



Mythologies

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REALITY

This is going to be a very atypical issue of MYTHOLOGIES. For one thing, it is very late. For another, it is designed to catch up with all of the letters and loose ends that have been hanging around. And lastly, there will be no MYTH this time. Instead, there's this, a genuine traditional editorial, in which I plan to explain why this issue is so late, what is going to happen to MYTHOLOGIES in the future, and what is currently happening in my life. This is not an indication that I am throwing out the fairly formal format (how's that for alliteration?) that I've used in the past, but merely a reflection of the fact that a lot of things have happened in the past few months, and I've been pretty much out of touch with a lot of people, and I want to use this as an open letter as well. Besides, many of the people who are getting MYTHOLOGIES now are not the close friends I've made in fandom over the years, and a lot of you probably have very little idea about my background. On to it.

1. Why is MYTHOLOGIES so late?

This is a complex question requiring a complex answer, although time and money cover most of it. Our thirteen month old car turns out to be a lemon, you see. With only 20,000 miles on it, an oil seal let go after the engine temperature indicator light malfunctioned, and before we knew it, we were shelling out \$1000 for a new engine. So help me, on the way home from the garage, we developed a horrible grinding sound which turned out to be a broken brake caliper, which cost us another \$100. In rapid succession and precession, we lost the gauge for the gas tank, the carburetor, and a few other minor things, which brought a total of about \$1400 in repairs in two months.

As if the internal problems were not enough, pranksters or thieves paid me a visit at work. They loosened the lug bolts on two of my wheels, but were unable to get the wheels off. Annoyed, they replaced the hubcaps without tightening the lug bolts, then hammered my tail-pipe shut. Luckily the muffler made a lot of noise, which led us to take the car to a Midas Muffler shop. Fortunately, the wheels didn't fall off until I was in their parking lot. The sound of the muffler drowned out the grinding of the wheels.

Piling Pelion upon Ossa, the washing machine burnt out a clutch, the front door lock broke in the locked position, the front storm door disintegrated, etc. etc. Although Sheila and I have a comfortable income, it's not that comfortable - we have expensive hobbies. So I finally was driven to something I should have done sooner.

As most of you know, I have a B.A. in English from Michigan State, but am working as a middle level manager for Taunton Silversmiths, a division of Lenox China. Because of my three years service in the Army, including a year in Vietnam, I am entitled to GI education benefits. So I enrolled in Johnson & Wales college, with a major in Management. In addition to providing some helpful knowledge (hopefully) about the way businesses operate, thereby making me a more valuable employee, this action also results in a bit over \$200 a month income. Which is

not to be scoffed at.

I'm taking two courses at present, Accounting and Economics. The Accounting course is relatively easy, particularly since I have the right type of mind for it. Economics is another story altogether. This is the one area I've long been unable to grasp, and although I'm doing quite well there also, I'm not as much at ease with it as with accounting. Worse, the 26 year old teacher knows surprisingly little about his subject area. Let me give a few examples.

1) He cannot grasp the fact that there is a difference between a democracy and a representative democracy.

2) He refuses to accept any variation from the book, even when the variation is obvious. For example, he stated the following theoretical situation. The only foodstuff in the world is wheat. There are only ten suppliers of wheat. Each supplier charges ten dollars per bushel. If one supplier charges eleven dollars a bushel, what would happen? The answer from most people was that the last man would not be able to sell his wheat. I demured. "He'd only be able to sell his wheat if demand exceeded supply, and then he'd be the last person to sell." The instructor disagreed. I pointed out that the alternative, as described by him, would be that people would starve rather than pay the extra dollar. We assumed people had sufficient money. He insisted that they would in fact starve rather than pay that price.

3) He insisted that government regulation has no effect on supply. Again this is demonstrably untrue. Government regulation of cobalt blue has very definitely affected supply, it cut it off. Silver and gold are similarly regulated.

4) He does not understand how the graduated income tax works.

5) He suggested that we might some day see gasoline taxes used exclusively for highway maintenance rather than flowing into the national treasury. In fact, for over a decade this is exactly what has happened.

You get the general idea. He's not J. Kenneth Galbraith. But between the two nights (4 hours each) of classes I attend, the homework involved, and increased demands from my job, I've had less time to devote to my hobbies. Alas.

2. What does the future hold for MYTHOLOGIES?

The tentative plan at the moment is to run four issues per year, with the page count of individual issues increased to 100 pages each. This should provide ample room for the letter column, and for some more extensive articles I'd like to run. Hopefully this will include some in-depth studies like Mark M. Keller's piece on FIRE TIME last issue. The format otherwise will be pretty much as you've seen in the past. With more space to play with, I expect to increase slightly the number of interior illustrations, starting next issue, although I still don't plan to make use of as many as most fanzines use. Artists please note, I have a very low store of material.

The very next issue is probably going to feature a 30 page article by George Fergus and some commentary by Jerry Pournelle. There will be

the usual MYTH and FABLE sections, and hopefully material by Paul DiFilippo, Mark M. Keller, and others. Although I'm still not actively looking for material otherwise, I am interested in pieces such as Keller's article on FIRE TIME, dealing with SF novels or stories. You can try something else on me if you like, but the odds are not as high that I'll accept it.

3. What's going on otherwise?

Although it may not be obvious, since I had such a large backlog of unpublished material placed with fan editors before the current level of activity cut into time for fanac, I've not written much for the fan press in the last four months. In fact, the only thing I can think of is a longish piece on Earl Derr Biggers I did for Paul Walker and J.J. Pierce. I plan to pick up the pace a bit, but I'm concentrating more on quality than quantity, for various reasons.

There are a number of big projects on the fire. I've been submitting to the prozines again. I've been doing a large number of reviews for both Richard Delap's F&SF REVIEW and Keith Justice's SF BOOKLOG, both of which activities I find rewarding for a variety of reasons. And Bonnie Dalzell and I have even negotiated with a publisher interested in one or more children's books, although nothing too concrete has come of that.

Although I've long had a low opinion of the Fan Hugo's, I was obviously happy to be nominated. Thank you all again. On the other hand, I was not too disappointed (or surprised) that I failed to win. I was, I confess, annoyed to place after "No Award", even though I realize it is likely the simple result of having so many people voting in a category to which they have little or not exposure.

Another project that Sheila and I have become involved in is a full catalog of our library. This amounts to 15,000 books at present, with an acquisition rate of approximately 1500 per year. (Before anyone asks, no, I don't read them all, although I intend to some day Read Soon Now. I read approximately 60%, which includes all of the SF.) This consists of typing a three by five card full of information for each book, maintaining a handwritten acquisition list, stamping and numbering each volume in the library. This was sparked mostly by the disappearance of some books from our library, but mostly because the breadth of the library has gotten to a point beyond the capacity of our collective memories.

Before I close for the issue, I'd like to recommend a few novels I've read recently. SALEM'S LOT by Stephen King (Signet) is the longest and possibly best vampire novel I've ever read. I notice that it has been nominated for a Howard this year. Similarly, Jeffrey Konvitz's THE SENTINEL from Ballantine is a very interesting supernatural/occult novel wherein the door to Hell is concealed in the basement of an apartment building. BEASTS by John Crowley is not as good, but is interesting (curse this typer) and well done nonetheless. Two Laser books are worth mentioning. BLAKE'S PROGRESS by Ray Nelson was as good as I'd been led to believe. M.K. Jeter, author of SEEKLIGHT and DREAMFIELDS displays some problems of inexperience, but particularly in the latter, some inventiveness as well. Finally, I wholeheartedly recommend Silverberg's THE STOCHASTIC MAN to those of you who can read a downbeat book without attacking the author as a pessimist, pervert, or New Wavist.

YOUNG WORLDS

Most of the good SF published in the prozines has been reprinted in paperback. That's a truism, isn't it? When you consider the vast number of paperback SF anthologies and one-author collections, one has to think that anything worthwhile has long since been reprinted. As a matter of fact, it probably is true, at least with regard to the major figures in the field. But there's at least one writer who has been appearing regularly for over twenty years, whose stories are almost invariably good, whose name is familiar to most readers, yet who has never had a paperback published in this country, despite almost 150 published stories. Of those, only 13 have ever appeared in paperback in the US, all in anthologies. That writer is Robert F. Young.

Robert F. Young was born in 1917. After serving in the Army, he took a succession of jobs in industrial firms, including such positions as steelworker, shipping clerk, machine set-up man, and the like. He married, and is now a grandfather. Although he has not made public many details of his personal life, it is clear that he lives on the shores of Lake Erie, probably in the Buffalo area. His first SF sale was to STARTLING STORIES, and he has appeared subsequently in virtually every SF market, including the SATURDAY EVENING POST.

Over the years, Young has demonstrated an interest in a variety of themes, some of which dominate his work for a period of time, then disappear, others of which occur intermittently throughout his writing career. One of these is his interest in ecology. In "St Julie and the Visgi" (1955), alien conquerors remake the Earth in the image of their homeworld, forcing their human subjects to cut down every tree on Earth. A young girl's determination to save her favorite tree alters their entire philosophical outlook. This concern with the environment appears rather more openly in "Prisoners of Earth" (1955). Human culture has spread throughout the universe, absorbing and terraforming all it touches. The protagonist searches for his wife, a poet, who wanders from planet to planet, seeking to escape the "tentacles of Earth".

Young drove the point home with less finesse in "Room with a View" (1956). A space explorer discovers a ruined city and discovers that the alien race which built it destroyed nature, thereby causing its own eventual spiritual death. Rarely is Young quite so didactic, though it is equally rare that he hides his didactic purposes. Man destroys his entire ecology in "The Courts of Jamshyd" (1957), a story which seems almost grafted onto its lecture.

One of Young's best known stories is "To Fell a Tree" (1959), in which a team of interplanetary lumberjacks set out to cut down a gigantic tree. The protagonist discovers that the tree is inhabited by a tree sprite, and that the destruction of the tree will cause her death as well. Ultimately we learn that the alien villages at the foot of the tree are a part of it, and when the tree is removed, the homes wither and die, destroying the human colony housed therein. The moral is obvious; you cut the ties to the natural world at your own peril.

Environmental concerns play peripheral roles in many of the stories published during the next several years, as in "Forest of Unreason", in which humans are altered physically by their environment, and in "Deluge II" in which one man is able to sense the imminent death of the Earth, both published in 1961. Nevertheless, although the strain of interest in ecology continued through the present, it gradually became more muted as Young became preoccupied with a variety of other subjects.

Young uses frequent Biblical references. In "Jonathan and the Space Whale" (1962), Jonathan finds himself trapped inside an immense, intelligent, space travelling "whale", which encompasses an entire human civilization, a civilization unaware of the existence of an external universe. Jonathan compares the simplicity and wastelessness of their civilization to the one he left, wondering why the bulk of humanity didn't seek a better relationship with their environment. "More probably though, Jonathan reflected, they put up with the pestilential pollution that clouded their skies every morning and every evening because its source lay in an object they revered - i.e. the gasoline propelled automobile."

Which leads us to another early but enduring theme in Young's work - the examination of the human fascination with the gadget, particularly the American fixation on the automobile. In "Chrome Pastures" (1956) for example, the purchase of a new car has become a basic principle of religious faith. The devil takes advantage of the same foible in "Added Inducement" (1957), trading free televisions for human souls. A man is killed because he defaces an automobile in "Your Ghost Will Walk" (1957) and there are automobile cemeteries in "Pilgrims' Project" (1957).

The automobile becomes an article of clothing in "Romance in a Twenty-First Century Used Car Lot" (1960), and it is considered immoral to be seen in public outside of one's own private vehicle. In "Sweet Tooth" (1963) metallic alien children romp across the countryside, dining on cars, trucks, and tanks. Automobiles are the primary characters in "Quest for the Holy Grille" (1964), an epic fantasy of sorts.

A great number of Young's stories are borrowed wholesale from mythology, folklore, and fairy tales. Some stories merely use pre-existing characters, like the wood sprite in "To Fell a Tree", St Nick in "Santa Clause" (1959), or the various Biblical references. Many others are science fictional recastings of familiar stories: "Boarding Party" (1963) is Jack and the Beanstalk, "Neither Stairs Nor Door" (1963) is Rapunzel, "Jupiter Found" (1963) is Adam and Eve, "The Deep Space Scrolls" (1963) is Noah's Ark, as was "Deluge II". Still others are new treatments of old stories. "Arena of Decisions" (1964) is a clever variant of the Lady or the Tiger. In "The Thousand Injuries of Mr Courtney" (1964), time travel is used to create a new version of Poe's "A Cask of Amontillado". There are numerous other examples, including "Rumplestiltskinski" (1965), which surely needs no explanation, nor does "Peeping Tommy" (1965). "The City of Brass" (1965) is an updated version of one of the Arabian Nights.

Young makes use of historical characters as well. The protagonist of "A Knight Ther Was" (1963) eventually takes a place in the past as Sir Thomas Mallory. Ben Franklin is featured in "The Second Philadelphia Experiment" (1964) and Samuel Johnson in "Minutes of a Meeting at the Mitre" (1965).

Possibly the element which is most easily recognized in Young's better stories is his fascination with size, with giants of one type or another. "To Fell a Tree" is only one of many such examples. Another of Young's most famous stories is "Goddess in Granite" (1957) which features a gigantic mountain shaped like a naked woman in repose. The gigantic figure represented by a natural/unnatural promontory figures also in "Nikita Eisenhower Jones" (1960), this time on Pluto, and in "The Hand" (1972), an asteroid that appears to be the hand of God. There is as well a head shaped moon in "Let There Be Night" (1963).

"Jonathan and the Space Whale" wasn't the only story to feature an interplanetary leviathan. A star travelling space whale appears in "Starscape with Frieze of Dreams" (1970) and its sequel "Abyss of Tartarus" (1971). A human giantess is the central figure in "In What Cavern of the Deep" (1964), and an animated sphinx in "The Sphinx" (1964).

Young's only series features the Beowulfs, a group of men whose job it is to kill or remove primitive gods, brought to physical life because of the strength of superstition of their followers. There are three stories in this series, each featuring the extermination or eviction of a giant "god": "The Ogress" (1970), "Genesis 500" (1972), and "The Giantess" (1973). Finally, in what amounts to a satiric fantasy, and in a story reminiscent of Slawomir Mrozek's THE ELEPHANT or Stanislaw Lem's THE CYBERIAD, we have a giant statue coming to life in "Techmech" (1975).

During the past few years, Young's stories have concentrated more and more on the inner mind, and less on physical reality. In "Remnants of Things Past" (1973), for example, a man literally sifts through his own memories. Reality itself is rewritten in "New Route to the Indies" (1974). The subjectivity of reality is examined closely in "Lord of the Rays" (1975), when a space pilot discovers an Egyptian burial boat orbiting the sun.

I don't propose to provide a detailed analysis of each story, because I doubt that anyone is really interested in the plot summary of 150 short stories. While re-reading Young's work, however, I was impressed with the sheer uniform quality of the writing. There aren't any really terrible stories, and only a few that seem poorly constructed or dull. But I thought it might be interesting to select just Young's twenty or so best stories and put together the BOOK OF ROBERT F. YOUNG for Don Wollheim's consideration. So here, in chronological order, are my choices for that collection.

For my first choice, I'd take one of Young's earliest stories, his first appearance in ASTOUNDING. "The Garden in the Forest" (1953) is outwardly a routine story of an alien invader investigating Earth's culture, only to be suborned by the simplicity of a young child. The most striking aspect of this story is that the alien examines humanity by symbolic interpretation of human psyches, and in doing so, Young has developed some fascinating imagery.

"St Julie and the Visgi" (1955) was mentioned earlier, and as with the preceding story, Young's skill at execution prevents the story from collapsing around the "cute" plot. "Prisoners of Earth" (1955) is one of Young's most convincing stories, and the self-contradicting character of the husband searching for his alienated wife on one planet after

another is well defined. There's a good inside view of a mind poisoned by depression and self pity in "Jungle Doctor" (1955). A beautiful but alien woman finds herself teleported to Earth through mischance, and sacrifices her sole hope of returning to her own culture in order to save a man from his guilt over the death of his wife.

Robotic representations of famous poets are menaced with the threat of permanent storage in "Emily and the Bards Sublime" (1956). Emily's love for their presence in a museum exhibit drives her to find a way to secure their continued use despite the museum's description of them as irrelevant to the modern world. Several of Young's stories display strong female characters, whose strength is brought out only when they are faced with adversity.

Several of Young's stories deal with some aspect of education, and none of these are better than "The Little Red Schoolhouse" (1956), in which automated conditioning techniques transform every child into an acceptable citizen, but which instill in each the identical neurosis. "Goddess in Granite" (1957) is one of his best stories. When the protagonist reaches the apparently virgin lakes of the goddess' eyes, he discovers that he is not the first to have walked their shores, and is distraught. "What did you do when you learned that your goddess had feet of clay? What did you do when you discovered that your true love was a whore?" It's one of the most powerful scenes in SF.

