolla Bolly Middle Eel Wilderness", Aandahl's longest published work, recounts the mating of a lonely female yeti, or abominable snowman, with an ailing, neurotic college professor. He is unable to satisfy her sexually and, in frustration, she accidentally kills him. The story is equally frustrating. The characterization is sketchy and the resolution unsatisfying. Aandahl's point is obscure at best.

Five years have now passed since this last appearance. Hopefully, we will be presented with another batch of stories shortly. Perhaps Aandahl will have regained during the interim the freshness of vision that made his earlier stories so outstanding.

FABLE: Starting From Scratch

Most people have a soft spot in their hearts for newborn kittens, so when a stray cat sneaked into our warehouse at Taunton Silversmiths to have her litter, no one was willing to evict her. She stayed for several weeks, and one by one the kittens were removed to foster homes. When the last was gone, the mother was escorted to the door and the broken window that allowed her in initially was repaired. Everyone concerned felt noble and warm about the affair, until this week.

Monday was quiet, the lull before the storm. Tuesday proved very different. The kittens had lived in a small room full of inactive records, mountains of paperwork, which are kept at the rear of the corrugated box storage area. This part of the warehouse is rarely visited, so at least a couple of weeks had passed since the departure of the kittens. Tuesday morning, one of the warehouse workers carried some additional records down and placed them near the entranceway to the record room. A few minutes later, one of his co-workers stopped him. "What the hell is that all over your back?" Closer examination showed literally hundreds of small insects -- fleas. He stripped on the spot, picking them from all over his body. Ultimately, he left work early to shower and remove those he couldn't find.

The warehouse supervisor immediately requisitioned bug spray. That night, shortly before leaving, he emptied one can each of Black Flag

and Raid into the room, closing off all doors and windows. When he came in Wednesday morning and checked, all was quiet. Thursday, I was talking to the warehouse supervisor when one of the lift operators reported that fleas had appeared in a second location. This area was sprayed also, and an inspection of the entire warehouse revealed no further infestations. There was nothing that we could see for them to live on, so a serious problem was considered unlikely. Little did we know.

Friday, things came to a rapid boil. Fleas were now located in various parts of the warehouse, and the employees were refusing to work near them. An exterminator informed us that some fleas can live quite well on mucilage, and corrugated boxes are held together by glue. The supervisor was about to order a case of bug spray when it happened that I needed to refer to some papers which were kept at the scene of the original manifestation, the records room.

I never got through the door. The entrance is hidden around a dogleg, so that you couldn't see anything in the room until you were stepping into it. As I was coming down the blind side, I heard a strange sound. I stopped dead in my tracks and concentrated. There was a constant, distant thrum of crackling noises, like Rice Krispies, as of myriads of small insects jumping across a concrete floor. Discretion being the better part of valor, I called the supervisor and, armed with a can of Raid apiece, we entered the room, spray cans fizzing.

We were confronted with a scene right out of a "C"SF movie. The entire floor, the shelves, filing cabinets, piles of paperwork, boxes, and miscellaneous litter seemed to be hidden under shimmering waves of movement. I have never heard a more threatening sound than the constant chatter of little bodies lusting after my blood. And it was apparent that they sensed our presence, because the near sector of insect turned as with a single mind and lurched in our direction.

We beat a hasty retreat, but not hasty enough, and both of us spent several minutes picking minuscule insects out of our clothing. Reasonably secure in our persons, my companion began locking all entrances to the area while I called the plant engineer and requested bigger artillery. He showed up shortly with four industrial strength timed bug sprays.

"Put one of these in each corner of the room when you leave tonite," he said, "and by morning they'll all be dead."

"If you think I'm going back in there," said the supervisor, "you are out of your mind."

Eventually a plan was developed by which the four bombs could be rolled, dropped, and placed in the room with minimum exposure. The balance of the corrugated, which was only mildly infested, would be treated by routine spraying. The weekend passed.

Monday morning, the supervisor and I unlocked the door to the records room, from which there was still a stench of bug spray. When the door was finally unlocked and swung open, a veritable

horde of insects emerged, lively as ever. Fantastic visions passed through my mind. The stray cat had obviously wandered near a nuclear plant and had been exposed to radioactivity. Her mutated fleas had fed on mucilage which contained an experimental adhesive, and this had further aggravated their genetic makeup to produce a superflea, impervious to all insecticides, able to multiply past all reasoning, which would supplant man on earth. And I had been witness to its very onset.

It didn't work out that way, thank heavens. An exterminator was called in. Although he admitted that he had never seen anything like it, he sealed off the entire warehouse and pumped it full of posson gas three consecutive days. On the morning of the fourth day, all was quiet. Investigation shows piles of dead fleas in some places over an inch deep.

Shortly after this happened, it occurred to me to wonder about the corrugated boxes which had left the warehouse during this period. Were some of the fleas perhaps carried in them, feeding unsuspected on their mucilage? I made discrete inquiries in the packing department and learned that, yes, the packers had been complaining of insect bites. I went from there to the stock room, where the packaged items sit prior to shipping. Yes, they also had been having trouble with small, biting insects. And these boxes have been shipped all over the country, and to Australia. (Watch out, Leigh Edmonds!)

So the next time you have an itch, no matter where you may be, think about our wayward kittens.

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The Crime of the Ancient Mariner

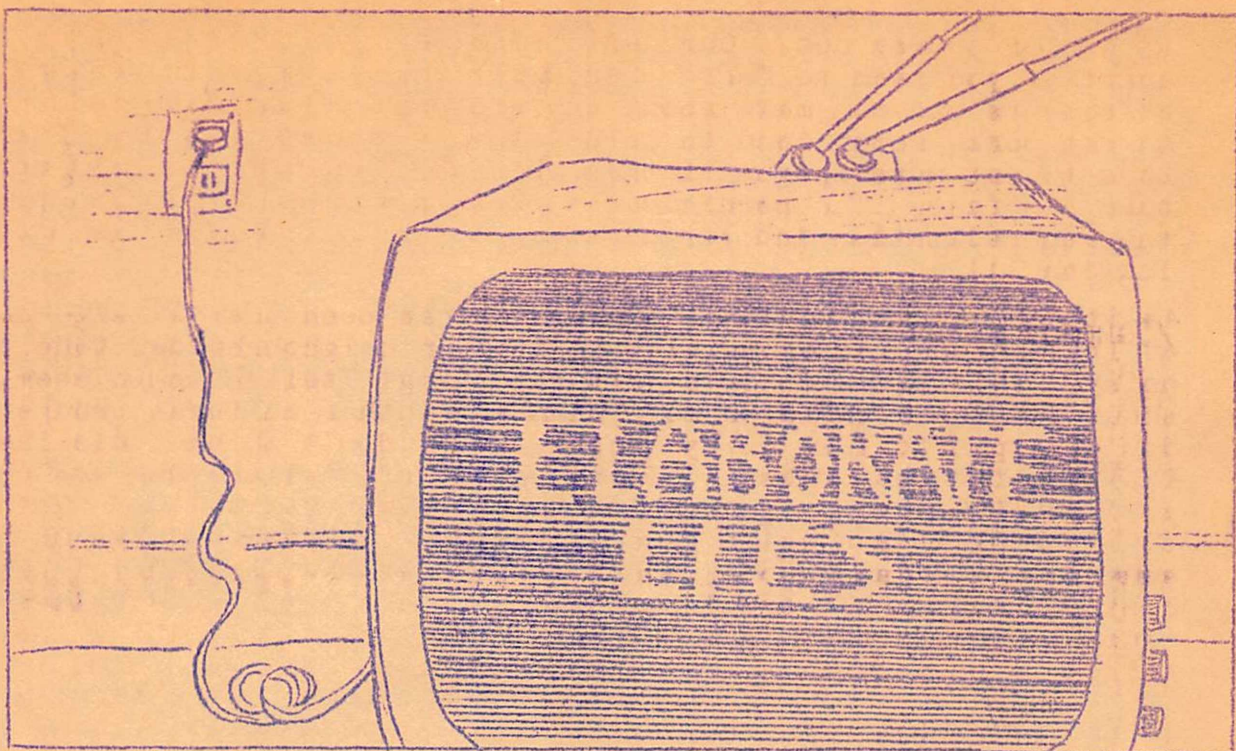
(or)

Investigation of the Induction of an Awareness
of Evil into an Interested Extraterrestrial

It is an ancient Mariner
And it stoppeth one of three
Of the Martian anti-missiles
That reach proximity.

It tells a tale of dusty death
Of dissolute and antique sin;
It is an ancient Mariner,
And I am next-of-kin.

-----Lee Carson (reprinted from Murex)



✓ PAUL DIFILIPPO ✓

I don't foresee any end to bigotry, since I believe its causes are built into every present-day society. First, the competitive struggle for survival and status ensures that all our rivals will become inferior in our eyes, so that we may trample them without guilt. In the related case of women, it is their existence, not their destruction, which is necessary for individual and racial survival. With their gift (sometimes curse) of reproduction, they become too valuable to be risked (or so it was formerly held), and we rationalize keeping them in caves or Victorian parlors by saying that they are constitutionally unable to manage in the outside world.

Second, the basic feeling of inferiority that many people have leads them to boost their own faltering sense of self by degrading others. Also, they project the traits they most despise in themselves onto others, sort of like the old cure for warts that allowed you to wish yours off on somebody else.

Granted the preceding, then, bigotry will always exist until the world becomes a single land filled with materially secure, self-assured people (i.e. Utopia). Who's taking bets as to the founding of that?

((Not me.))

✓ MIKE GLICKSOHN ✓

I fully agree that your concern with unconscious and conscious bigotry is merited, but I think we'd disagree on just what defines bigotry. There exist certain valid generalizations that I do not class as bigotry but that you do. For example, people from hotter climates do tend to be more volatile than those from more temperate areas. I think that's an established fact. It would be bigotry to

believe that this explains the behaviour of every Italian, or Spaniard, or whathaveyou, just as it would be bigotry to assume that this is the only explanation behind the behaviour of certain people. But it could contribute to someone's actions, I think.

Vera's remark about the coloured people who have worked for her, for example, sounds like an observation based on the people she had had direct experience with. It's perfectly possible that the three or four coloured workers she's known were lazy. If she meant that all coloured people are lazy for some physical reason, though, that's definitely innate prejudice. The words themselves could mean either thing, but you were there so your interpretation is probably correct. As for Canadians and our inbred genetic inferiority, well, I thought we'd hidden it pretty well up to now...

It is, of course, not a laughing matter. But neither should one look for prejudice in every remark. Some people may not be innately bigotted. Like me, for example: I do not have any inherent bias against any particular minority. I happen to think just about everyone is despicable. (I have a very low opinion of the general public, white, black, or green.)

As it happens, my personal experience has been that a large number of Italian people, especially in Italian neighborhoods, tend to be noisy. This seems to be a cultural thing: Italian women seem to shout for their children more than some other cultural groups. I don't happen to like noisy people, but I don't think I dislike Italians for that reason. I know a lot of Italians who are quiet, so I realize that my generalization is a generalization. Yet I still think it's a valid generalization. It doesn't make me shy away from Italian people, and neither does the fact that I believe most Chinese people are inherently quiet in their public lives cause me to shy away from Chinese people. Still, I think these things to be generally true: am I bigotted because of that?

((No, of course not. Our definitions of bigotry are not as far apart as you seem to feel. Certainly there are valid general statements one can make about any sub-population: Jews tend not to eat pork, women tend to be physically weaker than men, Italians tend to eat more spaghetti than Chinese, fans tend to read more than non-fans. The pernicious aspect is that most people apply the generalization indiscriminately to individuals:///I am a quiet Italian.)))

/GEORGE FLYNN/

I have before me Mythologies #1. Are you sure that what the world needs is another personaisino? And so little in it that I can think of any comment on, too. I have decided to take the drastic expedient of standing up for bigotry, to wit:

I would imagine that everyone on your mailing list shares your "bigotry about bigots". (And probably nearly all of us also have relations who don't realize they're bigots.) We take this so much for granted that we forget there's another side of the issue -- namely, that there are identifiable racial/national traits. Sure, they're merely average properties of the group and shouldn't be used to prejudge individuals; and we hope that they're cultural

rather than genetic in origin; but all this said, they do exist. Indeed, it can be as much of a mistake to neglect them in treating groups as to consider them in treating individuals. To concretize the argument, I'll take an example on which I can hardly be accused of bigotry: the Irish are, on balance, a combative and sullen race; this isn't helped by the fact that they're excessively given to drink; they have a predilection for celibacy and general solitariness; and, oh, are they stubborn. (As Dr. Johnson put it, "The Irish are a fair people -- they never speak well of one another.") ~~N/W. XND~~ ~~Italians~~ It is surely not bigotry to take such tendencies into account (though you'd better be damn careful how you phrase them).