There are occasional fantasies sprinkled through the years, none better than "Santa Clause" (1959), in which a man's deal with the devil stipulates that all of his childhood illusions must come to life, and he finds himself plagued by Easter bunnies, Jack Frost, and the like.

"Nikita Eisenhower Jones" (1960) is not strong on plot, but the isolation of the lone man on Pluto is evocative and haunting. It's a strange contrast to the humor of "Romance in a Twenty-First Century Used Car Lot" (1960), a gentle but biting satire on our love of the automobile. And Young's style and approach are different again in "Forest of Unreason" (1961). In the latter, a group of humans are menaced by a satyr who lurks in the distant parts of the planet they are exploring. One by one the human complement is lured off, to fall prey to a world-circling entity.

"Jonathan and the Space Whale" (1962) was described in some detail earlier. It packs an awful lot of story into a relatively small amount of words. Many writers would have made this novelet into a novel. I confess to a great deal of fondness for "Sweet Tooth" (1963), in which metallic aliens dine on cars, but I'd be hard pressed to defend it as one of Young's best other than by saying that it amused me. The magazine version (GALAXY) had delightful illustrations. It is, as well, a sarcastic comment on "Sci-Fi" monster movies.

One of the most stylistically impressive of Young's stories is "The House That Time Forgot" (1963), wherein a woman is able to regress through time by removing modern belongings from her house. By so doing, she is able to recapture a crucial point in her life and alter a bad decision that had disastrous results. The various scenes of the old woman dwelling alone in a house that seems to be haunted by time rather than by ghosts, the glimpses we are provided of her slipping time sense, are all brought off with consummate skill. This may well be Young's single best story.

Young used a time travel paradox to throw a new twist into Poe's "A Cask of Amontillado" in "The Thousand Injuries of Mr Courtney" (1964). He also uses various mythological references and a very convincing love story in "In What Caverns of the Deep" (1964). This latter story features a dainty woman who suddenly begins to grow at an enormously accelerated rate, until she is ultimately a living giantess. We then learn that she is a foundling, the lost child of a race of antediluvian giants that now live at the bottom of the sea. It's not plausible enough to be science fiction, but it's an excellent fantasy.

Young did several stories in which time travellers get involved in strange doings in the past. My favorite of these is "When Time Was New" (1964). In this one, our hero wanders through the age of dinosaurs in his triceratank, and rescues two Martian children first from pirates, then, in a manner of speaking, from the brainwashed automatons of the Martian government. It's a good adventure story with an ending that's a bit contrived, but not enough to hurt.

Another fine fantasy was published in the first Sol Cohen issue of AMAZING. "The City of Brass" (1965) features time travel to the future, a beautiful princess, the Seal of Solomon, afrits and djinns, a mutated superrace, and various other marvels. It reads very much like the kind of story that used to appear in UNKNOWN.

"L'Arc de Jeanne" (1966) is, obviously, Joan of Arc, this time set on another planet. The parallels are so obvious that the reader might early consider the story contrived, but as it progresses, it is clear that it was intended to give that impression, in order to lead up to the startling ending.

I'd pick one of the Beowulf series, probably "The Ogress" (1970), because it has a particularly repulsive menace. The first of the two space whale stories, "Starscape with Frieze of Dreams" (1970) features one of the best developed characters in all of Young's work, and one of the strangest cultures. The most recent selection would be "Tinker-boy" (1974), an almost surrealistic story about a space pilot who suddenly finds himself inside the toy spaceship he played with as a child, having regressed in time as well, and who hopes to change the course of his own remembered past.

Long time fans of Robert F. Young will probably notice that the preceding selections did not include his Hugo nominee, "Little Dog Gone" (1964). In that story, an out of work actor is saved by a woman and an alien dog, only to desert them later in favor of his own career. The dog then loses its life dramatically, and in such a manner as to show the actor how callous he has been. It's not a bad story, but it's not one of his best either. First of all, it's too cute. The description of the lovability of the doggone is so thick that it should be obvious to the reader that the dog is to die. Second, the motivation of the main character is inadequate; we are never shown those aspects of the actor's character that make him first desert his friends, and then return to them.

The stories that did not make this list aren't far behind in quality, with few exceptions. The infrequency with which Young has been reprinted should be a source of embarrassment to various editors in the field; the fact that he has never had a paperback collection in this country should embarrass the publishers.

POLL RESULTS

As most of you know, I ran a short poll in MYTHOLOGIES. Although it was chiefly designed for my own information, some of the questions were of sufficient general interest that I am going to publish some of the results here. I'd like to thank everyone who participated.

1. What is your current occupation, and what would you like to be doing for a living?

Mike Glyer	Ex-student	Baseball sportscaster
Michael Carlson	Student	Writer
Dave Hulan	Optical engineer	Living off inherited \$
A.D. Wallace	Retired Research Mathematician	Same
Barbara Geraud	Bookkeeper/Pay Supervisor	Reference Librarian
John Robinson	Student	Computer Animator
Gil Gaier	Teacher	Same
Roy Tackett	Electronics Technician	Nothing
Paul Walker	Offset Printer	Writer
Stephen Sawicki	Student	Youth Coordinator
Mike Bracken	Unemployed	Writer/Editor
D. Gary Grady	Navy Journalist	Film Producer
Vic Kostrikin	Student	Undecided
Gene Wolfe	Editor, Tevhnival Magazine	Same
Bruce Townley	Unemployed	Cartoonist
Diana Thatcher	Student	Paleontologist
David Singer	Student	Computers
Robert Whitaker	Postal Worker	?
Lesleigh Luttrell	Grad Student	Anthropology, Teaching & Research
Terry Kaufman	Sales Editor, Order Clerk	Undecided
Paul DiFilippo	Student	Writer
David Taggart	Student	Cowboy
Frank Balazs	Student	Professor
Jim Hudson	Consultant in Land Use, Water Quality, Transport	Same
Jim Mann	Student	Teacher
Rebecca Lesses	Unemployed	?
Laurie Trask	Student	Writer
Jackie Hilles	Student, Sales Clerk	Teacher
George Fergus	Designs Micro-miniature Electronics	SF Editor/Publisher
Jon D'Amassa	Production Control Manager	Editor/Publisher/Critic
Ben Indick	Pharmacist	Playwright
Toby Staffran	Clerk	Musician

Pauline Palmer	College Publications Office	Nothing
Jody Offutt	Typist	Librarian
Barry Hunter	Business Forms Salesman	Writer/Editor
Ed Conner	Whatever I feel like	--
John Curlovich	Substitute Teacher, Writer	Emperor of the World
Randy Reichardt	Library Assistant	Librarian
Lynne Brodsky	Teaching Assistant	Chemical Research
Dave Szupek	Unemployed	Actor, Psychologist
Rick Bartucci	Medical Student	General Practitioner
Alyson Abramowitz	Student, Bookkeeper	Business Editor
Fred Lerner	Librarian	Same
Sam Long	Grad Student	Writer
Doug Hoylman	Assistant Actuary	Nothing
Roger Bryant	Worker in Rubber Plant	Same
Cy Chauvin	Write for Trade Magazine	SF Editor
Neal Blaikie	Student	Psychology, Journalism
Steve Beatty	Student	Physics Research
Bud Webster	Voice for Radio Commercials	?
Mark M. Keller	Teach College Biology	Freelance Science
		Critic/Technical
		Editor/Teach History
		of Science
Chester Cuthbert	Retired from Property Insurance Business	Write Articles
Denny Bowden	Teach English	Undecided
Henry Argasinski	?	Writer
Stephen Dorneman	Library Worker	Writer
Tara Wayne	Odds and Ends	?
MacDonald		
Reed Andrus	Traveling Salesman	Scriptwriter
Jim Lang	Student	SF Editor/Ambassador to Canada
Chip Hitchcock	Hack Engineering	Stagecraft/Pilot
Neal Wilgus	USPO Clerk	Writer
Ellen F. Franklin	Broadcast Assistant	Raise Horses
Tim Marion	Student	Art Education
Lee Carson	Law Student	Indian Chief
Dale Donaldson	This & That	Something Manual
Sheila D'Amassa	Lion Tamer	Printer
Brett Cox	Student	Writer
Cathy McGuire	Receptionist	?
Scott DeVore	Student	Physicist
George Flynn	Chemist	Writer
Laurine White	Hydrologist	Bookseller
David Merkel	Student	Paleontologist
Judith Schrier	Lab Assistant in Psychology/Houseperson	Writer, Folk Dancer
Rick Brooks	Tutor/Substitute Teacher	Writer
Shakrallah Jabre	Bowling Manager	Run Coffee Shop
Adrian Washburn	?	Historical Society
Stuart Gilson	Student	Teach Genetics or Physics
Bob Webber	Chemical Engineering Student	Bio-Medical Engineer
Victoria Vayne	Secretary	Editor
Graham England	Computer Programmer	Same

T.J. Walsh	Computer Programmer	Rich
Gayle Kaplan	Student	Undecided
Tony Cvetko	Student	Machine Design
Peter Presford	Electrical Contractor	Same
Roger Schlobin	College Professor, SF & Medieval Lit	Same
David Moyer	Computer Science	Undecided
Alan Lankin	Student	Research
Tom Morley	Math Professor	Same
James Kennedy	Unemployed	Writer
Darroll Pardoe	Information Scientist	Publisher
Rosemary Pardoe	?	Publisher

2. Favorite Mystery Writers.

The winner with 22 mentions was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Dorothy Sayers (16)
 Raymond Chandler (14)
 Agatha Christie (14)
 Rex Stout (11)
 Dashiell Hammett (10)
 Ellery Queen (8)
 John D. MacDonald (5)
 John Dickson Carr (5)
 Leslie Charteris (4)
 Ross MacDonald (4)
 Emma Lathen (4)

There were three votes each for Isaac Asimov, Edgar Allen Poe, Margery Allingham, Josephine Tey, and Alistair MacLean.

There were two votes each for Donald Westlake, Ian Fleming, Dick Francis, Maxwell Grant, Nicholas Freeling, and Robert Van Gulik.

Mentioned in one list were Phoebe Atwood Taylor, Harlan Ellison, Mike Barry, Sapir & Murphy, Wahloo & Sjowall, Earl Derr Biggers, Jon Latimer, Patricia Highsmith, Michael Delving, Stanley Ellin, Larry Niven, Joe Gores, Richard Marsh, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, Ian Watson, Richard Goodwin, Mary Stewart, Sax Rohmer, John Creasey, Mickey Spillane, Colin MacInnes, Colin Wilson, Harry Kemelman, August Derleth, Robert Parker, Ed McBain, Charity Blackstock, Patricia Moyes, Robert Arthur, Victoria Holt, Cornell Woolrich, Fred Brown, Patricia Wentworth, George Simonon, Peter O'Donnell, William Brittain, Graham Greene, John LeCarre, Frederick Forsyth, Len Deighton, P.D. James, Desmond Bagley, Tony Kendrick, and L.P. Davies.

3. Do you prefer segmented or traditional letter columns in fanzines?

Prefer segmented: 38
 Prefer Traditional: 7
 Prefer Segmented in MYTHOLOGIES: 21

4. Are you optimistic or pessimistic?

Optimists: 42
 Pessimists: 23

5. What percentage of your reading is SF?

Glyer - 75
Carlson - 30
Hulan - 5
Wallace - 80
Geraud - 70
Robinson - 35
Gaier - 50
Tackett - 15
Walker - 50
Sawicki - 75
Bracken - 50
Grady - 12.5
Kostrikin - 20
Wolfe - 20
Townley - 75
Thatcher - 50
Singer - 70
Whitaker - 40
Luttrell - 5
Kaufman - 25
DiFilippo - 50
Taggart - 15
Balazs - 45
Hudson - 50
Mann - 78
Birkhead - 75
Lesses - 10
Trask - 75
Hilles - 50
Fergus - 60
D. D'Ammassa - 60
Indick - 50
Staffman - 75

Palmer - 50
Offutt - 50
Hunter - 75
Conner - 20
Curlovich - 10
Reichardt - 95
Brodsky - 50
Szurek - 75
Bartucci - 75
Abramowitz - 75
Lerner - 30
Long - 40
Hoylman - 75
Bryant - 40
Chauvin - 50
Blaikie - 50
Beatty - 60
Webster - 90
Keller - 30
Cuthbert - 80
Bowden - 80
Argasinski - 50
Dorneman - 65
MacDonald - 60
Andrus - 40
Lang - 90
Carson - 80
Hitchcock - 95
Wilgus - 75
Franklin - 10
Marion - 52
Donaldson - 5
Fergus - 60

S. D'Ammassa - 10
Mayer - 40
Cox - 70
McGuire - 90
DeVore - 60
Flynn - 75
White - 67
Merkel - 96
Schrier - 50
Brooks - 20
Jabre - 95
Washburn - 75
Gilson - 75
Webber - 40
Vayne - Most
England - 20
Walsh - 10
Kaplan - 50
Cvetko - 90
Covell - 45
Presford - 50
Schlobin - 80
Moyer - 25
Lankin - 75
Morley - 60
Kennedy - 60
D. Pardoe - 10
R. Pardoe - 20

I am not certain when, or if, I will be printing much of the rest of the results. The question about space travel was apparently not designed well, as most people objected to the form in which it was presented. The expert areas were so lengthy, I'd be typing them for two straight days. Same for interests. I do want to run the lists of favorite SF novels, painters, and artists. If there's time and space in this issue, I may add some of this elsewhere in the issue. But the major purpose of this issue is to catch up on all of the really interesting letters I've been getting.

ELABORATE LIES

MORE MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS ON MYTHOLOGIES # 8

[GEORGE FERGUS]

Are you still interested in information relating to Jessica Salmonson's theory that astrology can be explained by cosmic rays mutating the genetic code? No one so far has mentioned the interesting fact that by far the strongest extraterrestrial influence on the quantity and composition of cosmic rays reaching the Earth is the variation of the solar magnetic field with the 11 year sunspot cycle. Thus, even if some minor aspect of Jessica's theory were valid, it would probably relate more to the Chinese counterpart of astrology, which is based on a 12 year rather than a 12 month cycle.

You mention the unpopularity of the idea of rehabilitation in prisons. The truth, I think, is that the prison system is inherently incapable of rehabilitating anybody. In a review of Tom Wicker's A TIME TO DIE (New York Review of Books, April 3, 1975), Garry Wills notes that "The criminal is sequestered with other criminals, in conditions exacerbating the lowest drives of lonely and stranded men, men deprived of loved ones, of dignifying work, of pacifying amenities." Noting the high rate of recidivism, he questions even the usefulness of prison as a deterrent to crime. For the middle class, the process of arrest and trial is frightening enough all by itself, and for the poor, prison is not so different from real life.

I wonder if some aspects of competition can be related to your earlier discussion of Maslow's classification of people into those who are self-actualized and those who are not. Paul Walker suggests that people need competition in order to achieve satisfaction with themselves by measuring their skills against the skills of other people, but this may not apply to the ideal self-actualized person, who would measure his skills by how successfully he completes the tasks he sets for himself.

The process of human evolution has achieved some attention lately in the letter column, but no one really addressed the question of whether or not we are still evolving. Natural selection does not really seem to be operating any more in the technologically developed countries, since people tend to survive long enough to reproduce themselves despite whatever genetic advantages or disadvantages they may appear to have. Thus, I tend to discount the predictions made at various times by SF writers and others that at some time in the future we will have turned into frail, hairless people with bulging foreheads, or dull, conforming, four-toed nebishes, or whatever. In fact, it seems probable that the range of human variability will increase in the future, since useless or mildly disadvantageous mutations will no longer be selected against. (Those mutated genes whose effects are lethal will of course still be continually eliminated from the gene pool.)

A number of remarks have been made about SF dealing with "hard" vs "soft" sciences. In reading over these, I get the feeling that not everyone agrees on just which sciences are which. Do these labels refer to

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disciplines that deal with the study of human behavior vs the study of everything else? Or does the difference lie in the statistical certainty arising from dealing with large numbers of particles or people vs the uncertainty of dealing with individuals? Or can one take the simplistic view that it's those areas of study with a body of facts vs those consisting mainly of a bunch of theories? In almost every discipline, a number of things are quite well-established, whereas others are a matter of considerable theoretical controversy. Where do you draw the line, say, in a spectrum consisting of biology, zoology, physical anthropology, ethology, ethnology, sociology, psychology?

((I suspect definitions vary depending on your own orientation. The suggestion I like best is the study of human activities vs everything else, but then, isn't physics, and mathematics for that matter, a human activity?)))

[SAM LONG]

Isabella Figholler and Bertrand Betot were reading one day in the library of St Ompa's College, Osteen. Bertrand said, "Hm, rather curious article here about attempts at rejuvenation by injecting cellular extracts from young sheep into the human body."

"Yes," said Isabella. "I've heard of 'em. There doesn't seem to be much in the technique though. They have a theme song, nevertheless."

"Oh?"

"Sure. I've got ewe under my skin."

((How did that sneak in here?)))