Indeed, you yourself have clear-cut prejudices. I need only mention your obvious animus against Oklahomans, or at least Lawtonians. Lacking sufficient data, I am unable to judge whether your generalizations about them are justified in the statistical sense. But even if this be the case, I urge you to caution: Who knows whether your words might inadvertently inflame some innocent reader to the irrationality of Oklahomaphobic bigotry? Verily, the mind boggles. (And what's this about having to send to Italy for tires? Ain't Amurrican tires good enough for you wops?)

((As mentioned earlier, I never intended to deny the validity of some generalizations when applied to groups, only the practice of ascribing them to individuals indiscriminately. There are any number of groups against which I am prejudiced: the CIA, White Rhodesians, Lawtonians, the Miami Dolphins, etc. But I would not allow my attitude towards individuals in these categories to be shaped by that prejudice without confirmation. The streets in Lawton are demonstrably littered with an appalling variety of nails, screws, broken glass, scrap metal, and other impedimenta. That doesn't mean I would accuse my next door neighbor in Lawton of being a litterbug -- although he was, in fact, as I learned from direct observation.///There was no need to send to Italy for Michelin steel belted radial tires. I charitably assume that the men in question were merely mistaken.)))

/MICHAEL G. CONEY/

As you can imagine, I was interested by your MYTH section and, as my typewriter was handy at the time, I started to jot down some thoughts with the intention of incorporating them into this letter, briefly. However, such was my unconscious fervour, my desire to bring some light into this dark world and that dark mind of yours, that the goddamned thing overran -- and there's no way I have time to retype all that crap. So I'm enclosing it as it is, for you to snarl at. Because I seem to remember saying before: there will never be accord between us. You are not alone -- I've said it to plenty of other people. But I will not fight the problems of the blacks for them, or the jews, or women. But I will fight for -- have fought for -- a black, a jew, and a woman. Many times, many people. Individuals, you understand?

.....

I have the greatest admiration for someone who speaks on behalf of himself, but nothing but contempt for the person who represents a group -- whether or not he is a member of that group. Wars are the final degradation of Man, and they are waged by groups, and instigated

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by those who speak on behalf of those groups. A heavyweight boxer who fights "because I want the cash" has my respect. The same man fighting "on behalf of all my brothers" in the hope that it will encourage them in their struggle against the intolerable suppression which they have suffered for so long..." is a bum, in my books. If you consider (as I do) killing to be the ultimate evil, then ask yourself which of those two hypothetical fighters would be likely to cause the most deaths.

This is what I think, but I don't think you (or I) ought to be misled by apparently simple issues into condemning vast sections of the human race merely because they do what is natural -- that is, they mentally class strangers into groups. We'll never stop them doing it. And these groups will become individualised as stereotypes -- because in many instances these groups do have ethnic characteristics, and are even proud of them. Witness the feverish attempts of partly-assimilated races to recapture or retain their original cultures, if you don't believe me. Personally, I think it is crap, and have published several stories embodying my own feelings concerning the idiocy of this particular trait of man -- to insist that his group is different from any other (whether nationally, racially, sexually or whatever) thus accelerating the entropy of civilisation.

It is the wrong approach. We ought to admit that groups can appear to average out to a norm (the stereotype) if they insist on perpetuating their group identity. At the same time we should deny the concept, or even the word, equality (equal to who? equal on what basis?) and enhance our view of people as individuals. As I said before, individuals don't fight wars.

It is possible, sure, to be bigotted about bigots, if you look on the bigot as something unutterably evil, whose faults instantly outweigh any other fine characteristics he might have. It is this, I think, which leads you to your unhappy conclusion that you have met few genuinely kind people. There are millions of kind people -- by somebody's standards -- in the world, and I'm happy to say I've met many of them. By my standards, which are demonstrably not so demanding as yours.

I think perhaps bigot is not the right word to describe the people you write about. A bigot is obstinate. Any of your characters, given the necessary exposure to the "unknown"; that is, the negroes, the jews, whatever, en masse, would have come away saying that the individual was, maybe, quite a good guy after all. But your characters couldn't have had the necessary exposure, or they wouldn't have spoken the way they did. Unless they were totally unintelligent of course -- and if they are, why should you condemn them for their misfortune?

So -- until the groups stop thinking of themselves as groups, there will always be a problem, because no individual can get on terms with -- can know -- a group. A group is different, it is something apart from oneself, it is menacing. Fear of these ethnic and other groups is not so irrational as you think. It is nothing to do with propping up our own egos. It is a perfectly natural and human reaction to that which we imagine (rightly or wrongly) to be

threatening us. It is the very basic instinct of self-preservation, and there is no way we can permanently "deal with this basic flaw in human nature" as you put it. We can try -- but it will simply crop up again in the next generation.

Your approach is so wrong, and yet basically so well-intentioned. You say, "How many of us have the courage to tell a friend that he's a bigot when he tells us he Jewed a price down." (That's a new expression to me, as a matter of fact. But I know what you mean.) You see, you're assuming that because a person uses this expression, he is convinced, obstinately and beyond any possibility of reasoned argument, that members of the Jewish faith are shrewd and slightly crooked businessmen. That's a bigot. Now -- is your friend a bigot? Or is he a nice guy who happened to utter a phrase which you didn't like the sound of?

And if the latter case is true, then who is at fault? Your friend, in his innocent unthinkingness? Or the large group of people who have intruded themselves on his sensibilities by their history, their group-solidarity, and their unquestioned success in easily-identifiable fields? Or you -- for thinking in terms of ethnic slurs, and countering them with exaggerated name-calling?

Let's admit it all, get the thing into the open. I hate hypocrisy above most things, which may be one of the reasons you find my writing offensive in some respects. I will not sing a national anthem, I will not be proud to be Canadian, or British, or whatever the hell I am. I have been the victim of more racial prejudice than I feel like mentioning -- but I'm quite happy about it because I know the reason for it, and I know nothing personal was meant. I simply removed myself from it.

Enough of this serious stuff. I have a mass of jottings around my house, random thoughts, bits I decided were too dirty for novels and the like -- and I came across an interesting piece which I wrote as part of my biography for Ellison's LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, then left out, because I'd already done ten thousand words designed to drive Harlan out of his liberal mind, and I felt the pangs of conscience. Besides, my mother or sister might get to read LDV, whereas you say your circulation is 75. The following piece illustrates, I think, the way the group hatred thing horrifies me to the extent of nervous laughter.

...My mother was, and still is, an ardent feminist. Much of my childhood energies were spent in trying to disprove her oft-repeated theory that women could do anything men could, and more competently too -- and what was more, they could have babies. Which was incredibly painful, a pain so intense that no mere man could have suffered it without going instantly insane, or fainting. A lesser boy than myself would have contracted an inferiority complex for life, but I fought back, and beat her at intellectual games, and made myself unpleasant to my younger sister...

....I asked her the reason for her disquiet and she told me, with much hesitation, that my sister's lover was a French-Canadian. "And anyone will tell you," said my mother, who is of sound Anglo-Saxon stock, "that

French-Canadians are very unreliable people." You can imagine my relief when I finally met my sister's lover and discovered that he was not, in fact, French-Canadian at all, but Chinese. We were very hearty with each other for some time on this basis until I said something tactless and he told me, in annoyance, that his sallow complexion and other characteristics were due to an allergy which came on when the mountain ash trees flowered -- and that he was not Chinese at all. He was, he said, French-Canadian. Although, oddly enough, he had a Chinese wife. I have an undemanding nature and was willing to forgive the fellow all this, particularly when my sister told me how great with kids he was. He had three, to prove it.

Alas, time proved my mother's judgment sound, and Kenneth disappeared from our lives, leaving but a memory. Or not quite, since it was shortly revealed to us that my sister was pregnant. It was around this time that I left the country and all future contact was by mail. My mother has a gift for dramatic writing, although much of the effect can be lost due to her verbosity and a sad tendency to unconscious humour. She wrote telling me of my sister's latest problems.

"Poor Jane is at her wits' end! Last Sunday, who should turn up but Kenneth, and there was the most awful row. It finished up with him beating her up and she ran out of the house, which she paid for out of her own money, leaving that awful man sitting there drinking her whisky and making himself at home. She had to get the police to him -- it was all so degrading. And now she's got a black eye, and the poor little baby's got whooping cough, and to cap it all, her horse died of a heart attack while being castrated."

All the foregoing is true, except for a couple of name changes. My mother can stay there -- she already features strongly in my writings as Gerioka Jones. Now: I thought the sequence of events, particularly the racism, was funny, very funny. My wife, who is as open-minded as I, thought it funny too. But I can conceive of a number of people who for various reasons would condemn all of hand all the characters in this story -- and most of all me, for bringing it to their attention.

And that's all I do: bring things to people's attention. I know I can't buck nature, but I propose to try to live with it.

((I think opposition to the factionalization of humanity is implicit in my remarks on bigotry. I deplore the necessity for mass actions as much as you do. But social reform has to be implemented on both a specific and a general level; it just would take too long to consider the rights and wrongs of every specific case. If we create one new inequity for every two we cure, that's unfortunate, but since every social action we take creates inequities somewhere along the line, it's hardly a cogent argument. Just as there is some validity to generalizations about classes of people, so is there also some validity to generalized cures.

The main point which I have in the past attempted to make about your fiction is that many of your characters, particularly women, are totally stereotyped. As I believe I once mentioned to you,

Carioca Jones is one of the few female characters you've created who seem to have any depth. Stereotypes are useful in satire, and if a writer wants to use them as a device for satirizing women's groups, civil rights advocates, or any other institution, more power to him. But stereotypes do not work well in a realistic story. "The Unfortunate Episode of Mrs. Hector Powell-Challenger" uses the stereotyped aunt and her circle of friends effectively in satirizing their social attitudes and hypocrisy; the same type of shallow characterization of women does not work in MIRROR IMAGE.

I don't believe I concluded that I had met "few genuinely kind people"; if anything, my conclusion was that even genuinely kind people are capable of unkind stereotyping, and this is what puzzles and disturbs me. While, as you say, we are unlikely to come to an accord on much of the above, the exchange has, presumably, forced both of us to re-examine our own beliefs, and clarify them in our own minds. And that's the primary purpose of Mythologies.

/MIKE GLYER/

I got Mythologies the other day. I've got to admit that character at the restaurant who had it in for Italians is a real dinosaur. Other than that observation I haven't got a whole lot to contribute to the bigotry discussion because it's been worn out for me through the last six years of grade school where I had the "opportunity" to attend "integrated" (just 30% white) schools. It always seemed that my color mattered more to others than theirs did to me, hence I tended to dismiss both them and the topic of racism. Prejudice against Jews has been less of my experience, but principally because skin color was the primary issue, and those interested in stirring something up just didn't have to do that much research, i.e. find out what everyone's religion was.

At the university level prejudice against Jews was slightly more visible, but at USC social consciousness of any kind, positive or negative, tends to be absent. That sounds cynical, but what's worse, it's almost true. On the other hand, with the impressive sweep of Jewish history, the eras of persecution and rejection, it's not exactly surprising that Jews will also make a distinction between themselves and everyone else; yet it never fails to irritate me to be identified as goy or goyisce kopf.

Overall it's ironic that social progress in racial and ethnic terms has not been enough to begin breaking down social distinctions stated on those terms, but instead has intensified those distinctions. Two decades after the early civil rights demonstrations, several years after integration has been accomplished in Southern educational institutions, a near riot can still be provoked in South Boston, and at San Fernando High (in LA, where I attended), racial violence persists -- and there, when Black, Brown, and White teacher caucuses are seriously suggested, the criticism against their inherent racism is treated by ethnics with contempt.

((I firmly believed all along that the real crisis in school integration would, could, and as it turned out, did come in the North. Speaking of which, I just happen to have a letter from Boston.)))

/REBECCA LESSES/

I read your first section and recognized from your story many people I know. Until about 3 weeks ago I was working at the Stop & Shop Company's headquarters on "D" Street in South Boston. You may have heard of the recent troubles in South Boston relating to school integration -- that's an indication of the attitudes there. The people I worked with came mostly from South Boston and Quincy. They were utterly incredible. What they said matched anything that ever came out of the South. They had conversations every so often at coffee break about Blacks. One conversation concerned mortgages for houses. One person said, "Well, you know, the government always pays for the cost of getting a mortgage and pays for the lawyer when a Black buys a house." Blacks were rarely called "Black", it was always "colored" or "n----". "They should never have come here, they should go back to Africa." When school started in September and, along with it, school busing for integration, the viciousness of the talk increased. One the first or second day of school, buses with Blacks in them went down the wrong street on their way home, and they were stoned by Whites. When someone brought this piece of information into the office, several people cheered. I felt very frustrated by this kind of talk, because I didn't dare say anything.