[NEAL WILGUS]

I thought I'd pass along a Cherokee myth I recently ran across and think you'll find interesting. The story concerns the origin of the Pleiades constellation and the pine tree -- interesting symbols for the horns of the dilemma facing civilized man. Long ago when the world was new, goes the myth, seven boys spent much of their time near the townhouse playing a stick and wheel game called gatayusti and their mothers constantly scolded them for wasting time. At last the mothers decided to teach the boys a lesson by preparing a soup out of the gatayusti stones -- hoping to impress them with the importance of tending the cornfields instead of playing games. But the boys rebelled and ran out to the townhouse, threatening to run away from home. Then they began to dance around in a circle and as their mothers came to take them home the boys began to rise up into the air, higher and higher with every round. The mothers were too late to keep their boys from flying up into the sky -- all except one, who grabbed her son by the foot and pulled him down. The other six boys rose on up into the sky and became the Pleiades which the Cherokee still call Anitsutsa, but the son who was pulled back fell to the ground with such force that he sank into the earth and was covered over. His mother came to the spot every day to cry and eventually the ground was damp with her tears and a green shoot sprouted, growing day by day until it became the pine. The pine is of the same nature as the stars, the Cherokee believe, and holds in itself the same bright light.

/D. GARY GRADY/

In the interest of fairness, the law to make pi an even three, or the bill, rather, was introduced into the Indiana legislature as a joke, poking fun at an anti-evolution bill then under consideration.

Did you know, by the way, that under present federal law, a sentence cannot be appealed? That is, if I were prosecuted for fleeing Vermont to avoid prosecution for a crime I had not committed, I could be sentenced to the maximum limit and would only be able to win an appeal if I could show that I had not fled? Only the President can reduce a federal sentence on the grounds that it is too severe. The courts cannot.

I dunno what your point was in the anecdote about the woman and McKuen. It strikes me that an instructor of poetry who has not heard of Rod McKuen is not qualified to teach the subject. I hate the man's work too, but let's be honest: he is by far the best selling living poet. Not to know of him while claiming to be an authority in the field is like a physician who has never heard of chiropractice.

/MICHAEL SHOEMAKER/

I resent your "very few of us are honest men". To the extent that it is non-specific, it is worthless; and for what it implies it is utterly contemptible.

((The statement implies nothing other than what it says, and what it says is, alas, demonstrably true. The IRS has consistently estimated that better than 80% of all taxpayers cheat on their income tax. A study of traffic patterns recently showed that better than 75% of all drivers exceed the posted speed limit regularly. A poll recently established that better than 60% of all drivers felt that they need not wait for a green light if there was no traffic in the area. One out of every eight US adults has smoked marijuana. More than 50% of all men and nearly 50% of all women have engaged in illegal, extra-marital sex. I am at least honest enough with myself to admit that I have occasional lapses. Assuming you fall into any of the above categories, are you equally honest with yourself?)))

/ROBERT JACKSON/

I'm not too sure I'm that fond of your idea that everybody should be allowed to say what they like regardless of the veracity of the facts (or factoids) behind their opinions. Let's take this to an extreme, and postulate a rich and powerful son of a small mid-Western town who has nurtured an abiding hatred for his schoolteacher who occasionally beat him at school. His teacher is now retired, has suffered a stroke, and is not well off financially. If the big shot decided to take an advert in the local paper denigrating the teacher, saying insulting and untrue things about the teacher's sadistic sexual proclivities, would you as editor of that paper accept that advert? The teacher may have the right to reply, but the damage done by the initial advert can never be truly undone, even were the retired teacher to have the same financial and mental resources as his tormentor. Your ideas about people's ability to reply may work OK in fandom, but in the mundane world there has to be some limit to the amount of gratuitous insulting that can be

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done in public.

((First of all, I would reject that advertisement, because while I would allow that individual the right to say whatever he likes, I am in no way compelled to aid him in its dissemination. Second, in your example, you have demonstrated no damage. The people who knew the teacher would presumably disbelieve it. Those who don't know the teacher are not relevant, since they don't interact with him, and thus do him no harm. If the teacher lost his job because of this, that would be demonstrable harm, and that would be actionable.)))

/JESSICA SALMONSON/

There is a type of censorship - more pervasive and unfightable than that based on bias or prejudice. It might be called "unintentional" or "accidental" censorship. It pokes itself into everything that is edited, paraphrased, or quoted out of context. And that unfortunately is just about everything.

I was victimized by a perfect example. I taped a television segment for the local NBC station. On the tape, I talked about transsexualism, lesbianism, feminism, from personal, medical and clinical, political points of view, with a major goal in mind, all the time, of shattering the myths and popular misconceptions on these subjects. But the editor had done his homework. He was steeped in misknowledge and wasn't about to let me get away with changing his or anyone's preconceived notions. The tape was butchered, rearranged, edited, sliced and spliced and Jesus Christ, there I was on television saying with my very own lips everything the text book said, everything the editor read, and nothing that I had intended. Specific:

Actual statement: "In my parents' minds, my expression of femininity was an expression of homosexuality. My family supported me in my desire for gender reassignment, seeing this as the best method of making me heterosexual. After surgery, after acquiring a feminist consciousness, after beginning to detest men for what they did to women - after becoming a lesbian - my family couldn't handle it."

What this says by inference and in other ways than direct is, one's gender and one's sexual attractions are two separate things, and a transsexual is not a queer desiring to be straight. The edited version said the opposite!

Edited statement: "My family supported me in my desire for gender reassignment, seeing this as the best method of making me heterosexual."

Well, it agreed with what the editor thought was likely true, but it sure as hell wasn't what I was saying.

((I agree with your points, but one statement interests me. If, when you were still Amos, you did not oppress women, then you seem to have been an illustration of the fact that it is not necessary for men to exploit women, and this therefore becomes an inadequate reason for adopting lesbianism. If, as Amos, you did oppress women, you are one of the best examples of the fact that there is no basic difference in mental outlook between men and women, and for that reason you have made

invalid oppression by males as a justification for lesbianism. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against lesbians, and don't see that it particularly needs to be justified anyway. But your statement seems to imply that your choice of sexual partners was a political/social one, rather than gratification of your own personal tastes. And neither do I deny that there are legitimate claims that men oppress women. But it is equally true that women oppress men, and women oppress women, etc. Let's say that our society is designed to oppress everyone, forcing men into "dominant" roles and women into "submissive" ones.)))

/CHESTER CUTHBERT/

I remember reading a couple of years or so ago of a small hamlet in Ontario where three families were on welfare. They had a social worker to counsel them. The local authorities decided that the social worker was an extravagance for so small a caseload, so they laid him off. He could not find other employment, so there were four families on welfare, and no supervisor. Now, this could make economic sense to the local authorities and the local taxpayers, because welfare is subsidized by federal and provincial grants, whereas the salary of the social worker had to come from local taxpayers.

/MICHAEL CARLSON/

It is also a well-known fact in Canada that Glicksohn's low bowls score is a reflection more of his tendency to concentrate his physical exertion knocking over bottles of beer at the snack bar than the fact that, much in the same manner that a basketball in Abdul-Jabbar's hands looks like a ping-pong ball, so a bowling ball in Glicksohn's mitts bears an uncanny resemblance to a geodesic dome.

/SAM LONG/

Speaking of games, although I'm an ardent anglophile and can claim to understand a little about cricket, I must take issue with Peter Roberts and say that, objectively, baseball's the better game.-

/DON AYRES/

This matter of mutations is picking a dead bone. The principal adherents of the importance of mutation to evolution are the geneticists and the anti-evolutionists. The environment acts on the whole organism, not just on individual cells. Occasionally, a genetic trait occurs called a lethal; one in which the organism is doomed. For the rest of it though, living creatures possess an enormous number of genetically inherited traits which have nothing to do with survival in a given environment. Alter the environment, however, and you change the importance of a given trait.

It is not an entirely desirable example because it is too violent, but we can refer to the pepper moths of England, *Biston betularia*. Quite simply, industrialization of southern England resulted in soot blackened tree trunks. The "normal" white form of the species is cryptically colored when it rests on tree trunks, but quite conspicuous on the blackened trunks. In these areas, the melanistic form was able to become more common than the white form.

((But didn't environment contribute to the original coloration?)))

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[JOHN KUSSKE]

I enjoy MYTHOLOGIES quite a lot, but I am not interested enough in the various controversies that it contains to write you a detailed letter of comment. The arguments in your fanzine strike me as rather dry and dispassionate, and those are not the kind of contests that I enjoy. Give me something with a little emotion in it! I found David Taggart's contribution concerning censorship to be rather foolish, though. First he calls the governor of New Hampshire a "crypto-Nazi", the only discernible reason being that the man favored moving Veterans' Day back to November 11. (Calling somebody a "crypto-Nazi" is a serious thing. David should have some documentation before he begins slinging the epithets around in such a manner. Besides, the expression "crypto-Nazi" is a nonsense word. The dictionary definition for "crypto" is "a combining form meaning hidden, covered, secret..." If Governor Thompson is really a hidden Nazi, how does David Taggart know about it? And if the man is an out and out Nazi, where is David's proof?

Secondly he lets fly with some nonsense about school libraries taking books out of circulation as being "scary". I wonder if David thinks that school libraries have an obligation to include every book ever published in their inventories? I wonder if he thinks that school librarians do not have an obligation to employ discrimination and discretion in choosing their stocks? I wonder if he thinks that school librarians consider themselves to be infallible, that they can never admit to having made a mistake, by taking a book off their shelves? (The whole question of a library's obligation to its customers is a rather interesting one. Do public libraries have a duty to include pornography because a substantial number of a population likes to read and look at it? I would answer in the negative. Because Congress can pass no law limiting freedom of expression is no reason why a library must include all examples of this expression.)

[JERRY KAUFMAN]

Mark Keller mentions the bad taste of Monarch butterflies and on that subject I have a few thoughts. Monarch butterflies are bad tasting because they eat milkweeds. Do they eat them because they are bad-tasting? Birds will not eat Monarchs because they are bad-tasting. Is it because of this that Monarchs continue to eat milkweeds? I think that somehow the bad taste is beside the point.

If a bird eats a Monarch it is sickened, and never (we will suppose the bird will learn quickly) eats another. This is good for the entire species of Monarch, of course. But it has not saved the individual Monarch. This is a strange survival trait that does not save the individual which has the trait. Thousands of Monarchs could taste sweet; if our bird eats the one bitter butterfly, he will shun all others, sweet or bitter. And if he eats the one bitter, milkweed eater, the trait of preference for milkweed will not be passed on.

The standard theory of natural selection allows for passing on of traits useful in each individual to itself, not traits useful to other members of the specie, and not ones which require the individual to die to demonstrate the trait. Certain other species of butterfly look like the Monarch, and save themselves from being eaten by looking bitter. The more the imitator looks like the Monarch, the more likely it is to survive and breed. This is the way the thing is supposed to work.

Now we have to assume (don't we?) that at some point Monarchs began to eat milkweed and to be bitter, and birds began to avoid them. But the Monarchs which were most attracted to milkweed had to be eaten to teach birds most effectively to avoid them. And so not pass on their avidity for milkweed. Did every bird have to go through the experience of eating a bad butterfly or was there considerable word of mouth? Of course, butterflies, like most insects, reproduce in the thousands, so if one avid one managed to do his/her duty, enough babies would benefit by their siblings' deaths to pass on the liking. But still, the whole thing suggests to me not the workings of survival of the fittest but the need for a new paradigm that would include not only personal but societal traits. Monarchs dying for the good of their species sounds suspiciously like altruism to me.

Something else that bugs me about standard evolutionary theory as it seems to be understood is that, given the usual variations in a species changes of emphasis (like increase in height or change of coloration) should not, does not create a different species. Dogs, changed into a thousand peculiar and apparently alien shapes, are still of one species and can interbreed to produce fertile off-spring. So how would small incremental changes to meet changes in environment cause new species to emerge?

/DOUG HOYLMAN/

I wanted to comment on Mike Glicksohn's description of the psychological experiment which allegedly proved that humans are naturally competitive. All that it really proves, as I see it is the unsurprising result that human behavior is influenced by past experience. Here is this game (even if the experimenter didn't use the word "game", judging by Mike's description it looks like a game.) The object of a game, almost by definition, is to do better than the other player. Is it any surprise that that's what the participants in this experiment tried to do? A more fruitful experiment might have been to pay the subjects, say, ten cents a point instead of a flat \$10. Then, if a significant number of people still played competitively without considering the possibility of cooperation, you might be able to draw some meaningful conclusions.

/GEORGE FLYNN/

Page Stephen Dorneman, it seems Darwin did accept the term. I quote from THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES (via Bartlett's): "The expression often used by Mr. Herbert Spencer, of the Survival of the Fittest, is more accurate (than "natural selection"), and is sometimes equally convenient

The kids Paul Walker played games with don't resemble the ones I remember: I recall getting into fights over rules all the time. (This may be because I usually knew the rules better than the others; I always did have bureaucratic tendencies.)

Bruce Townley on Eastern streets to confuse outsiders: Have I told you my theory that the lack of identifying signs on major streets in the Boston area was originally so the Redcoats would get lost?

/RICK BROOKS/

Speaking of condoms, have you heard that there is a red, white, and blue one out for the Buy-Centennial? Caught it on the news the other day.

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As my sister, Betty, asked, "Do you stand at attention when it is raised and lowered?"

I'm afraid that you do not have the revised "If":

"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
Maybe you do not grasp the true nature of the situation."

/~RANDY REICHARDT~

"Portraits" by DiFilippo was a delightful offset to your piece. Great fannish humor there, I laughed out loud, especially during the story involving Yolanda Plackett.

/~PAULINE PALMER~

DiFilippo's "Portraits"...The article started out amusingly enough, then as I was just beginning to tire of it, he lulled me into that clincher--his marvelous piece de resistance--about Leonardo Joyce Wagner! (And isn't it true that the authorities had that very same problem with yet another little known hero, Wagner's soul-brother, Leonardo Nijinsky Hemingway?)

/~DAVID SINGER~

Paul DiFilippo seems to have made a study of courage, in all its forms. Unfortunately, I can offer no examples to add to his gallery, but I'll be looking.

/~DENNY BOWDEN~

I enjoyed Paul DiFilippo's "Portraits". Satire and black humor are the treasures of fandom. I wish my students could enjoy satire without trying to see only the concrete possibilities. At school I am advisor to the school newspaper, and we print an April Fool issue each year, but if we forget to explain the purpose of the newspaper, students gullibly accept each item as gospel, believing even such ridiculous stories as the one that said our school would be offering a course in "Advanced Alphabet".

((When I was in high school, we once ran a story in the school paper that a new letter had been added to the English alphabet. I've forgotten the symbol, but supposedly it would precede all silent letters in words to indicate they were silent. And naturally there were people weeks later who still hadn't realized it was a spoof.)))

/~SCOTT DEVORE~

"Portraits" was something I got a kick out of. In fact, I enjoyed it so much I've taken it around showing it to my friends. Most of them liked it too. Satire like this and "An Artist's Life" are among the many things I look forward to in MYTHOLOGIES.

/~STUART GILSON~

Paul DiFilippo is likely the best humorist writing in fanzines; "Portraits" was an incredibly funny piece that had me doubled over from the first paragraph on. Reminds me of the politician who never said anything intelligent in order that he'd never have to tell a lie. Great material.

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/VICTORIA VAYNE/

Paul DiFilippo's article is enjoyable, as his MYTHOLOGIES articles always have been.

THE SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM

/BARBARA GERAUD/

I've heard John Curlovich rant on at WPSFA meetings, though not in such great detail as he did in that article. I know a couple of the boys he was talking about -- genius level IQ's, but they were going to smoke hash before a battle. And one chased me all over FanFair screaming, "Ya got any speed?"...I don't know if all the SCA kids/men are latent S&M freaks or what.

/MIKE GLYER/

Come on. You're in charge here. Make a decision. How could you let self-righteous, goodole John Curlovich utterly blow his chance to play Mark Twain? The hilariously absurd description he almost wrote of the Society for Cremative Anachronuts, Inc., somehow swelled up with its own importance to a degree that Curlovich ended up satirizing himself instead of the organization he detests.

"All this must sound ludicrous and may be hard to believe; it is difficult to convey properly the intense manner in which some of these people become involved in their fantasy world." No harder than it is for me to believe the sincere pomposity of the scholarship Curlovich mistakenly brings to the situation. That dedicated ludicrousness is the stuff of which satire is made -- Curlovich was handed a whole cloth, and instead of working with it, he swallowed it.

Just for a moment I'll step aside from my opinion of what Curlovich did and lay it out plainly. If a writer is doing a sociological group analysis, he should concentrate on presenting his evidence, and when the time for conclusions arises, he should draw them without condescension, or an inflated opinion of his own cleverness. If a writer is doing a satire, he can be sure that the shortest route to making an ass of himself is to be conciliatory and sincere. If the writer is doing a reportorial analysis, he should describe and relate to what he sees, rather than measuring the event against his prejudices, thereby distorting what has occurred by comparing it to his mistaken expectations.

If instead of those the writer is doing elitist criticism, the reader should page ahead to the next article, and forget the writer's name; it is the kindest thing he can do.