Now I'm working at the First National Bank of Boston. I thought I wouldn't hear any of that talk, because none of my co-workers live in South Boston and wouldn't be under the pressure there -- they would have no particular reason to think of race. One of the women was talking about an incident in her apartment house -- someone stole a couple of chairs and a mirror from the front lobby. Two Black students moved into the building this September and live on the first floor, near the lobby. This woman assumed that they were the thieves, with no evidence whatsoever. She's a nice woman, friendly, kind, generous, but when you get her on the subject of Black people, she's totally screwed-up.

It makes me so mad, and makes me feel so futile. I can't seem to convince people that they shouldn't make blanket judgments on a whole group of people because of the actions of a few of them. I'm sure I'm not completely openminded about people, but in my own mind, I try to tell myself not to make blanket judgments. I don't know why people act that way. I wish I did. What makes me feel even more apprehensive about the whole thing is that people my age, who are supposed to be so enlightened, are just as bigoted as the older people.

((I used to tell myself that once I got to college, I wouldn't have to listen to constant racial slurs, because educated people wouldn't allow themselves to participate in ethnic prejudice. I was very naive. Bigotry is not confined to the young or old, rich or poor, educated or ignorant. In fact, it doesn't appear to be confined at all.

The Boston situation is likely to worsen. There will be more incidents in the schools themselves, and students will be injured. Some people who are neutral will be forced into the antigusing camp because they'll be put off by the hostility of Blacks from ghetto areas, their habit of coming to school armed, for example. The national publicity isn't going to help. Since people tend to

act in the manner that they are expected to act, the constant mention of violent incidents will lead to further violence.

I had a close friend in high school who constantly argued with his parents because of their racial attitudes ("Martin Luther Coon is on TV again."). After a gap of several years, we met again, and he mentioned that he no longer supported civil rights legislation because Blacks were demanding jobs just because they were Black, and that therefore they deserved no further consideration. It did no good to point out that Whites had been taking jobs away from Blacks for decades just because they were White. Dick, like most people, wanted to be a "regular guy", and since the majority of people accept racial stratification, he convinced himself that he had been wrong in the past. Rationalization is a miraculous process to watch. A fairly well known fan, whom I have never met personally, once informed me quite heatedly that I had no right to actively support controversial policies, because it was unfair to my family to expose them to possible threats.)))

[BEN INDICK]

The world thrives on its bigotries, which, it seems to me, are essentially scapegoat devices, frustration-releasing valves. Today's most tragic example is Ireland, and solution seems impossible. If brother cannot live with brother, without even color as a factor, there seems little hope. Yesterday a bomb-laden car was exploded outside a school! Life itself is cheap today; viz. the current vogue of seizing hostages and, sometimes, actually killing these innocent persons. If depression comes, and population still soars, it may grow even cheaper. Our wars, and the Holocaust, have taught the grim lesson that Leaders do not consider Life inviolate.

What can be done about bigotry? I do not know, except that one must watch himself, must know when he is demonstrating bigotry, and, for his own sake, try to control and abolish it. Personally, I would have blown up at the woman with her wop remark. Hell, some of my best friends have been daggoes, and even some spice, hunkies, polocks, ruskies, and, my goodness, even a few n-----. Not to mention some Jewboys. What a world!

[SHERYL BIRKHEAD]

Prejudices are strange beasts. We all have 'em. Perhaps they take on forms different than the "norm", but we have 'em. I try to stay away from conversations which show hackles rising and bugaboos coming out of hiding. Mostly irrational (at least to those who don't have them), they don't seem to respond to logic or much else.

[BRUCE APTEURS]

I was once accused of racism. It's quite a long story, and I spent six pages describing part of it in Powermad #3, about a year ago. Taken down to basics, though: I put a guy in jail for assault after he tried to bash my head in. He happened to be black, and he spread the lie around that he'd bashed me because I had called him a n-----. Some people believed him, and I started receiving vague and not-so-vague threats from other blacks in the company I was assigned to at the time. The whole situation was quite unnerving, to say the least, and I almost: a) deserted to Canada, b) had a nervous breakdown, c) committed suicide, and/or d) got myself a gun and started blowing some

people's shit away. The Army officials pointedly ignored my requests for transfer and when I wrote my Congressmen, tried to claim I was insane and kick me out on a psycho discharge. By this time I almost was insane, and I think it was because a couple of officers involved realized that I was just about ready to start shooting my way out, including them in my targets, that I was finally transferred to this company. Took me months to recover from the experience, and it's left me with a permanent paranoia towards blacks. Fortunately, it's no longer as bad as it was; I no longer get the shakes at the mere presence of a black man, and I can even talk and joke with some of the blacks I know. But whenever I find myself in a room where there are more blacks than whites, I still get edgy.

((There are always some people around who can't wait to take advantage of an unfortunate situation. There are many Blacks perfectly willing to capitalize on the fact that many people feel guilty about the conditions under which Blacks have lived, and many others are well aware that Black pressure groups are getting results on a political level. Sheila had a fascinating encounter with a Black door-to-door salesman. When she told him that she was quite sure we didn't need any additional magazine subscriptions, he became surly: "You'd buy subscriptions from me if I wasn't Black." He patently didn't believe this, but thought it would be an effective sales gimmick. It probably is, though luckily neither Sheila nor I walk around bent under the weight of 200 years of Maude-style White guilt.

Your lack of success with the Army recalled one of my own experiences. When I was in Vietnam, the room next to me was occupied by a character named Kalmer Melby. Melby was about 25 years old, alcoholic, and looked like a football player. For reasons which were never quite clear to me, he took an instant dislike to my every action and engaged in a continual policy of harassment: turning on his radio full blast while I was sleeping, insulted me, climbed the partition between our rooms to pour beer onto my bunk, etc. As I'm sure you're aware, if you complain to the First Sergeant about this sort of thing, the enlisted men ostracize you, and the officers and NCO's would just as soon not know what's going on anyway. So you solve the problem yourself. I tried two approaches. First, I ignored him, figuring he'd lose interest if he didn't get a rise out of me. That didn't work. Next I got him alone one day and asked him straightforwardly why he felt compelled to bother me. He seemed quite embarrassed and put off when confronted with the fact, and I actually had no trouble for a couple of weeks. But then it resumed in full force. I wasn't about to fight him, he had almost 12 inches and sixty pounds, and I'm not exactly the -take-him-out-behind-the-building-and-thrash-him type anyway. On the other hand, I'm not exactly noted for being able to control my temper. So one evening, when he drove the point of his bayonet through the partition a few inches above the bunk on which I was sitting, I calmly picked up the hoochmaid's basin of soapy water and heaved it over into his room. A very wet Melby was at my door a few moments later. "D'Ammasse, in about five minutes there isn't going to be enough left of you to put a bandage on." I sat up in bed and uncovered my M16 rifle, pointed it. "Shit," he said, "You haven't got the guts to fire that thing." I very uncalmly fired one round past him, out the doorway. I never had any more trouble after that night.

/MICHAEL BISHOP/

Living where I do, I daily confront the word "n-----" used as an almost neutral appellation for blacks. By "friendly, sociable, unselfish," otherwise admirable people--from relatives, to neighbors, to children who've picked up the term from their parents. All I can do, really, is insist that words like these, slurs so frequently used they've almost become institutionalized, not be used in my home, around my children, preferably not around me, either. Anything stronger, I'm afraid, alienates, serves no purpose, maybe even embitters. And the old will not change for you, won't be dictated to. This isn't to say that genuine change hasn't occurred in the South--it has--but only that time and education won't eradicate the last vestiges of racism here or anywhere else when the poison is passed on, parent to child, by the frustrated, the failed, and the pettily mean. As it's being passed on, every day. Finally, you hope to reduce these people to a minority of their own, one nearly everywhere acknowledged as a societal evil. You become, as you put it, a bigot in regard to bigots, trying--somehow, even yet--to comprehend the basic common denominator that doesn't exempt even them from the human condition we all share. Like you, Don, I'm left with questions, a sense of bewilderment, but a bewilderment still a good deal short of despair. At least I hope you're not yet despairing. In a previous letter you told me that your own world view was a somewhat bleak one (as my own occasionally seems to be, I know); well, a certain bleakness is justifiable, maybe even inevitable, but it isn't finally very serviceable. And so I stand in the hail and smile...

((Fortunately, my sense of humor is indomitable -- some would say incorrigible -- and that maintains my sense of proportion. While I'm not sure there's much hope for the ultimate sanity of the human race, I'm not about to let the Great Unwashed ruin my life for me. ///I've always believed that racial conflict would be greater in the North than the South. Southerners had to split their resentment, because they felt that integration was being inflicted upon them by the North. Obviously, there was more than a shade of truth to that, and it has only been recently that the rest of the country has been ordered to meet the same standards we have instructed the South in. In Northern urban centers, like Boston, the chief target is the Black student, and Black organizations who have pressed for busing. Bostonians can't even split the blame in Ford's direction, because he as much as told them they were being treated unfairly. So the main target has been and will continue to be the Black population itself.)))

/JIM GOLDFRANK/

I hold the basic tenet that all men are brothers, and that each of us is responsible for helping where necessary, or at least acting decently to each and every one of us. I'm told that I could pass physically for any Mediterranean type: Spanish, French, Italian, Greek or Arab. I'm not sure where this comes from in a German Jewish ancestry. I've seen some people of my persuasion come out with the attitude "Yeah, I'm Jewish, and do you want to make anything out of it?" This is not my attitude, but I don't go under any false pretences either. I have a heritage of 4K years of wisdom and culture which I'm proud of. If there is anyone who cannot

accept that, well, I don't want anything to do with anyone who doesn't want anything to do with me. My people are Reform Jews, a sect which started in Germany, but which has had its largest flourishing here in the U.S. They are also xenophobes, which is to say that anything which is non-American is anti-American. They are also anti-Semitic in a strange way. Very early my mother told me not to talk with my hands because it looked Jewish. I didn't realize at the time this was common to many other ethnic groups. Safety in conformity? Who knows?

I've had a few brushes with racial intolerance. I tend to take a very deep tan in the summertime. When I was about 14 a grown man yelled "Hey, N-----" at me. I yelled back a particularly nasty epithet implying incestuous relations and ran like the dickens. I applied once for a programming job with Southern Railway. Evidently I broke the top of their programmer aptitude test, was recommended for hire, and a veto came down. I later found out I'd picked the wrong ancestors.

The cultural rule seems to be that sons should marry young ladies of the same persuasion. Which brings me to my wife Rejane, who is French Canadian and Catholic. I never received much flak from the folks on this because they knew they would have heard one word from me: "Goodbye." Our relations have been good these 17 years, or at least since I got them off her back for wanting to remain a Canadian citizen. And would you believe I was introduced to my mother-in-law as having the virtues of a good Christian?

There was never any pressure when I was a kid to go to Hebrew School or attend services. I only turned on to my own religion when I was in college when some friends persuaded me to go, and I discovered what a really great thing it was, and how much wisdom it had to offer. I claim that the men of the Old Testament were no mean social psychologists, and had a lot of good workable solutions for people getting along with one another. Christianity is all the greater for having built upon those teachings. One thing I've learned is that Jews should have learned lessons about not being biased because they know what it feels like. Well that's the difference between theory and practice. My mother can feel very ecumenical toward Christians, but those people who go to synagogue wearing yarmulkes, OY!

There is a great deal of racial prejudice in Israel among European, African, and Oriental Jews, which brings me to another point about intolerance. Take any group who's been down, Jew, Black, Puritan, unions, women, the list is endless. When someone wants equality, it generally means they want to be on top and do their share of the pushing down. Read Anatole France's Revolt of the Angels on this point. This seems to apply to groups as a whole, rather than individuals, or maybe it applies to the noisier individuals within groups who tend to lead the others. I'm sure you can provide your own examples.

((The tendency for emerging groups to seek domination is more or less a matter of inertia. The momentum of social change is in their direction and often takes a long time to neutralize. They generally have a better organization than those whom they are

attempting to dominate. The reason why many people fear similar groups more than substantially different ones is understandable; they are more of a threat. In the film, The Cardinal, a Catholic mother tells her daughter to marry a Jew or an Atheist, but not a Protestant. The reasoning, or lack thereof, is simple. The basis of Protestantism is that there was something wrong with the particulars of Catholicism, where Judaism or Mohammedanism are simply rivals. I would expect deeper hostility between Reform and Orthodox Jews, for example, than between Jews and Christians.)))