Curlovich's elitism, besides going against the grain of my personal opinion, has required him to betray his instinctive awareness of this subject's silliness, and sent him seeking profound conclusions where none are to be found. What a travesty to place a line like "SCA warriors are capable of talking for hours on end about things like whether one long stick with a toilet paper roll on the end of it is better than two short sticks with toilet paper on the end of them" in the same article as "I must insist that it is downright stupid to numb and derange the senses in a situation where there exists a real danger of

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physical injury."

When you come down to it Curlovich's remarks do him more harm than any abuse I could direct at him for (1) misusing potentially brilliant material, and (2) being unable to choose between farce and expose. It suffices to end with his desperate soliloquy, "The medieval mythos within which these people operate is a bubble, a large but flimsy fabrication designed to create an illusion of legitimacy. But why on earth do they need it? I confess I don't know." Four pages of soul searching pretentiousness just to conclude that?

Actually I have some familiarity with the SCA, though never belonged to it, and have to conclude the crowd Curlovich ran with was on the wrong side of the bell-shaped curve. Pomposity is a great part of it, and may be why John was originally attracted to it. But there's some excellent craftsmanship, skill and scholarship involved too. It helps to have craftsmen and scholars involved, as they are in the west. (For instance, Katherine Kurtz and Karen Anderson are some of many wise and interesting SCA members hereabouts.)

/LYNNE BRODSKY/

A short comment on that SCA lament, I just took part in Shire of the Bridge activities because my friends did. But I kept on because of the music (mainly) and art and sewing and chess and costumes. Poor Curlovich had some bad luck, though there is some truth in what he said. He need not condemn the whole SCA on the basis of one lousy barony.

/PAUL DIFILIPPO/

John Curlovich's diatribe is one of the most entertaining ones I have read in a long time. It managed to make its point, to lay waste left and right, without boring the reader. On Curlovich's actual thesis: It seems that what he was looking for was a group of scholarly, like-minded history buffs who would cooperate to recreate historical eras. He should have known that the SCA is made up of a few people like this and a large number of historical illiterates who have a mistaken, one-sided conception of what the Middle Ages was. He should have known that the public conception of the Middle Ages is exactly what influences the majority of the SCA: swordfighting and meadswilling. I just can't accept his gripes in the end. He should have foreseen that a spare time hobby type organization could not provide the level of professionalism and accuracy he wanted.

/JIM HUDSON/

Much the same as I've heard from other sources, but some of your correspondents in the other Kingdoms may have different impressions. There seems to be a lot of variation between regions, and even some ladies and gentlemen out west.

/ERIC MAYER/

John seems upset that the SCA members tend to forget chivalry and the arts in order to concentrate on violence. But isn't that just a good example of human nature? And doesn't it suggest that the idea of chivalry really is nothing more than a pleasant myth to begin with? If modern day SCA members, involved in a mere game playing situation,

cannot maintain chivalrous attitudes, how can anyone possibly believe that medieval men during the course of their lives could have adhered to those attitudes?

((Chivalry was probably more of an ideal than a practice, admittedly, but it still seems to me more likely that medieval men would have lived by the code than our modern hobbyists, because that code was a pervasive influence on all aspects of their life. To reject it was, to a great extent, to reject the basic tenets of their civilization. To the SCA, there's always retreat to the real world.)))

/TARAL WAYNE MACDONALD/

I was ready to tear Curlovich limb from limb until I saw his address at the back of the zine. Pittsburgh! I've talked with the local SCA bigwig here in Eoverwic, Finnbar, and discovered that Pittsburgh was perhaps the one bad apple in the medieval barrel. Not all SCA groups are like the one John described. In Toronto there are several SCA people, and while most of them fight, several also make medieval musical instruments, cook, dance, practice calligraphy, and study history. Costumes are homemade also. Nor are the "swords" simple sticks with toilet rolls at one end. Depending on the weapon, the construction of a sword is designed to be sturdy, cheap, light, and safe. And deprecating swordfighting as simply hitting each other with a stick is equally foolish. Just as fencing and judo are sophisticated arts, so was the fighting technique of medieval knights. If John doesn't believe it, let him try it once.

/JIM MANN/

John's article on the SCA was nicely written. The members certainly seem to have a distorted view of courage. It's amazing that a group of people, at least some of whom are intelligent, could base courage and "manhood" on such a distorted set of values.

/LAURIE TRASK/

What? John Curlovich in a neo-beanie? Surely you jest! I wasn't overly thrilled by his article. It's most likely because I don't like the SCA in any shape or form. At least John made them look almost as ridiculous as they deserve.

/DIANA THATCHER/

The article on the SCA struck a chord with me and in some ways confirms my suspicions. I have been attracted to the society off and on, mainly on the basis of one tournament which I witnessed years ago. It was bashing, yes, but colorful and dramatic as all hell. The thing that always kept me from joining was the unappealing role of women (especially single women) in the SCA. With regard to the corroded values and bastardizations of the Society's avowed goals: It's my impression that things are not this bad in the SCA's home turf of Northern California where decent, rational-people-even-as-you-and-I find a pleasant and enjoyable hobby in it. They strive for (admittedly rather eclectic) accuracy and foster the non-fighting arts. Regional variation aside, it's a great pity that a group as potentially gratifying and exciting as the SCA should have become as debased as Curlovich describes.

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Sue Anderson

Up until these last few months, my experience with the SCA was, like Curlovich's, only of one group--East Lansing aka the "North Woods". I was there when the chapter was founded--which, by the by, was after you left, Don; you're thinking of the Tolkien Fellowship, who also liked to dress up, and some of whom became the heads of the local SCA, and pulled out after three years. I know there've been considerable changes in the membership and leadership since I left, and hopefully changes in their collective attitude toward their hobby, but I'm not up on that. All I can give you is some thoughts on the early days.

Curlovich, in Pittsburgh, found that "the dominant tone in the SCA is of excess and violence". Not everywhere. In East Lansing, c.1969-70, the dominant tone was of excess and impressing the higher-ups. To wit: "All right, you people, we have to get this galliard right this time because the King is coming to our tournament and revels next week and I've hired a hall and arranged for the feast and I mean to see to it that all you clowns put on a good show and you're tripping on purpose and not cooperating and trying to make a fool of me and I have to do all the work and boo hoo hoo." It worked. The King was duly impressed and nobody else had any fun.

(I admit to poetic license in "So Much for Chivalry". It isn't at all hard to keep a straight face while dancing, when you're worried about people having nervous breakdowns on the sidelines.)

Well, even a well-balanced hobbyist gets nervous when it's the group's first big events. But the atmosphere didn't seem to improve. The aim never seemed to be to have fun; always, for the ordinary folks, it was to shape up and put on a good show. That was how the powers-that-be got their fun--being leaders, you see. And there was no room for fringe SCA members: you had to be all the way into it, or first the chiefs, and then the lackeys, would stop associating with you. The few people I knew who tried to maintain relationships with both the SCA members and outsiders eventually gave up, one way or the other.

Still, having now gotten acquainted with a few other SCA people, I'm prepared to admit that my previous attitude was, perhaps, like Curlovich's, based on an inadequate sample, and that sane, sensible persons with other interests in life besides power can associate with the Current Middle Ages and survive. I wouldn't have done this a year ago. Maybe there's hope.

I'm sorry to see Tim Marion's opinion of "So Much for Chivalry". I wrote the poor silly thing largely as a technical exercise in parody: in the original, the 7th line in each verse is "By hook or crook you try to look both angular and flat", with the music appropriately flat-ted on the last syllable, and that fixing of the word, plus the internal rhymes, and the fact that the original is about "medieval Art" served to set me off. By coincidence, if there is such a thing, I finished it the same day Curlovich's article arrived, so you published it. No plot, Tim. No vicious insult intended. Not even necessarily the author's opinions...I'm very pleased with the song as a parody; it's going into the fannish musical Mark Keller and I are writing, and in which Faye Ringel will star if it works as planned, and they won't let me insult the SCA, even mundanely (whatever that means), so it can't be that offensive to sensible persons.

[/LAURINE WHITE/

I'd never recognize the SCA from John Curlovich's description, but then his experience was with the Eastern Kingdom. The fighters in the Western Kingdom are more mature. John would change his mind if he visited Berkley. Our baron is a great fighter, but he also writes poetry and makes candles. John wouldn't be interested in the Albuquerque SCA though. Some of those people sound just as bad as the ones he writes about in the Eastern Kingdom, like some idiot wandering around the streets at night threatening people with his sword.

[/SCOTT DEVORE/

The SCA seems to be just another aspect of the escapism that is creeping into our society with Von Daniken, astrology, trekkies, auras, pyramids...I wonder if it's just an illusion of my perception or if society really is moving into an era of pseudo-intellectualism.

((I don't understand your last remark at all, since the subjects you mention are anti-intellectual, not pseudo-intellectual.)))

[/PAULINE PALMER/

I read John Curlovich's "expose" of the SCA with interest. It didn't particularly surprise me to read that the group as a whole shows little if any active interest in actually studying medieval times; I had already more or less gleaned that from previous readings and a very limited contact. But on the other hand I was totally unaware of the (apparently) rather violent side of the organization and will be interested to see if anyone comes forward to refute this. Perhaps it isn't true of all baronies--the group from which I once received a newsletter type publication appeared to be primarily interested in socializing via medieval banquets and the like. At any rate, it sounded, if not particularly academic, at least non-violent. Here in Bellingham there is actually a scholarly medievalist group which meets regularly and is open to anyone who is seriously interested in things medieval. But on the whole they go too far in the opposite direction, presenting to one another long papers on such fascinating subjects as "The Importance and Role of the Chimney Sweep in Medieval Society" (an actual paper title and not one I just made up for the occasion).

[/RANDY REICHARDT/

Curlovich is to be thanked for a closer look at the SCA, something that I was only vaguely familiar with until I read the article...I was on my lunch break when I was reading this bit, and I literally roared at the bagpipes-tomcat analogy, and couldn't stop for a good five minutes. I'm sure the clerk and various patrons wondered what was going on in the basement of the Cornish library.

[/GEORGE FLYNN/

Granted my own knowledge of the SCA is pretty peripheral, but for what it's worth I do have the impression that Curlovich's experiences were not quite typical. If so, one might have much to say about the ethics of printing deliberately provocative articles containing half-truths; people will think you want to get a Hugo.

((Ah, but I asked various SCA people to provide their side, which was belatedly forthcoming. See further on in this issue.)))

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/SAM LONG/

Poor old John Curlovich. Maybe he should have knitted himself a suit of armor out of steel wool. I've never got into the SCA myself, having noticed early that they have no real sense of history. The songs they sing are usually post-medieval ballads. Medieval, of course, means "half bad". (Another word of similar etymology is "seminar", which comes from the Greek semi, half, and the German Narr, fool.)

/STEVEN MUHLBERGER alias FINNBARR/

About a week after Balticon Taral Wayne MacDonald called me up and read me excerpts from John Curlovich's article on the Society for Creative Anachronism. As a long time member of the SCA, I decided immediately that a reply was necessary. Unfortunately I was unable to get past a rough draft before one of the most hectic months of my life intervened. Now I'm able to complete this, which is not intended as a refutation of John's account (I'm not able to check most of his points directly) but as an attempt to put his article in a different perspective.

I'm sorry to say that John's picture of the Pittsburgh barony in 1974 is not much different than the impression I got myself. He seems to have run into the one group that sums up the worse tendencies present in the society in one compact package (maybe you know equivalent fan groups). I am only surprised that, if things were that bad, he stayed as long as he did. I certainly would not associate willingly with people who commonly used the term "woman" as an insult.

I have, however, been a member of the SCA for six years now. I have been a member of three different groups, in Michigan, Maryland, and Ontario. I have some acquaintance with most groups in the Midwest and on the East Coast. I have held various offices and ranks in the Society. Thus my qualifications to speak on what is typical of the SCA and what is not.

First, I will agree with John that the SCA is only indirectly an educational organization. Being a professional medievalist, I am more aware of the Society's limitations in that respect than most. More properly it is a game or social hobby, one that can (and usually is) quite creative. In my six years, besides fighting and making armor, I have sewn my own medieval outfits and shoes, pursued an old interest in calligraphy, acted in a 16th century Robin Hood play, and learned how to dance with a moderate amount of grace.

Most society groups do begin with some emphasis on fighting, which is rather spectacular when done right, and has certain "romantic" connotations. Few groups stop there, though, and I have never been in a group where fighting was the sole activity, or where most members fought regularly. In the midwestern groups (the "Middle Kingdom") at most 25% of the men (as well as a few women) fight.

What do the rest do? Some just socialize. Some drink beer (or mead) with their friends. Some politic. An awful lot, though, are or soon become interested in some skill or aspect of medieval life and pursue this interest. They have an excellent opportunity to get positive feedback, because quality work is intelligently appreciated. Also a free sharing of information and cooperation are the norm. Had John been at the next war he would have seen an arts competition that amply showed

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that the Society is very successful in promoting creativity.

Back to the Pittsburgh group. Why are they so creepy if the SCA is so good? There are two large opportunities for abuse in the SCA. First is the fighting - John has shown what can happen here. Second is the danger inherent in any organization where people are given offices, responsibilities and jurisdictions, the danger that these will become ends in themselves, and that people will use them for egoboo instead of doing their jobs. To this the SCA has added pseudo-medieval titles (most of which carry no power). In an immature group this second can be the worst abuse -- as witness the war hysteria created by the Pittsburgh leaders.

In Pittsburgh, besides the macho-violence ethic in fighting (in other groups violations of rules of the lists are not taken lightly) there was (is?) a bizarre power structure. The group was founded by a... lawyer who proceeded to devise a written constitution for the barony, complete with a Council, Constitutional Assembly of the people, and a lot of other bullshit. Though the SCA Inc and Kingdoms have their "laws", most local groups manage to get along on a face-to-face informal basis.

All this is symptomatic of taking the game too seriously, and our reaction (meaning the Middle Kingdom's) at the war John was at, was to find a way to "walk off the field", after our first encounter with large numbers of Pittsburgh fighters. Admittedly our king made a tactless mess of it by talking loudly about our victory, but the original motivation of our withdrawal was to stop the fighting when the sun and some people's tempers were too hot for safety.

Is the case of Pittsburgh damning enough to dismiss the whole SCA as dangerous lunatics? In my experience I would say no, but of course it is a matter for individual judgment.

[BOB WEBBER]

It's a pity John Curlovich managed to run into the SCA group considered the worst in North America - by other SCA groups. It's even more of a pity that he tarred the whole group with the same brush. On my return from Balticon I mentioned that I had seen a couple of idiots running around with bare swords hanging out behind them, and even staging a fight with said swords on the convention floor (with no one around to hold back people who might wander too close), to a woman who is a member of the local SCA group, who told me in reply about others of the Pittsburgh people catching arrows with their hands. (Women have little to do other than the baronial guilds in the SCA? I wish you'd tell her that. She's trying to qualify as a fighter.) What I'm trying to say with all this is that not all SCA groups are the same, and Curlovich just happened to find the worst one. Other groups are really interested in medievalism, and do things other than fighting.

[IAN COVELL]

Organized nostalgia will always seem slightly insane; reading the article reminded me of nothing so much as that cartoon with a man wandering around on the beach. He is on holiday, it is pouring down and he looks very miserable. He is muttering, "I am happy, I am happy..."

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It comes over as a rather violent boy scout camp with dehumanized violence and ludicrous intentions. Playing at death and adventure in an atmosphere of family and comfort. Nobody dies, but everyone has the chance to kill someone. Somehow the masks we wear habitually are beginning to stifle people; either you opt out of masking altogether and find (look for?) yourself; or you strengthen the mask and try to forget you ever burst from it; or you take another mask in an area which is known (so-called) and observed. Thus the medieval costumes and manners. To be someone else in a society of someone else, to belong in not-belonging, to conform in non-conformity...

[/PATRICK HAYDEN/

The SCA material in this issue will probably win my all-time gold medal for Failure To Ring True. Which is understandable, considering that Curlovich was talking about the Pittsburgh group. I have associated occasionally with Anachronists in Phoenix, East Lansing, and know those in Toronto quite well, and one thing they do do is tell jokes about those psychos in Pittsburgh. It is indeed irritating to see the sort of abhorrent behavior that goes on in one group typed as that of the entire Society...irritating, since the descriptions of that particular group can only be used as a reverse barometer of what the people I know are like.

Refusal to fight? I have never fought (I edit the newsletter of the local group and hold the title of Chronicler) and I have never ever been called a "coward" or "woman". One wonders about the character of Mr. Curlovich if he indeed, as he claims, stayed with these people for over a year. I (and any Anachronist I know) would have quit.

Keeping a straight face? Nobody in Toronto or East Lansing even tries. People laugh a lot at SCA events. There is a ridiculousness in what is being done, and people tend to take a special joy in that absurdity. Please don't set up straw men at the expense of the entire Society -- which is by and large composed of some of the gentlest fans I know.