✓ ROGER SWEENEY

How do you account for your own fairly tolerant attitudes vis-a-vis those of your mother and father?

((That's a damned good question that I wish I could answer. I obviously do have prejudices, but not of the same type and (hopefully) not on the same scale as do they. Part of the answer is probably the result of normal adolescent opposition to the views of one's parents having solidified with age into dogma. Part may be because I had very little contact with minorities as a child, and therefore was never in a position of competition with them. But these are only partial answers, and they do not satisfy me.)))

✓ JODIE OFFUTT

During my early years prejudice meant looking down on Blacks. Period. It didn't apply to anybody or anything else. At a very early age I realized my grandfather was prejudiced (before I knew the word) and I later had to rationalize his prejudice. My dad was, too, although he recognized it and discussed it. I don't know if I was or not as a child -- I never was in a position to find out. I do know that I've been self-conscious in social situations with Blacks. Probably that was due to it being a new experience rather than any prejudice. (I have also seen my son describe somebody as the one in red pants and white hat, when the most obvious-to-me-description was that he was Black; I thought he was being overly liberal, but have since decided that the red pants were truly more distinctive a color to Chris.

The first time I ever seriously questioned the Catholic Church had to do with prejudice. Oh, I'd asked a couple of unanswerable questions way back in second or third grade about things that puzzled me and I got because-that's-the-way-it-is answers that didn't satisfy me, but what can a child do at that age; I forgot about it -- at least for a few years.

It was in 1952 or 53, when the first Desegregation Law went into effect. I was in high school and it seemed the most obvious thing in the world for the two Catholic schools in town to become one. There weren't many Black students, their facilities were terrible, and we were sharing teachers who had to walk back and forth between the schools. In the first place, it obviously made sense. In the second place, who should better set the example in our town, but the Catholics? Well, it didn't happen. And I had one hell of a time reconciling that with the "all God's children are brothers, love thy neighbor" stuff I'd been indoctrinated with all my life. Most of my childhood had been spent hearing about the Church and all it had done for the victims of WWII regardless of faith or nationality. I'd put countless dimes and nickels in boxes, and drank a lot of milk I

didn't want while being told about the poor starving children in Europe. I guess I never reconciled the failure to desegregate the Catholic schools, with what I'd been taught. (I still have a very hard time accepting gray areas.)

Prejudice toward Italians or Irish is honestly beyond my understanding. I can find no reason for it and it seems so ridiculous to me that I simply can't take it seriously. I just find it funny. It's like small town gossip; if there's nothing big to talk about (and there never is) people are going to look around till they find something, however insignificant. Or they'll speculate, then gossip about that. I think that if these poor people are so desperately lacking in their lives, so ignorant, then the rest of us just have to ignore them.

I'll tell you something that I find just as uncomfortable and embarrassing as prejudice. People who constantly make comments or OK jokes about Jews and Blacks to show how liberal they are. They may not be prejudiced, but they sure are self-conscious.

((Unfortunately, prejudice against Blacks and Jews should strike us as just as funny as prejudice against Italians and Blacks. It gets a bit harder to laugh when prejudice is directed against you personally. It's also hard to ignore people of this nature when they are in such an apparently large majority.

Your disillusionment with the church reminded me of one of the more memorable days of my high school years. Through a series of events which does not remain very clearly in my mind, I found myself one day dating one of the more desirable girls in my class. Sandi was a very nice person, though a bit prone to religious excesses. I had long since lost any firm belief in the Methodist Church, although I still attended sporadically. Sandi was also a Methodist, and one day she announced that a nearby Methodist church was sponsoring a series of speakers for an all day session Saturday, and would I take her. Now, Church meetings were never exactly my idea of a date, but I didn't want to relinquish the chance to go out with her, so I agreed. In due course we went, and I found the program about as boring as I had expected. The speakers went on endlessly, divinely inspired no doubt, and I didn't both a drink of cold water and a restroom desperately by the time they announced that the congregation would be broken up into various discussion groups. We were assigned to one group of about 50 people and sent off to a room where rows of seats had been set up. The congregation of this particular church was lily white, but the program had attracted Methodists from all over the area. Some of them were Black, and one of them was in our discussion group, a very quiet, rather attractive girl. By the time I returned from the restroom, everyone was seated except Sandi and I. All the seats were filled except for a neat, antiseptic circle around the seat where the Black girl sat. People were standing or sitting on the floor rather than sit next to her. I was in a combative mood as it was, so I rather pointedly insisted that Sandi and I fill in the gap. The discussion centered on Brotherhood in Christ, and I took the first opportunity I had of speaking to point out the obvious hypocrisy present in that very room. The discussion leader fended me off with an irrelevant series of quotations from the Bible

and then proceeded to ignore my hand whenever I raised it again. Eventually I could stand it no longer and insisted to Sandi that we leave. She seemed extremely embarrassed by the entire thing. I never took her out again, and I never attended a Christian church service again, except as a spectator.

THE LESS SERIOUS SIDE

✓PAUL DI FILIPPO✓

Regarding "Meteorologist's Soliloquy", by George Fergus, I can only say that I was hardly prepared for its fevered, maniac qualities. Truly, this is the work of a man obsessed. I only met the author once (on a twilight balcony during the Diacon banquet) and I don't believe we were even introduced, but he seemed a steady, sober chap. How then, upon seeing his byline, was I to expect so macabre, so grim, an opus? I hope the lad will realize his limits, though, and not let his Fancy dwell overlong on such subjects, for that way Madness lies. Nonsense aside, it's as fine a takeoff as I've seen in a while, although my favorite is still the parody of "To His Coy Mistress", which ends with the line: "And now let us discuss your tits." Unfortunately, I have lost all traces of it (the parody, not the...skip it.)

✓MIKE GLICKSOHN✓

The feghoots were amusing, although I wish they'd been padded out a bit more. Half the fun is in groaning at the amount of irrelevant background thrown in to toss you off the track of the punchline.

Not being a car driver, I've no flat tire tales to regale you with. At least, none to compare with your own experiences. Being in Prague with a two-day expired visa, no Czech at my command, a flat tire on my scooter, and a Czech soldier with a machine gun at my back isn't even in the same league.

((I was planning to omit this last paragraph, Mike, but decided it would be unfair to cancel your Czech.)))

✓BEN INDICK✓

Paul Di Filippo's piece was a genuine cautionary tale, but I fear it is not a laughing matter with me. Perhaps, too, it was, editorially, too much, after the other, preceding, articles of some despair.

✓MICHAEL BISHOP✓

Lee Carson's "Birchers" was fine, the Shakespeare parody less effective. DiFilippo's puns? Fine, especially the second one. A minor art form, puns. Yes, indeed.

✓MIKE GLICKSOHN✓

I've never encountered any prejudice in stores or restaurants because I was white, or English, or Canadian, or half Jewish, or even because I was a fan. But I do remember once going into a small restaurant very early one morning, just as the sun was rising, with my parents. When I was eleven through fifteen, I used to go on camping holidays with my parents, and most of these were down through New England. One morning, after we'd driven all

night from Toronto, we stopped in an all-night diner in...are you ready?...Providence, Rhode Island. It was the first time any of us had ever been to Providence. We were pretty grubby, having travelled all night as I mentioned, but we'd stopped for coffee and toast to tide us over until we reached a campsite and could cook a proper (cheaper) breakfast. The counterman was all alone, and quite friendly. He started asking us about where we were going and what we planned to do. Then he asked us where we were from. We told him we'd come from Toronto. "Toronto, Canada!" he intoned, with the sort of reverence one usually reserves for Shangri-La, or at the very least Disneyland: "You come from Toronto, Canada?" We all agreed that yes, this was the case. Then he said something that's stuck very clearly in my mind for at least the twelve years, maybe longer since I'm not exactly sure how old I was at the time. He asked us in a very puzzled tone, "What in hell would you want to come to Providence for?" I never did find a satisfactory answer to that...

((A base canard, indeed. In all honesty, however, as much as I love the Providence area, I make no secret of the fact that I was completely taken with Toronto last year and would dearly love to live there. On the other hand, when I visit Boston, Manhattan, Chicago, Washington, or even London, Canada, for that matter, I'm satisfied living in the second best metropolitan area in North America.)))

[Bruce Arthurs]

Since you were at Fort Lee once, you might be interested to learn that a recent study listed nearby Petersburg as having the fourth highest rate of venereal disease in the nation, after Washington, New York, and Detroit. Hell of a claim to fame. Can you imagine the city council putting that up on a sign outside of town: YOU ARE NOW ENTERING PETERSBURG, FOURTH HIGHEST RATE OF VENEREAL DISEASE IN THE NATION. DRIVE DEFENSIVELY.

((The sign should probably read: SWIVE DEFENSIVELY.)))

BYPASSING TIME AND SPACE

WITH ISABELLA FIGHOLLER

--Mike Blake

During her tenure as diplomatic troubleshooter for the Solarian Council, Isabella Figholler usually found her most vexing problems in interplanetary relations were with the recalcitrant and headstrong colonists of Mars. Because of the incredibly harsh physical conditions on the planet, only those from equally primitive environments on Earth, such as Eskimos, Australian aborigines, and desert Africans and Arabs, could be induced to settle there. 21st century technology and their own stubbornness enabled them to survive and prosper where all others had failed, but before long they began to make the most outrageous demands of Earth and the other members of the Solarian Council--demands which were usually met. Thanks to Mars' lower gravity and selected radiation

mutation, the colonists were able to grow fruits and vegetables of the most amazing size and weight. Earth came to depend upon imported Martian foodstuffs. The colonists began increasing the price by great leaps, and when Earth protested, the Martian colonies declared an embargo of all edibles. Earth backed down, and the incident--called the Ares Edible Crisis--taught her a bitter lesson. Isabella did much to cool down tensions in Areas. Later, armed conflict broke out between the Martian colonists and those granted the right to inhabit and exploit the asteroid belt, dwelling on the planet Icarus. Isabella was able to stop the fighting and was generally credited with bringing to a peaceable conclusion the Ares-Icarus War.

Trouble seemed to be brewing again when Isabella found herself summoned to a briefing of the Solarian Council. One of the Ares colonies had slowed production to a virtual standstill because the Council would not meet what it called a simple demand. The colony was New Algeria, founded by settlers from the Mediterranean coast of Africa, specialized in the growth of huge fruit. What they were demanding was a new governor for the colony, as the old one had died. None of the settlers, from Eskimos to aborigines, would cooperate with officials and scientists in charge unless they were members of that particular ethnic group. The Council coped with this by taking selected colonists and training them in the necessary areas. The New Algerian demand, however, was unprecedented and could not be met. They wanted a governor who was not only of their own ethnic group and an able administrator, but a practicing doctor of medicine as well! The Council was perplexed. They had several medical students, but they were all too young and had no training in colonial government. Not knowing of anyone who was an expert in interplanetary government as well as a doctor (besides herself, of course) Isabella decided to visit New Algeria and find out the reason for the unusual request.

The rulers of New Algeria were called deys, the title used by governors of the original Algiers on Earth before it became a French colony. Isabella was met by the acting Dey, the former assistant dey, as soon as she landed. On the way to his office, she noticed the distinctly hostile attitude accorded him by the colonists. "They despise me," he said sadly. "I am not a doctor, alas, merely a politician. Because I have not been able to find a true Dey to rule us, the workers refuse to harvest and weigh our fruit, which threatens to over-ripen and spoil."

Isabella pressed him for an explanation as to why the people insisted on a doctor, when the colony already had enough, and it could not be logically considered a relevant qualification for holding office. "It is not logical. The people are superstitious," he replied, but deferred any continued discussion, saying it would all be graphically illustrated by a visit to where New Algeria's chief fruit export was prepared for shipment. So he took her to the plant where huge, sweet, delicious apples, weighing up to a hundred pounds, were readied to be sent to Earth. Isabella, legendary throughout the solar system as the only person ever to consume an entire Martian apple at one sitting, found her mouth watering at the fruit standing next to the electronic scales. "Our workers' demand is simple: you must find a physician to rule us or they will no longer weigh the fruit and send it to Earth."

"But why?" cried Isabella in exasperation. "Why is that the only thing that will keep your workers on the job. Why?"

The official looked slowly from the empty scales to Isabella. "Surely you have heard that a doctor as dey keeps the apples aweigh?"

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Due to unexpected, and flatterring, demand, circulation of Mythologies
is now approximately 100. I hope to have the next issue out by the
first week of December. Keep those cards and letters coming.
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MYTHOLOGIES

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