[/JOHN L. LELAND alias COUNT SIR JEHAN DE LA MARCHE, O.L.]/

In replying to Mr Curlovich's article concerning the Society for Creative Anachronism, I should begin by emphasizing that I am writing on behalf of the entire East Kingdom, from Massachusetts to North Carolina, over which I have travelled extensively and in which I have been active for 4 years, after 2½ in the Middle Kingdom. I probably know the SCA as a whole better than all but a dozen or so of its members. One group with which, as it happens, I have had extremely little contact is the only group with which Curlovich has had any contact--namely, the Pittsburgh group. Consequently, with regard to Pittsburgh I will pass on information sent me by the group there, but on more general points I will speak from general knowledge. I emphatically feel that I am far more qualified than Mr Curlovich to describe the SCA as it exists as a nationwide organization.

To begin, the organization of the Society is not "arbitrary". In fact, it is quite simple. Groups are not set up meaninglessly but to cover specific areas. A canton or a shire is a small group. (For example I am a member of the canton of Dragonship Haven, covering New Haven and Bridgeport, Connecticut.) A barony covers a larger area, sometimes an

entire state--my canton is part of the Barony Beyond the Mountain, which covers all of Connecticut. Above this are the regional kingdoms--Connecticut is part of the East Kingdom, covering the East Coast of the US. Above this is the national Board of Directors, sometimes called the Imperium. All this has very little to do with "who beats whom"; it is simply the usual sort of pyramid typical of most nationwide voluntary organizations, like the MLA or the Presbyterian Church, to cite two with which I am familiar. The pyramid structure has been adapted to the Middle Ages with a modicum of accuracy. There is less disorder than in the real Middle Ages, though more than we would like. At times interbaronial feuds do go beyond their usual level (which is approximately that of, say, college football) but ON THE WHOLE I would say that there is far less destructive factionalism in the SCA than in SF fandom. I am constantly amazed (pleasantly) by the ability of people holding very intense personal disagreements to cooperate for the general good of the SCA. There has never been anything in the SCA like the three rival Star Trek cons with which New York was lately edified. (You may say that that was not fandom at its best, and I agree, but one of my points is that what Mr Curlovich has seen may not be SCA at its best either.)

Second: Mr Curlovich concedes that we do wear medieval costumes. He does not consider what this may entail for the conscientious. We are tolerant in most cases of clumsy efforts of beginners, and there are veterans like myself whose skills lie elsewhere, who must rely on the expertise of others in this field. But if a carefully researched hand-sewn complete 14th century Florentine dress, of sufficient quality that the lady who made it was allowed college credit for doing so, for example, is not a real piece of medieval research, what is? Our garments are not the makeshifts used on the stage; like real medieval clothing they have to stand the test of hours of hard use, over and over. Not all are of such high quality as the example cited, of course. From that peak we go all the way down to two towels pinned together. But at an official SCA event (as distinct from an exhibition for non-members) everyone is asked to make some attempt at costume. SCA is participatory to at least this degree. I have met people at SF cons who had never read the stuff and just came for the drinks (and the women) but in theory no one comes to an SCA event without exhibiting at least a minimal interest in the Middle Ages.

Mr Curlovich says he would advise anyone interested in medieval art or Chaucer to look elsewhere for company. I would disagree. With regard to art I can only say that there are a considerable number of SCA artists who are able to command goodly prices from outside buyers for their work in medieval style, and many more on the level of good SF fan artists. With regard to Chaucer I can be more specific; I personally have taken a graduate level course in Chaucer from E. Talbot Donaldson at Yale, and I have both attended and conducted SCA classes in medieval literature given by persons with graduate training in Middle English literature. Indeed, considerably more esoteric genres have been studied; Old English, for example (the West Kingdom bardic group studied BEOWULF in the original) and Old Norse and Old French (a reading from the CHANSON DE ROLAND in the original was given at the very first event by our foundress, Lady Diana Listmake r, who studied comparative literature with Alain Renoir at Berkley). We have had a national contest in medieval style poetry judged by Poul Anderson,

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Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Dr Elizabeth Pope (head of the Mills College English Department and author of PERILOUS GARD) among others. It is alleged by the Pittsburgh SCA that Mr Curlovich assumed the position of head of the bardic group there and then never held any meetings. I know that he never made any attempt to attend bardic activities outside his area, for instance in Bhakail (Philadelphia) where they have been very numerous.

Thirdly, he complains that when he contacted the Knight Marshal, that that officer attempted to tell him about combat. He seems to regard this as peculiar, but it is hardly surprising since, as he admits, the Knight Marshal is the officer in the group in charge of the fighting. If you asked a football coach about his school's English program he might have trouble answering too. Curlovich admits that the Knight Marshal referred him to the guilds, who are the groups charged with the various non-fighting interests. What else could he expect the marshal to do? He does not add that in every SCA group of baronial or higher status there must be (it is one of the requirements for promotion of a group from shire, or provisional, to barony, or regular, status) not only a Knight Marshal in charge of fighting, but also a Mistress or Master of Arts in charge of the peaceful arts and a Master or Mistress of Sciences in charge of crafts and technology. Mr Curlovich can hardly be unaware of this since, according to the Pittsburgh group, he was himself the Master of Sciences in the area for a time. I may note that a lady who herself served as Mistress of Arts commented that Mr Curlovich did nothing to organize the peaceful arts while he held office. If Pittsburgh tended to be stronger in the martial arts this would seem to be a fault not of its marshal, who was doing HIS job, but of Mr Curlovich, who was NOT doing his own. I may note that despite this the Pittsburgh group has in fact developed sufficient strength in medieval arts to hold a crafts fair, and undertake other peaceful projects.

With regard to the fighting, since Mr Curlovich ventures to criticize it at some length (despite the fact that he admits he never took any training), I may make the following points. It is true that devotees of SCA fighting get wrapped up in it and can talk of it for hours. Why not? Devotees of anything are the same way, whether it is flyfishing or SF. But he seems to imply that this has nothing to do with serious medievalism. Well, as C.S. Lewis points out, we have to remember that those long descriptions of tournaments in the romances are there precisely because they held the same fascination for medieval men that accounts of modern sports have for modern enthusiasts. Combat was one of the major features of the life of at least the male nobility of the Middle Ages, and it seems to be worthwhile to investigate it. (I have been invited to a graduate class in Old English at Yale to explain how SCA fighting applies to THE BATTLE OF MALDON.) SCA fighting techniques are based on serious, continuing research into the methods actually used in the Middle Ages, distorted only where safety seems to require it. Mr Curlovich says that SCA safety rules (which he concedes are extensive) are often disregarded. I can only say that such is not my experience over a much wider time and geographical area. It is true that new groups tend to be sloppy at times and I have heard some criticism of the then Knight Marshall in Pittsburgh in this regard (he has since given up his post, by the way), but Pittsburgh people now deny

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that they are below kingdom standards. I may note that this was taken so seriously that Mr Curlovich's charges are now being investigated by the Earl Marshall of the East Kingdom. With regard to the gentleman who suffered a concussion, it may be noted that this did not prove his helm was inadequate protection; according to the Pittsburgh group he had lost his helm in a melee just before the blow fell. Such accidents do occur, but they are rare. I can recall two cases (neither of which caused a concussion) in six years. Helms are usually carefully checked if they show signs of being loose, and I have seen important fights postponed while such checks were made. It may be noted that the gentleman who received the injury is in fact still active in the SCA and is indeed a deputy knight marshall in Pittsburgh now -- I hardly imagine HE is lax in enforcing safety rules. On the whole, I think SCA fighting is reasonably safe. In six years I have seen two broken arms and a number of broken fingers (some, though not all, before we required hockey gloves). I consider this a better record than that of any major physical contact sport, e.g. football, boxing, karate or even hockey. With regard to our equipment, I may note that we use freon tanks, toilet paper rolls, etc., simply for reasons of expense; most of us are unwealthy students. Those with the skill to make or the money to buy something better (i.e. handmade real chain-mail, for example) are very glad to use it, and such good materials are consistantly more common.

As for whether there is anything chivalrous in a "blatant penchant for flagellation" I will meet him head on and say yes. I was not a natural fighter. Some people have the physique and athletic experience to be very good SCA fighters a few weeks after joining. Others do not. Personally I had no athletic experience at all before joining the SCA. This did not discourage me. My other talents were appreciated. I served as seneschal (chief administrative officer) of a barony and had a serious voice in kingdom affairs; I received the Order of the Laurel for poetry. (The Laurel is the non-fighting equivalent of knighthood, a non-medieval addition created precisely because the SCA does wish to honor the nonfighting arts.) But I felt it was appropriate for a medieval noble layman to learn to fight, and after several years of painful training I did earn knighthood. It was one of the most disciplined efforts of my life and I consider it worthwhile. I also feel that a novice who is willing to go through that kind of pain (only bruises, but plenty of them) is worthy of my respect whether he ever improves an iota or not. I do not say that all SCA people feel the same way. There is the kind of unhealthy adulation of success at any cost which Mr Curlovich mentions. Again it is hardly an SCA monopoly. I have seen it in high school football (which killed an acquaintance of mine), and the Philadelphia Flyers (among others) suggest pro sport is affected by it. In more varied forms, such unscrupulousness appears in politics, literature and other fields. But I have very seldom seen, outside the SCA, any activity in which there is a serious, continuing effort to COMBAT this adulation. Our war-songs are often not glorifications of victory but of defeat with honor. "Utterly whelmed was I/ Thrown under, horse and all" says one adapted from Kipling. "Plus fait douceur que violence" (sweetness does more than violence) is the refrain of an oft-recited poem. The problems of chivalrous conduct and the enforcement of rules are discussed seriously and repeatedly among the ranking fighters of the two kingdoms with which I am most familiar (East and Middle).

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On to the war. Mr Curlovich may be forgiven his failure to understand what the two armies were doing. From all accounts that I have read, most battles are not very clear to casual observers. But his failure does not (as he seems to think) mean that such things as tactics did not exist. Most SCA battles, in fact, are rather better thought out tactically than the average real medieval battle. The hay bales he mentioned were in fact used in the first battle of the war to represent a bridge, combats on bridges between limited numbers of champions being a genuine medieval custom which we have revived. They also figured as representing a fort held by the Middle Kingdom in the second battle. They were abandoned without a fight in the third battle precisely because the rules were such that the Middle king saw an advantage in NOT fighting--hardly the mindless bloodlust Curlovich imagines to be typical. I can further assure him, as a participant, that both battles involved attacks by several different groups delivered to achieve specific goals. In the bridge fight, for example, I was one of a group of small, fast men sent ahead to seize the bridge before the "enemy" vanguard reached it. Not all battles, SCA or medieval, are that well organized. We sometimes have simple field fights when two lines form up and charge into each other. The Middle Ages had plenty of those, too. We usually fall back on such things, however, either at minor events or under special circumstances--at a more recent war, for instance, which drew several hundred people in the teeth of pouring rain, evidence that there is a real attraction in this for many people, even if Mr Curlovich failed to find it.

I may note that with regard to the alleged prevention of a council to discuss rumors of violence at the war (which were, as Curlovich admits, unfounded) I have received a statement from the Lady Chancellor in question, saying that the verbal abuse was part of an emotional discussion to which she contributed her share, and that the baron did not forbid the meeting (which was to be informal rather than formal) but actually called it to explain how he could be removed if they were not satisfied with his leadership. The meeting did not occur because further consultation with other members of the council led her to conclude it was not in fact necessary. I may also note that any "right" Curlovich may have claimed could only be based on a local charter; standard SCA groups are run by a seneschal appointed from above, in consultation with the local people. In practice the result usually has been, in my experience, that SCA groups, like most SF groups I have seen, are run mainly by consensus and the real problem is to find people willing to serve as officers at all.

With regard to other matters at the war: the arrow catching group were a local Pittsburgh group not part of the SCA, according to the Pittsburgh seneschal. She notes that the group of young kids who got drunk were provided with potables by none other than Mr Curlovich, who was supposed to be their chaperone. Their leader absolutely denies using hashish, which would be strictly against SCA fighting rules, of course. (This matter is also under kingdom level investigation--it is emphatically NOT the sort of thing we encourage.) The pipers began at 8:30, not 5:30; most of us like pipe music and I can only regret it was not to Mr Curlovich's taste.

Beyond this I would like to reply to Mr Curlovich's general assumption that we are obsessed with fighting. Wars occur once a year. Tourna-

ments are quite frequent, but so are other activities oriented toward the peaceful arts. We have revels at which medieval songs are sung, dances danced, food and drink eaten--all these often laboriously reconstructed from the obscure medieval evidence. Of course quality varies, but I think the average very high for amateur scholars. Some of our music is simply the bellowing of "drunken choruses" in a good-natured but hardly accurate way, on the level of fannish filksings. But we have also had performances by graduate students in music. As noted earlier, poetry (both in genuine medieval forms and modern imitations of varying skill) is recited. All this tends to develop later than the fighting, and may not have been well developed in the group Curlovich was in. But it has a serious impact on the fighters themselves. A gentleman who wishes to earn the honored title of knight must not only be the equal of the other knights in combat, but also know something of dancing, heraldry, music, chess and literature. As noted before, persons who excel in non-martial arts can be made members of the Order of the Laurel, equal to knights. Those who excel in administration are granted the equal Order of the Pelican. I may note that many knights also hold the Laurel; we are not merely bruisers. By the time I had trained my esquire for six months he could not only fight well enough to qualify (for safety not skill) but also design a heraldic device and compose several forms of courtly verse.

In view of all this, I do not think the SCA the disgusting sham Curlovich believes it to be. It offers serious opportunities for the study of many medieval arts and crafts as well as fighting, it is as safe in its fighting as most sports of comparable type (and demands at least as much skill) and it can give great joy to those willing to give it an honest amount of effort. Mr Curlovich claims to have left it without regret, but I am told he came back to an event in March. If even he can still find some interest in us, I suggest many others may, as well.

(((((Thanks for the extensive, cogent reply. I don't think you'll score any points with John Curlovich by comparing the SCA to SF fandom, since he apparently has similar reservations about both organizations. I do, however, think you made a tactical error in referring to the rival Star Trek conventions. There is overlap between Trekfandom and SF fandom, but no more so than between SF fandom and the SCA.

As to the substance of your reply, I find parts of it very convincing. On the other hand, I have spoken to about fifteen society members and ex-members since, and communicated through the mail with several others, and have found a diversity of opinion wide enough to confuse the issue thoroughly, particularly with regard to the specifics of the Pittsburgh group.

My only direct contact with the SCA, incidentally, was with the proto-SCA group in East Lansing. It was my understanding that they were already associated with the SCA at the time I was in contact with them, but I have subsequently been corrected. What I knew was an off-shoot of the Tolkien Society which gradually became a medieval group and naturally fell into the SCA as time progressed. Sue Anderson, who remained in East Lansing after my departure, became a member of the East Lansing SCA, but has since left the Society.

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What did disappoint me in the SCA discussion is that so little attention was paid to what I consider one of the SCA's major problems, a problem they are sometimes the expression rather than the cause of. Many SCA members are too caught up in their fantasy world. I suppose this is a valid argument only if you start with the same basic view as I, but I think it becomes unhealthy when people's fantasies are more real and more important to them than realities.)))

ARTWORK FOR ISSUE #8

/IAN COVELL/

The cover: striking and challenging; we all must have an idea of what a unicorn may have looked like, and the popular conception of a pointed horse somehow never commanded the magic of legend. This drawing is close to what might excite wonder and fantasy; the strange unearthly eyes and screw-horn are perfect. Perhaps these things are wrong (perhaps not): the stylized stance that is so obviously posed to display the full animal, even the back leg up and forward does not help (and why is it doing that anyway?) to break the rigidity. I suspect Ms Dalzell will become very famous in fantasy circles (be she not already).

/ROGER SCHLOBIN/

Really liked the cover by Bonnie Dalzell, and I guess coherency of vision made it quite natural that I'd like "The Pious Men". If you're in contact with her, please refer her to Snodgrass's poem "The Examination" and tell her I've fallen in love with her.

((You also asked the publication dates for the Sarban books. Ballantine published all three in 1960 - 1961, and later reprinted them.)))

/T.J. WALSH/

The Dalzell cover is superb. In regards to Bonnie's poem, "Pious Men", I can only repeat what the Prophet Mohammed said. "My back has been broken by 'pious' men." My sentiments exactly.

/GRAHAM ENGLAND/

The cover by Dalzell was excellent. Interesting that the Unicorn lacks a goat's beard, but the supercilious regard is good.

COURAGE

/T.J. WALSH/

To my mind a confusion has arisen around the topic of courage. All sorts and manner of distinctions have been created. Physical courage. Mental courage. Psychic courage. It's actually quite simple.

I shall use the example of two soldiers at war. The first believes with a passion that what he is doing is correct. He fights well. In fact, he even gives his life for what he believes. He is courageous. The second believes that the war is wrong. Regardless, he fights well and gives his life in an even more spectacular and worthy (from his officers' standpoint) way than did soldier #1. He is gutless. A puppet. A coward.

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Courage is simply following your own "gut feelings". It has nothing to do with intelligence or correctness. Hitler was a courageous man (I assume he really felt a need for power in his gut). The tragedy of Nazi Germany was that a few million Germans were gutless. To my mind Hitler was intelligent (in the early stages) and wrong. He was courageous though.

/ MARK M. KELLER /

The letter by John Curlovich on the history of military virtues is truly amazing. In a mere 250 words, John Makes ten major errors of fact - a density of mistakes that ranks him with Erich von Daniken and L. Ron Hubbard. His animus against soldiery and the Roman Catholic Church seems to have wholly deprived him of historical perspective.

Let me enumerate, so people will not think I'm exaggerating:

1) We are told that Gibbon despised the "weak and effeminate" Byzantines. The implication is that the Byzantines were not warlike, but cultivated the arts of peace in their quiet gardens. West Rome fell in the fifth century, but East Rome was not overrun by hostile armies for another 700 years. The Byzantine East Romans avoided barbarian sacking...how, John? They did it by having the most effective and brutal army - that's "army", John - in the Balkan region. Byzantine heavy cavalry rode down Huns and Bulgars, Byzantine naval ships broke Arab battle lines by flamethrower charges. The Byzantines were warlike. Gibbon was grossly in error to think otherwise.

2) We are told that the fascination with strength and courage came "not from the classic cities but from savage tribes". Classic cities must mean Hellenic Greece and Republican Rome. The Greeks and Romans did not admire physical courage? Their whole culture was based on it? How is one to explain the worship of Herakles, the Olympic Games, the idolization of the naked male athlete? John, please explain the Roman concept of virtus, explain the myths of Romulus and Mucius Scaevola, if you think they do not represent the glorification of military courage.

3) The "savage tribes erected no buildings, conducted no trade, created no art". I think John is confusing the Huns (who never became Christians) with the Germans (who did become Christians). The Germans moved into the old precincts of West Rome as hired border police. When the central authority collapsed, the German war-bands took over and ran what remained of the Empire. The Goths in Italy certainly tried to keep the Roman system going, but they didn't have the administrative skill needed. John, maybe you're thinking of the Comanches, not the Goths.

4) "The Church put the lid on pleasure." Well, I don't know, John. The early Catholic Church certainly didn't enforce celibacy on priests or forbid the drinking of wine. What it did mostly was try to restrain the free exercise of manslaughter, rape, arson, pillage, and like that. No doubt that's why the Vikings considered Christ a kill-joy compared to Odin. I wonder if such pleasures are not better off suppressed.

5) "The Church put the lid on comfort." You know, John, not everybody was forced to go out and become a cenobite, or live in a hermit's cave. The lack of bathing in the Dark Ages was as much a result of the breakdown of water supplies as of clerical preaching against lusts of the flesh. Remember, the real ascetics were the Manichaen heretics.

6) "Stern, puritannical ways" -- see above. Your version of Puritanism, John, seems to come from H.L. Mencken in the 1920's: "Puritans are mostly interested in stopping people from having fun." That's inaccurate.

7) Military virtues survived because the Church encouraged them.- The desire of European boys to be "strong rather than wise, athletic rather than contemplative" was encouraged also by the Vikings, Magyars, Turks, and other marauders who were riding into the boundaries of Europe, and had no desire to stop and discuss philosophy. The feudal culture, ruled by warlords, was in many ways a regressive one. But it was a response to the real danger of the bandits and reivers from over the borders.

8) The Church preferred men "chaste rather than sensual". A false dichotomy, John. Minor fornication and adultery were so common that the Church considered them relatively venial sins. Rape was considered more serious, and many warlords were annoyed to be told that kidnapping village maidens was no longer acceptable behavior.

9) The Church preferred a "brave soldier to a brave draft refuser". Talk about anachronisms! "Draft refuser" would mean very little in the 12th century. When the Petchenegs rode out of the grassland, you either went with the village militia to fight them, or you ran away. There was no Selective Service Board in those days.

10) "Fifteen hundred years later", the Church is responsible for the mess our world is in. Oh, maybe there are a few other factors involved. Try gunpowder, trans-oceanic ships, nationalism, new crops from the New World, capitalism, the Industrial Revolution...There are a few other things involved, John.

You know, it's amazing, John. I almost ended up defending the Roman Catholic Church, which is something I normally don't do. It must just be that your biased, inaccurate, unfair, and careless piece of historical analysis has caused me to consider some arguments for the other side. I hope that you usually do a more careful job of research before writing than is displayed by your paragraph on "courage"

((The Catholic Church is, like all human institutions, subject to the strengths and weaknesses of the people who carry out its policies. There is no question that the Church has been responsible for both good and evil in the world. Attributing the state of our society to one institution is doubly wrong. First of all, as you cite, there are a wealth of other contributing factors. Second, John attributed all of the bad aspects of our society to the Church, but none of the good. If the Church was as influential as he claims it to be, they must be responsible for the good as well. Finally, the other factors which molded society also molded the churchmen.)))

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/GAYLE KAPLAN/

I think physical bravery is so admired because it seems clear and obvious that the person has triumphed over something or someone, perhaps him/herself. Also, the act is self-evident, that is, it can usually be seen and is concrete. Thus, an act most people can understand, or think they understand, in simple terms. Such acts and the admiration for them relate to our history, especially our history of war. For men, courageous actions are often linked to virility and to physical prowess in one form or another. Moral and ethical bravery are more recent developments in human thought and feeling. They also offer less tangible award. A man fights and kills his enemy. First he has the body for people to see what he has done; next, he probably received some economic benefit - though that usually doesn't follow any more.

/JESSICA SALMONSON/

Now that you've attacked Laurine White's hero Audie Murphy, all she has left is General George Custer, who, says she, "no one ever denied... had courage." Some historians state that Sitting Bull was not at Little Big Horn, but waited in his teepee for any overture of possible peace. Custer, however, wished to be the next President of the United States and would send no encouragement for stopping the battle; a victory would make him a hero. Custer wasn't riding bravely into battle; he was riding to power and authority, while the brave man, the man with courage, never even arrived at the scene of so much unnecessary bloodshed.

/BOB WEBBER/

What I think courage is seems to agree at least somewhat with your proposition - that courage can be a strictly non-physical thing, evidenced by the support of convictions in a situation which may be hazardous in some way other than in its possibilities for death or mutilation. On the other hand, courage can surely be a physical thing too. I suspect that the over emphasis on physical courage in our culture is related directly to the emphasis on physical activity. As a high school student I found that there was much more to be gained from a personal aggrandizement viewpoint, by being a little above the mediocre average in athletics than by excelling in academic work.

On the other hand, one must be at that "little above mediocre" point in one of a somewhat restricted number of ways to get acclaim. In a bicycle ergometer test, I came out second of thirty, behind a fellow who played a minimum of half an hour of squash every day. I was barely on the lowest "poor" range of the chart accompanying that Swedish torture device, but the football players in the class were even lower. In other words, I was in better shape, but because I did not show it in flashy, socially acceptable ways, it didn't count. The same thing seems to be true of heroism.

/DON FITCH/

General Custer may have died heroically (most Heroes are pretty stupid) but not courageously. He died for the same sins/flaws by which he lived: Arrogance, Greed, Egocentrism, and Stupidity. The Little Big Horn battle is a classic/textbook example of what not to do, and it's difficult to imagine any reputable historian coming to any conclusion other than that summed up in the bumper sticker so often seen on cars at Indian powwows -- "Custer Had It Coming." And I'd always assumed

that Tom Paine and Patrick Henry did indeed quake at the thought of death -- and put their lives on the line anyhow. (Also, that they were pretty sure that the odds were with them.) Misplaced courage can easily be fatal to an individual or to a nation, and perhaps the world.

ERIC LINDSAY

Apart from the fairly obvious point that physical courage is almost universally respected in societies, the essence of moral courage is almost bound to be found in opposing those things that are respected in the particular group of which you find yourself a part. In fact, moral courage seems to imply being a traitor to the things your group wishes you to respect. If it did not involve disagreement with the group, the courage involved would then have to be physical (by acting in accord with their wishes, even if in a situation that is made dangerous by the environment or by the opposition of those outside the group.)

Now, moral courage can also contain a considerable element of physical courage, but things honored by the group as physical courage do not involve opposition to the group, and so does not include moral courage. In your case, you found yourself having to follow the dictates of either the wider group of society as a whole, or else of the dictates of your own conscience...against the pragmatic concerns of the group you temporarily belonged to, despite the possibility of considerable disapproval.

DOMENIC QUADRINI

Why does moral courage seldom receive the favorable acceptance that physical courage does? It would appear that the answer goes back to man's very struggle for survival and has persisted in many perverse forms to this day. It was physical courage not moral that brought home the buffalo. An act of physical courage successfully accomplished meant life, and the rewards were immediate. It is a sad fact of human nature that today, when our survival depends less on physical courage and in all likelihood more on moral courage, we continue to embrace the former and shun the latter.

LAURINE WHITE

A book has been or will be published this summer, with a new theory, and a rather controversial one, about Custer's Last Stand. The author did research among the descendants of the Indians involved. According to him a large percentage of the soldiers were not experienced Indian fighters. They'd heard about the "save a bullet for yourself when attacked by Indians", and panicked when surrounded by the Sioux. Many of the soldiers shot themselves. A few even killed other men before shooting themselves.

COMPETITION

ROBERT BRIGGS

I can't let this statement of yours go by. "I believe that our two countries (US & USSR) have more common interests than points of difference." This idea is very popular today. It is in every issue of the WASHINGTON POST and NEW YORK TIMES. It's all the rage at Harvard. However, that doesn't make it true. You forget the USSR is communist. Communism is a rather typical near Eastern religion in many ways related to Islam. One of these ways is a world conquering dynamic. We could only cooperate in our own destruction.

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((First of all, the Soviet Union does not have a communist government. They have an oligopolistic dictatorship with socialist trappings. I suspect it is impossible to even approach a true communist state in an industrial nation. Second, you are reading too much into my statements. By common interests, I meant that both the US and the USSR are concerned with environmental issues, the diminishing of resources, energy shortages, possibility of nuclear proliferation and use, the development of space, improvement of the standard of living, the problem of the Third World, etc. The truth is that the Soviet Union has grown in our direction in recent years and vice versa. One cannot help noting that at least they no longer execute their populace by the millions, that they have re-instituted capitalism in some industries, and that civil liberties have increased somewhat. Contrarily, we have seen an eradication of our civil liberties, increased governmental control, increased taxation and welfare programs, etc. Mind you, I'm not implying that any of this last is either good or bad, but it does reflect a trend toward socialization.)))

/ROBERT COULSON/

Like most people, you imply that the only choice is between competition and cooperation. Personally, I don't think highly of either one. Oh, they're both necessary evils if one desires civilization (I almost added "to continue" and then I considered our present society and decided that one can't continue something one doesn't have to begin with). But I try to keep mine to a minimum. My most satisfying job to date has been one in which I had only nominal supervision.

((Yes, but you're still competing for your job with some theoretical person who might do it better or cheaper, and your job only exists because it competes with automation or elimination successfully. And your employer only exists because of competition. And you can only drive to work because you cooperate (mostly) with other drivers. I'm applying the terms in a far less specific manner than are you.)))

/JESSICA SALMONSON/

Jerry Pournelle's competitive market theory is something that makes me want to respond with, "That's what they'd like us to believe." Actually, when demand is down, prices go up to make up for the loss of sales, which ruins sales all the more, forcing prices up still further to make up the difference.

((Err, sorry, Jessica, but it doesn't work that way. If demand goes down, prices drop. But since prices drop, the product is no longer profitable, so less people make it. Since less people make it, there is more demand for what is left. So the prices go back up again. And on and on.)))

/DON AYRES/

Competition reminds me that Robert Whitaker's expectations of schools (by which he means I suspect colleges and universities) is wholly different than that of the university itself. Why else did all the so-called demands for relevance disrupt university life of the early 1970's? Students were demanding job-training, life-training, which universities had never really concerned themselves with. You didn't go to a university to get job-training, as Americans deluded themselves into believing, but because you wanted "enlightenment", to

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understand finer points of a topic; only with select professions did the schools ever intend themselves as "job-training" centers, so the 1970's were a bit of a shock. (Vietnam, of course, played its part.)

Interesting to see Luttrell's comments on evolution from a physical anthropologist's viewpoint. One comment in regard to natural selection is that man is still exempt from many of the selective elements that affect other animal life (which also have high infant mortality, aberrant infants with six or eight limbs or partially bifurcate heads are not, I recall my major professor saying, as rare as the geneticists would like to think, human or animal.) The elements that dictate whether or not human kind is a constituent of the local fauna are not those that determine whether another animal is - nor the percentages.

MARK M. KELLER AND FIRE TIME

/MARK M. KELLER/

Three short comments on the FIRE TIME review, now that I have had a chance to look it over in leisure. First, it has been pointed out to me, and quite correctly, that Poul Anderson does not say the star Anu actually went nova. Please ignore my quibbles about nova stars on pages 16 and 18. What Anu did was gradually swell to a red giant. I should have read the book a bit more carefully.

The Dalzell theory on six-legged tendencies among vertebrates is elaborated in GALAXY, May 1976 issue, in the article "Hexapedia".

There are places on the Earth that undergo in fact a "fire time" situation, namely those parts in India with irregular monsoon cycles. Two years drought, seven years rain - usually. The inhabitants have mostly taken the Motie attitude: "It's coming and there's nothing we can do about it."

/POUL ANDERSON/

Thank you for the issue of MYTHOLOGIES with the essay on FIRE TIME by Mark M. Keller. On the whole, that is an excellent one. It is always gratifying to a writer to find that somebody has read his stuff closely and actually thought about it; few people do.

Mr. Keller's comments on the biological implications of the two life systems on Ishtar are very well taken. I could respond, going into more detail than was possible in the book, and that might be great fun -- in a face-to-face bull session. But right now my time is limited, as are your space and the patience of your readers. Besides, most of what was said by either party would have to be sheer speculation; after all, so far we have only one sample of life on a planet, unless Viking comes up with something.

For the record, I would like to correct one error that Mr. Keller makes. Stars do not "go nova" and then turn into red giants, and nowhere in the novel did I say that that had happened. Most stars simply swell up in their old age, becoming cooler, redder, but more luminous than before because of the vastly increased surface. Very massive stars blow up -- actually, collapse, releasing enormous energies that explode away a great deal of their material -- rather than swell up; these are the supernovae. Ordinary novae are an

entirely different and much less violent thing. It is now thought that they result from the interaction of two companion stars in rather special states. See any good book on modern astrophysics for details. The point here is that the sun Anu in FIRE TIME simply turned slowly but inexorably into a red giant.

Also for the record -- although ordinarily I don't think an author has any business telling people what he really meant -- there is no particular significance in my use of the word "Naqsa" to designate a race of sophonts. I had done it ten years previously in THE STAR FOX, and frankly, didn't then know that it meant anything in Arabic. I did make FIRE TIME a kind of sequel to that book to emphasize the point that some wars are just and some unjust; but my feeling is that any such preaching should be done indirectly and held to a minimum. Readers who wish to read more specific meanings into a particular piece are welcome to do so. They may even be right. But mainly I tell stories.

[GREG BENFORD]

Mark Keller's excellent piece on two-phase biospheres is just the sort of thing authors love to see in fanzines, and I think ultimately benefit readers the most, too, compared with the usual run of reviews. Without having read FIRE TIME I believe I agree with all of Mark's objections. Though I lean toward scientific authenticity in SF, I think the two-phase biosphere is so fascinating that the errors are justified, as a first crack at solving (i.e. imagining) the problem. Probably the easiest way to isolate biospheres is with an immense, equator-girding desert. I've been toying with this idea for some years now, and may someday work it into an overall scheme; I think there are sound reasons why a bacteria which could gobble up an opposite-handed sugar, etc., still couldn't survive the migration across a vast desert -- two specific adaptations, to reach a new food supply, seem highly unlikely. I'll grant that, given geological time scales, the continents will drift and things can be scrambled. But if the desert is there because the star is just too damned hot (and the planet has no polar tilt, to average the hot portion over a band around the equator, as the Earth does), the desert will remain and will fry away elements of either biosphere which are carried into the equatorial region.

[VICTORIA VAYNE]

One of the high points of the issue for me was Mark Keller's long article on FIRE TIME. That so enthused me that I have already written to him to ask for that sort of article for my own fanzine, some future issue, and he agreed to try when I saw him at MAC. A most excellent article, and for me very likely more interesting than the book itself would be. I've never read the book, which considering I still found the article fascinating, attests to the article's excellence. I am not in a position to argue Mark's points of science in the piece; it sounded convincing enough to me. I do hope you will continue to publish long critical reviews and examinations of books like this one.

((OK, Mark, get to work on another one. Actually, I'm rather fond of very detailed in depth analyses of books myself, and this gives me an excuse to goad someone into writing one. One of these days I'm going to talk Bonnie Dalzell into doing a piece on the zoological basis of Larry Niven's aliens.)))

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[STEVE BEATTY]

Congratulations to Mark M. Keller on the best sercon article I've read in some time. It was intelligent, thoughtful, well written, and could be followed by someone who hadn't read FIRE TIME.

Where was your article on T.J. Bass published?

((GRANFALLOON)))

[GIL GAI ER]

To say that I was impressed with Mark Keller's article on Anderson's FIRE TIME is calling the shot. Will come back for seconds after I've read the book. Am looking forward to other such pieces by Mark. That's the kind of sercon I like when I like sercon.

[GEORGE FLYNN]

Mark Keller's essay on FIRE TIME and related matters is fascinating, if a bit diffuse. It would be well worth expanding further, with consideration of other aspects of Poul Anderson's biology (the Ythrians? the killer herbivores in SATAN'S WORLD? etc). Indeed, even as it stands it's meatier than some "books" I've seen from fannish presses.

[STEPHEN H. DORNEMAN]

Three cheers for Mark Keller's article on the biology of Poul Anderson's FIRE TIME. One comment: Once an ortho-form evolved, the not-so-hard-to-do capacity to digest the T-form proteins, it could well wipe out all the T-life on the planet before a reciprocal defensive capability to digest it evolved in the T-forms. I agree with Mark; I'd be very surprised to see anything but symbiotes of the original schism, and probably there'd be ~~very~~ few even of them. You just don't mix such wildly different ecologies without losing one, or sometimes even both of them, as man is just now beginning to learn.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

[GEORGE FLYNN]

I think Huxley correctly identifies many of the problems associated with technology, but which are causes and which effects? I think "the ever-growing population" is the fundamental problem. Even without international tension or crisis (which do aggravate the situation), government must grow faster than population merely to maintain the same level of services; and to do this requires an ever more extensive use of technology. Worse yet, any technology a government declines to involve itself in will probably be used to create private "concentrations of power" even less benign. And so the vicious circle goes on in one way or another. There is a limit, of course, at which things become unworkable however the power is wielded, and to reach this point unprepared is likely to mean catastrophe. But to "alter society" as you suggest is probably possible only with a firm governmental hand, and thus with still more diminution of liberty. But maybe the people will of their own accord opt for a rational policy? Sure they will...

((I never promised you a rose garden, George. Naturally, it's likely impossible to achieve the broad goals we agree are desirable with regard to control of technology, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't at least be conscious as a nation of the problem and working on it.)))

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[DOMENIC QUADRINI]

Is Mark Keller kidding? I wonder if any member of the German High Command said to himself at the start of World War II, "So what if our oil gets cut off?" The few examples he points out of a desperate nation's resourcefulness are hardly grounds for believing that we could survive in a world where there are so many powerful and hostile factions. In a peaceful world I would buy his philosophy, but in this one - well, Germany did lose.

After having read Myth number 9, I was compelled to thumb through FUTURE SHOCK to review what I had read a few years ago. Toffler gives countless examples from many aspects of our society of how technological change is affecting our lives. He says that we must adapt to these changes without ever saying how the adaptation is to be affected. This, as you have observed, seems to be a shortcoming of most writers on the subject.

((When I finally read FUTURE SHOCK, I was amazed that so much praise had been heaped on such a derivative book. Toffler had no new insights; he merely belabored the obvious. I have encountered some cursory discussions of how we might achieve the necessary adaptation. I'm partial, of course, but I strongly suspect that the increasing popularity of science fiction is a result of this desire for a means to comprehend change and accept it. There have been some experimental communities established recently in which the status quo is maintained rigorously,)))

[JOHN KUSSKE]

Ah, machinery. I'm a person who can tell you something about that. I spend 25% of each day tending a milk-bottling machine. I affect it, and it affects me. For one thing, while I'm running the thing I find my entire body adjusting to its speed. I walk in time to its thumping; I whistle in time with it; I think in time with it. The machine imposes a tempo on me, and since it never stops, just keep churning the cartons out, I don't stop either. Moreover, it imposes a heightened awareness on me. I must watch several components at once, alert for the slightest malfunction, employing four of my senses. Such a hyperactive state consumes much of my energy and requires several hours of relaxation on my part, afterwards, in order to "come down". There is a clash of personalities between myself and the machine. I am not a person who believes that machinery is just inanimate matter. I think that it has primitive consciousness of a sort. My machine can be influenced. For instance, if it is running poorly (not badly enough to require attention from a maintenance man, but badly enough to cause inconvenience for me), I will set a sledgehammer in the vicinity and threaten to use the same on the machine. This frequently induces it to behave. Kindness also helps. I may give the machine several extra spurts of grease, if it has been good, and that usually ensures several additional days of smooth operation. One time, in an experiment of applied psychology, I printed SUPERMACHINE on the nameplate. For a month it ran perfectly, until I went on vacation and another operator substituted for a week.

Mankind has not had time enough to adjust to technology, I think. Intellectually we can handle it. We can foresee and provide for lim-

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itations of record-keeping, or of transportation, or of warfare. But physically there hasn't been enough time yet. Our bodies are used to the seasons, to travelling at five miles per hour, to eating slowly and digesting peacefully. It will take many generations until we are able to get along physically with the altered life that machinery has produced, I think. No doubt this entire train of thought is unoriginal. Wasn't Wells saying much the same thing in THE TIME MACHINE?

/MIKE GLICKSOHN/

As a fan who makes the best possible use of electrostencillers, IBM Selectric typewriters and ever better silk-screen mimeos, I don't think I'm all that much afraid of change-through-technology, but your article was very interesting reading. Even though fans have broad mental horizons and hence are unaffected by future shock, I guess we've all had sufficient experience with bureaucratic inefficiency to accept the basic truth of what you say. (I think the best summary of the topic I've seen was a cartoon in the Saturday paper several years ago. The caption was "What's the use when they stubbornly refuse to be mechanized?" and the picture showed a construction site in India. In the foreground was a bloody great crane from which hung a sling containing an elephant with a log in its trunk.)

/STUART GILSON/

The alternatives to non-renewable resources Mark Keller writes of are sound in principle, but, as is commonly the error, they are short-term solutions only. In the past, such an approach may indeed have worked, but in present terms there is not enough public concern for the long-term effects of petroleum depletion. Science would be wise to exercise a little foresight in such matters if we are ever to find permanent replacements and not simply temporary substitutes. The trouble is, nations have reacted to shortages only in times of crisis, when the discovery of new usable products was virtually necessitated if they were to survive; and this is not always a guaranteed way of averting disaster. In specific instances, desperation may have worked; once our non-renewable petroleum resources become exhausted, however, our present dependence on them being what it is, I doubt if alternatives can be found in time to stave off economic collapse (which might in part be due to the control the oil corporations have over research into new sources of energy; at the moment, for purposes of their own self-aggrandizement, the corporations have stifled such research to a large degree in order to ensure that petroleum is never, for the present at any rate, supplanted by a cheaper, more efficient source of energy. It's plain good business. I seem to recall there being several years ago some furor over an engine designed by a Canadian student that could run on sugar at small cost and at great efficiency; shortly after its invention, however, the engine was bought by Gulf Oil (then under a different name in Canada) and little was heard of it afterwards.)

/SUE ANDERSON/

Technology? I heard an amazing theory a week or so ago, from a Boston area SCA member. We were riding through Newport, and the sight of the tourist-attraction mansions prompted her to mention the one manor in England that at one time was the sole support of two entire villages. That's in addition to the agricultural workers. Idle rich? No! They had to spend all their time supervising the household staff, making

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sure things were done properly, deciding on umpteen courses for dinner, and generally using their valuable time for the benefit of these immense numbers of villagers who filled these useless positions -- "underhouseparlormaid, first assistant underhouseparlormaid, second assistant..." It seems that the invention of the horse collar had removed these people from their unending drudgery in the fields -- so the upper classes were forced to create jobs for them lest they starve, and to waste their lives overseeing them, etc etc. There's "future shock", if you like.

/RONALD SALOMON/

Mark Keller points out the admirable achievements accomplished (for unadmirable ends of course) and accomplishable under a dictatorship. I doubt whether the US could have managed to accomplish the same things America today and Germany then is a case of apples and oranges. What did happen to those "synthetic oil" plants built here in the 1920's? If the US really wanted to become energy independent, wouldn't we have? Obviously in our society there's a powerful enough segment that doesn't feel the need (the profit bucks aren't there) so it just doesn't get done.

/JODIE OFFUTT/

It is strange how we at once resist real change, while at the same time we're so infatuated with "new, improved" gadgetry. We're most comfortable with the same old things that do new things.

Our blender sits in the cabinet and is seldom used. It involves a different way of preparing foods as well as different kinds of dishes. Had I started off my cooking career with a blender, I'll bet I'd have used it along with everything else. I didn't get it until several years into my marriage so I don't think about using it very often. Most of the things I do use it for, I can just as easily use the beaters.

/ALEXANDER DONIPHAN WALLACE/

The statement that, because of our technology we need fewer man-hours to produce the same amount of goods is misleading. As an example note that only about 25% of the human energy is required now as was a century ago to produce a ton of wheat. BUT this does not count the human energy expended in the production of farm machinery, or in producing fuel, or the R & D that has gone into the agribusiness over the past century. Nor the use of irreplaceable raw material. I suggest that the main impact of technology is to provide these things we had not earlier.

About employment, look if you will at this too simplistic example, a nation-state without exports or imports, in which 50% of the labor force can produce all needed goods. The other 50% goes on the dole and is unable to purchase all of what the other labor force produces. Accordingly, less than 50% of the labor force will be employed. Reiterating this a few times produces a disastrous situation. This rather trivial and absurd model shows why full employment is necessary.

((I can't agree. To use your example, 50% of the work force might well be able to produce sufficient merchandise, through use of technology, to satisfy the needs of the whole population. If so, the

price will drop until the people on the dole can afford it also. If employment increases to, say, 60%, the additional labor would be used to provide goods not formerly produced, thereby increasing the standard of living (and the base for taxation).

Full employment is a theoretical goal at best in any case. There are always going to be chronic unemployables, and, for that matter, it is probably a good idea to have some people in a constant retraining program, which would make them between jobs. Full employment would probably just increase the rate of inflation in any case, a seesaw between two problems that no one has been able to solve yet.)))

/PAUL DIFILIPPO/

I'd like to suggest one possible motivating force behind anti-technology sentiments. This was hinted at in a Brian Aldiss story in the next to last NOVA. There, he postulates that the majority of mankind demands to work because they are inherently incapable of handling their leisure time. Work is a deadening process necessary for the continued day to day survival of human beings, who would all go starkers if they were forced to fill up large amounts of free time with thoughts about the basic mystery of existence. In short, by keeping its collective nose to the grindstone, Man survives and is not made to think creatively -- something the major part of mankind, in my opinion, cannot do.

So when you threaten to give someone more or total leisure, his subconscious reacts totally hostilely. Who wants to have the responsibility of keeping themselves productively active? Perhaps this all ties in with the issue raised in the Maslow discussion: most people are not self-activated and prefer to be given a predigested formula for existence. When, all of a sudden, Big Brother/Pseudo Father/Uncle Sam says, "We are dropping our management of your lives and we are going to concentrate on machines. See to yourselves.", the reaction from the unprepared masses is bound to be great and calamitous.

/PAUL WALKER/

The problem of man and machine is usually portrayed in a very one-sided fashion these days, almost always by people who dislike machines, but not everyone does. I know a lot of people who love machines: cars, tvs, radios, offset duplicators, electric appliances, computers, etc. People who love them take an esthetic pleasure in their design and working. They do not feel intimidated by them at all. The prime reason is they know how they work. They have taken them apart and put them back together again. They know why they go wrong and what to do about it. They see the machine as at their mercy and not the other way around. They are not afraid if the gadget goes "buzz" all of a sudden. It intrigues them. Keeping a machine running smoothly is a challenge.

I am not one of these people but I believe them when they tell me they enjoy machines. Between every man (or every woman) and every machine with which he works daily there develops a relationship, but the man who loves machines never anthropomorphizes them. It is his goal to get full production from the machine, and to do this, he must keep an eagle eye on the gadget. He believes he is making the machine do exactly what he wants it to. He is usually unaware that in turn the machine modifies his own behavior; that it imposes its own discipline.

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But then the same is true in the arts. A writer sets out to make a thing he has clearly in his head, but the process of making it refines and reshapes it often into something radically different. The writer is not displeased if the final result is successful, and neither is the machinist.

The conflict between man and machine comes when man is deprived of forming a personal relationship with his machine. When he is denied personal responsibility for his machine, as on an assembly line, Then he is there as the service of the machine rather than the machine being at his service. He may not even know how the machine works, or what to do when it breaks down; he is not the one who determines the maximum output of the machine or its quality of performance. That is grounds for alienation.

It is the system of workmanship in this world and not the machine that is the enemy. People do resist change because they fear the consequences to their jobs and their life styles and with good reason. It is one rule of the working man that management never makes changes to benefit the working man; never to make his burden easier, simpler, but only to increase profit. And management's favorite method of increasing profits has been, since the industrial revolution, to decrease labor costs -- at the expense of the workers. I have never yet worked in a place where the workers were not suspicious of management, and management did not regard the workers as the "enemy".

But there is something more to this involving changes in "efficiency" of work routines. Every job involving more than one person requires a system of operation, a delegation of duties and responsibilities, a "team effort". Sounds simple but in practice it is very complicated, so complicated that I wonder sometimes how systems like companies don't break down entirely. In any group of workers charged with specific responsibilities only some of them will fulfill those responsibilities; the burden of production falls on a few dynamos who do most of the work and compell the sluggards to do at least part of their share. Despite the lables of "boss" or "supervisor" it is he who is most essential to the success of the production that is in charge.

Developing a successful work routine is something that can take years to do. There is not only the problem of finding the best way for the individual to do his job, but the best way that will suit the others he works with, bosses and peers. This usually involves some kind of demoralizing compromise. The boss may want a job done his way which may be impossible for the individual worker to adapt himself to. So he has to find a way to do the job that will satisfy both of them. Secondly, his job may involve relying on the services of a fellow worker who cannot be relied on to fulfill his responsibilities. Supplies are not forthcoming, workmanship is sloppy and slow moving. He must adapt his own routine to that of others. When one begins, when one is ambitious, one resists authority and sloppiness is not what is desired. There is a certain measure of productivity required of the whole operation and as long as that is fulfilled -- and it always is in any moderately efficient plant -- then nobody wants "efficiency". They want to be left alone. A time comes when a young man realizes that what he is doing is just a job and not a living. He is made to be in such and such a place for X number of hours and do this and that, and as long as it is done at the end of the day no one will bother him.

And he finds that over a period of years he always manages to accomplish his "this and that" no matter how "efficiently" he does it.

In time he realizes that he could accomplish more than his quota, but then that would mean that he would be expected to produce more each day. And to produce less than more in any single day would make him look bad. So he settles down to an acceptable quota. It gives him time to grab an extra cigarette or just goof off. And this does not trouble the boss who is most concerned with a smoothly running operation. Greater efficiency to a boss can mean chaos rather than profits.

It is a sad thing. But I think most work is a sad thing. Working from necessity rather than pleasure is a curse.

((Allow me to disagree somewhat, although in specific types of jobs I agree. Among other things, my specific job is to grease the wheels of a rather large factory, to ensure that those little inconsistencies between factions don't happen, are corrected when they do happen. I think you underestimate the preponderance of incentive systems in this country. Virtually every job in our plant is performed on a piece rate business arrangement, which means that the more that is produced, the more the individual worker is paid. Except in certain very exceptional situations, there is no reason for him to work more slowly.

There is, obviously, a running battle between labor and management in most companies. This is understandable, although the hostility is often without basis. For example, my company employs a number of very highly skilled workers. Most of the competition for our industry is within twenty miles of us, so they could easily get new jobs if they left. It is not to our advantage to aggravate the worker unless no other course is possible.

Now, at the moment we are overproducing our budget. To cut this back, I have ordered a two day production curtailment. During this month (November) we have two holidays that fall on Thursday. Our contract allows us to curtail production (days with no work and no pay) up to four days per quarter. Because I wanted to cause minimal unhappiness, I scheduled these days for the two Fridays following, so that the employees would have two four day weekends. Also, since Massachusetts unemployment doesn't recognize holidays, the employees would be able to collect unemployment compensation for both Thursdays and both Fridays.

Well, the Union officials apparently felt that if we were offering something, it must be loaded. Because of an imprecision in the wording of our contract, they insisted that we could not schedule a curtailment in a week that included a holiday. Rather than cause bad feelings in the union, we conceded and moved the non-productive days to the following Mondays.

Now, a one day curtailment makes them ineligible for the unemployment compensation, so they will all lose one and a half day's pay that they would have had otherwise. Additionally, they will have Thursday off, come in Friday, then have three days off. The union officials admitted that the majority of the membership wanted the Fridays off, even if there were no compensation at all involved. So why did they insist?

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"It's the principle of the thing." Well, the result was that the Chief Steward of the union has been assaulted by one of the employees, and rumor has it that the reason the Union President has been out sick for the past two days is that he's afraid to come to work.

We don't consider the workers as our "enemy". But some of them very obviously have that attitude toward management.)))

[HARRY WARNER JR]

Much of the resistance to change which people possess seems founded on the suspicion that the changes will be more trouble than they're worth. The camera industry, for example, has been undergoing an invisible revolution in recent years, because good cameras are substituting electronic intestines for their old mechanical insides. There are undoubtedly advantages, like a good camera's ability to provide an infinity of shutter speeds, not just the eight or ten normally offered when it was all done with spring and gears, and liberation for the photographer from the old chore of reading a light meter and then setting manually his camera in accordance with what it showed. But the change in construction of good cameras is bringing the drawbacks which many of us feared without knowing the exact form they would take. It's no longer possible to have a good camera repaired by the neighborhood mechanical genius who can find in an older camera the difficulty and fix it just by looking and poking a few minutes. There's no way to repair a bad connection with an ordinary soldering iron when you can't even see the individual wires without a magnifying glass. Some of these new cameras are totally dependent on the battery, unable to take a picture if it fails and there's no replacement handy. And some of these improvements are irrelevant to most picture-taking purposes.

[STEPHEN H. DORNEMAN]

One of the problems in introducing new technology is that the average man refuses to take the long range look at anything, therefore evidence for the greater efficiency of a process means little to him unless it specifically makes his job easier to do now without eliminating any of the status, pay, security, etc. of that job. Sims would have been better off going directly to the gunnery officers and emphasizing how much more important they became with the new system.

Huxley's edict "to educate people to preserve their own freedom and resist the misuse of technology" is definitely a part of the solution to the concentration of power that technology fosters, but I would add that the people should not only be educated to preserve and resist, but also be educated in the use of that technology themselves. The system New York has where any citizens group that demands it must be given facilities, instruction, and air time by the various television stations is a marvelous example where such education has been nurtured by law. Although I understand that fewer and fewer groups are demanding such access to the media.

Your statement that full employment makes bad economics is not backed up by the best examples. It is not only not "highly unlikely that we will tailor our machines to be less efficient", it is being and has been done for years. Ever hear of built in obsolescence, or notice that warranties on a number of products are good for fewer and fewer years these days? I do agree that the solution to unemployment is not

to be found in public work programs (at least, not with any degree of improvement in the economy), but rather by a restructuring of our present systems of production. The time is ripe for a much greater, perhaps government sponsored investment by companies into providing services rather than goods. There are so many only raw materials to be made into Veg-O-Matics, but the number of humans available increases daily by leaps and bounds. I can see it now..."General Motors. We also walk dogs."

((First of all, I was talking about the efficiency of capital goods, not consumer goods. The production equipment is not designed (for the most part) with built in obsolescence, because most of the time the very rate of technological advance makes it obsolete long before it would break down from overuse. Secondly, Sims could not have approached the gunnery officers directly because he had no idea at that time of the social changes that would result from his gunnery system. As for the virtues of full employment, see my comments to A.D. Wallace a bit earlier.)))

DALZELL

/DR. ROGER C. SCHLOBIN/

Really liked the covers by Bonnie Dalzell, and I guess coherency of vision made it quite natural that I'd like "The Pious Men". If you're in contact with her, please refer her to Snodgrass' poem "The Examination" and tell her I've fallen in love with her.

/LEE CARSON/

Just to start off on the wrong foot and seize your attention briefly (buried alive in letters as you are), egged on by Lynne Brodsky, I must say that I wasn't impressed by the latest Dalzell cover. I didn't like it at all until I realized that it had to be a joke. The tail was the tip-off - the absurdity of it boiled over. The beard remains perplexing. The shaggy forehooves vs the (shaven?) hindlegs - the white hair/black mane, etc. Can't place the horn (a bit like a saber). The head resembles that of a doe to me, who might as well be walleyed for its unruly forelock/eyebrows. The torso largely resembles a scrawny hound, which comports with the general air of poodle barber malpractice victim, complete with vaguely effeminate posture. Unimpressive. Uncharacteristically, I might add.

/IAN COVELL/

The cover: striking and challenging; we all must have an idea of what a unicorn may have looked like, and the popular conception of a pointed horse somehow never commanded the magic of legend. This drawing is close to what might excite wonder and fantasy; the strange unearthly eyes and screw horn are perfect.

/SHERYL SMITH/

Re: "Requiem for an Age Not Dead" -- You have no idea how delightful it is, after the number of formal fuck-ups that have fallen under my eye of late, to read a poem by someone with a decent sense of meter. Poets seem to consider counting inartistic these days, but perhaps Ms Dalzell as an artist has escaped this silly fashion. I only wish this competent poem of hers was more interesting! I wish there were more than three metaphors and less repetition of words and phrases (and

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The "splendor" and "grandeur" of the human estate, male or female, has not been a vital factor since the 18th century with its Great Chain of Being). Primarily, despite my wholehearted agreement with her message, I wish Ms Dalzell's didacticism had not gotten in the way of her art.

[STEPHEN H. DORNEMAN]

Although the two-color work came out very well, the oriental style just did not appeal to me as have Bonnie's previous covers. Incidentally, having recently acquired the Dungeons & Dragons rule books...I've noticed a number of Bonnie's works therein.

((Bonnie would be very interested to know just what rule books her art appeared in, since she has no knowledge of it, was not paid for it, and holds copyrights on it.)))

[HARRY WARNER JR]

The cover would have been impressive even without the long explanation of the ingenuities involved in its creation. At first I found the unicorn unsettlingly skinny. But after looking a few more times, I've decided that it's better this way. There's no reason why the unicorn should have exactly the build of a horse and its graceful contours in this picture make it look more vulnerable, as if doomed to the apparent fate of all unicorns.

((I wonder how many people were disappointed in that cover because of the non-traditional approach to the unicorn and the artwork. There's that resistance to change again. I'm very fond of the Oriental art style, which finds little favor among SF fans, who apparently are influenced by paperback and prozine cover illustrations.)))

MISCELLANEOUS

[TOM COLLINS]

BB Sams, the brilliant Southern fan artist, proposed a section of asphalt as an artwork several years ago and I rather think you got the idea from him, via me, though likely the source has been forgotten: we all plagiarize from the collective unconscious.

((More likely the other way around. "An Artist's Life" was written while I was in high school, about 1963. I talked about the idea in Apa45 in 1966-8, and since that had several southern members, it's entirely possible I was the source for BB Sams.)))

Your reply to Indick appalled me. You would not deny your son access to porn at any age? Granted the impressionability I would think shutting him off from scenes of joyous, violent death-making, animal torture, napalmed babies, battered children and all of the other most gross manifestations of violence, terror, and hatefulness the world provides, would be essential until there was a sufficiently developed emotional nature for dealing with such scenes.

((Firstly, we were talking about sexual pornography. Secondly, the only way to develop the emotional nature you describe is through exposure. And I never said I would encourage him, merely that if he was insistent that he was interested, I wouldn't stand in his way. But I certainly would make sure that he was getting a balanced presentation.)))

To George Flynn: Oh yes, time of year makes a big difference in the number of children born and their characteristics. See Gacuelin's THE COSMIC CLOCKS, and any of the stuff from the cycle studiers. Correlations are strange and insistent between "obviously" unrelated phenomena.

On Collins on DeCamp: To Paul DiFilippo: One can't comment on every thing. Yes, the book was anti-fan, but it was also, and more important, anti-HPL, however unconsciously.

To Cy Chauvin: I'm glad you didn't find HPL "repellent" from reading the book. Ursula K. LeGuin, normally quite intelligent, and novelist Larry McMurtrie are two who did. Mike Kurland, whose works always give me great pleasure, called HPL "scarihidaceous" after reading this book. DeCamp must take responsibility for those opinions, since they are based only on information he has supplied.

To Robert Whitaker: I complain of inaccuracies and distortions, sir. All the information available and in existence severely contradicts DeCamp's view - in the mass. The utterly ignorant are always unbiased; intelligent bias is more to be respected--Sprague fails to provide intelligent bias, or to admit the bias he has.

SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE was partly revised by HPL before his death, and still stands as the major work on its chosen topic. If it could have been so easily fixed, howcum no one has undertaken the task? It is idiosyncratic, of course. Most authors who have achieved much themselves are quirky in their judgments. So what else is new? Shakespeare never perfected his writings either.

To Sheryl Smith: "Passionate" indeed, and you are the only one who supplied the term. I consider it a compliment, and thank you.

Truth is not what one believes. If I believe I can fly, it ain't necessarily so. Not by flapping my arms, anyway.

((That's not demonstrably true. You've never flapped your wings believing you could fly, have you? For that matter, if you were in orbit, you could fly by flapping your wings. With some artificial wings, you could actually fly by arm power on the moon. Truth is relative.)))

/LAURINE WHITE/

You're an arachnophobe! I wouldn't recommend "The Great Spider Invasion" to you. The scene might get to you where tarantulas are crawling all over the kitchen and one of them falls into the blender as the woman starts to make a Bloody Mary. At this point we couldn't take any more and walked out.

If you didn't read Burroughs' books until late in life, how old are you?

((It was the "Giant Spider Invasion", and I saw it, and that scene did get to me, and you didn't miss anything by walking out. I'm 30 years old and I read Burroughs in college, which is relatively late in life to be reading Tarzan.)))

/REED ANDRUS/

Paul DiFilippo's piece left me speechless, choked with emotion. Being on a slaes force myself, I naturally identified with the teller, but it does point to the truism in the old saying, "No noose is good noose."

/TONY CVETKO/

Sue Anderson's loc raised an interesting point. The transportation industries at first opposed government regulation, but now everybody wants to keep it, because of one thing: guaranteed income. The government gives each trucking company a certain territory and the company reaps the profits from that territory. No one butts in. Free enterprise?

((I've never heard of this, Tony, and we deal with literally dozens of different trucking firms from our company. There are people trying to cut in on some of our business constantly. The biggest single trucker was UPS (Until the current strike), but that's because they have the biggest and most efficient nationwide delivery system. But this territorial assignment you mention is news to me, and doesn't seem to be supported by the evidence.)))

/GRAHAM ENGLAND/

Please explain to foreigners why a number plate R'LYEH should be unusual. All US number plates look odd to us Britishers.

((Your confusion has nothing to do with your being a Briton. The number plate is the name of the dreaming city of Cthulhu from the Lovecraft mythos, and would presumably be just as unusual in England as here.)))

/ROBERT BRIGGS/

You say, "it was one of the biggest shocks of my life to find that 'right' and 'wrong' were abstracts." Isn't this the attitude you condemn in Nixon and Ehrlichman? Remember Ehrlichman is not a twice born Baptist. He went to that citadel of the eastern liberal establishment, Harvard. While there he had a class in modern situation ethics. Is not that the ethic you promote?

((Don't be ridiculous, Robert. I regret sorely that right and wrong are not concrete, identifiable qualities, but my regrets will not alter the facts that right and wrong are ideas created by man, they have no existence outside of man, and therefore are abstracts. I have no doubt that Nixon felt he was right, and that his right is just as good as my right. But that doesn't mean I don't have the moral duty to see that my version of right prevails. After all, isn't that what all of us do? We all promote our own version of right and combat our own versions of wrong. Even if right means to obey the Pope/minister or whatever. Situational ethics means simply that while it might be perfectly all right to make passionate love to one person, it might be wrong to do so with another, because of differing qualities of the two individuals involved. You do this as well. You wouldn't make jokes about amputees in the presence of a quadriplegic, would you? I assume you wouldn't. Well, the same principle is applicable to most human affairs. The difficulty is in deciding when to apply what rules of behavior.)))

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/IAN COVELL/

There's a joke I like: One boy says to another, "I got a new watch." "How'd you get it?" says the other. "I walked into my parents' bedroom and found them making love. My father told me not to tell anyone that I'd seen them and I'd get a new watch, which I did." The other boy decides to try this that night. He waits till he hears the sound of their lovemaking then slams the door open. "I wanna watch," he declaims. His father turns to look at him, considers. "OK," he says, "Close the door behind you and stand near the bed."

/GEORGE FLYNN/

John Curlovich's interpretation of history is remarkably oversimplified. "...this fascination with physical strength and courage derives not from the world of the great classical cities..." Indeed? Then who invented the gladiatorial games? And what of the application of the "dubious arts of warfare" that fratricidally wrecked the first peak of Greek civilization? While the "savage tribes" to the North did indeed conduct trade and create art, though much of this was lost when the forces of "civilization" (= higher technology) set out to prey on them: it wasn't for lack of trying that the Romans failed to conquer the Germans first. All this, of course, before Christianity played any role in the situation. As for the Middle Ages, I will note only that any supposed neglect of the "contemplative" is belied by all those monasteries.

/DON AYRES/

Not to detract from the intriguing bit of work on the cover, but you mention that Dalzell is working on a doctorate without specifying the topic.

((It's Zoology. I have absolutely no idea what area of specialization, and probably wouldn't understand if I was told.)))

/SHERYL SMITH/

Re: The Wallace letter on Heinlein as mainstream. The problem of DOUBLE STAR as a Ruritanian-Graustarkian romance is that had Heinlein written it that way, he would almost assuredly have been unable to get it published, as the R-G romance was then fifty odd years out of date and was considered exceedingly corny. The fact that it was readily publishable as SF lends credence to the argument that successful SF is failed mainstream.

THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, among other more ambitious works, is something else again. LeGuin, Vance, and others of the socio-anthropological school of SF are attempting to use the conventions of SF as more than a Graustarkian gimmick. The intention here is to create entire other societies to provide complex illuminations of our own, and in such work the elements of strangeness - LeGuin's androgyny and so forth - is more than window dressing. In LHOD our response to the other worldly aspects is not limited to sheer romantic escapism. The best of these writers along with those of the myths and mysticism school (Delany, Lafferty, early Zelazny, etc.) whose best work packs a Jungian wallop, are using the field for more than Ruritanian adventurings. It seems to me then that such work is more than transplanted and inferior mainstream, and if you're looking to call something true science fiction, try those.

A FEW CLOSING NOTES:

I have been in contact with Eric Batard, a French fan, who wishes to promote more interaction between English-speaking and French-speaking fans. If there are any people among my readers who feel they have enough grasp of French to read and respond to French fanzines, they should let me know and I will see that Eric receives a list, which he will then publish in France.

As it now stands, this issue will be mailed out in late November. The first 100 page issue, #11, should be done in time for Boskone in February. I hope to see you all there...among other things, it saves me postage.

I will definitely be at Autoclave this year, late July, and hope to see you there as well.

I am looking for a Bart House paperback mystery novel titled THE WALTZ OF DEATH by P.B. Maxon. Anyone who happens to see a copy should please keep me in mind. I am as well looking for copies of the following Leslie Charteris "Saint" books: THE MISFORTUNES OF MR TEAL, THE BRIGHTER BUCCANEER, ANGELS OF DOOM, DAREDEVIL, MEET THE TIGER, THE BANDIT, THE LAST HERO, THE WHITE RIDE, X ESQUIRE, PRELUDE FOR WAR, THE SAINT ON GUARD, THE SAINT AND THE SIZZLING SABOTEUR, THE SAINT ON THE SPANISH MAIN, FEATURING THE SAINT, THE SAINT PLAYS WITH FIRE, THE SAINT MEETS HIS MATCH, or TRUST THE SAINT. Any assistance in locating any of these books, preferably in paperback, would be appreciated.

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I'D LIKE TO THANK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE, WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE, AS WELL AS ALL OF YOU WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE POLL.

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 Several people felt that I over-reacted last issue to Tim Marion, and Tim Marion felt that he over-reacted to Susan Anderson's poem and apologized. I'd be churlish not to do the same. Sorry, Tim.

Among those who wrote interesting letters I did not print were: Steve Ehrlich, Michael Bishop, Karen Bennett, David Moyer, Jim Goldfrank, Angelo Zaccone, Ray Bowie, Jerry Pournelle, John Thiel, Bill Breiding, Michael Carlson, Mae Strelkov, Dave Szurek, David Taggart, Chester Cuthbert, Mike Wood, Terry Jeeves, Chip Hitchcock, Frank Balazs, Doug Barbour, Adrian Washburn, Beck Brooks, D. Gary Grady, Rod Snyder, Randy Fuller, Tony Cvetko, Wayne Hooks, Tim Marion, Brendan DuBois, C.D. Doyle, Hank Heath, Mark Sharpe, Ben Indick, Denny Bowden, Laurie Trask, and Paula Lieberman. If marked _____ write or else!

A P A 4 5

As some of you already know, I am Official Editor of Apa45, one of the oldest general interest apas in science fiction fandom. Apa45 was founded in 1964 and has included as members over the years such well known fans as Joe Staton, Mike Glicksohn, Hank & Lesleigh Luttrell, Bob Vardeman, Johnny Chambers, Fred Lerner, Susan Wood, Bruce Gillespie, Arnie Katz, John Kusske, Fred Haskell, and many others. Current members now include Leigh Edmonds, Eric Lindsay, Jean A.B. Johnson, Mark M. Keller, Mike Wood, George Laskowski, and myself.

Unfortunately, Apa45 suffered greatly during the apa boom and during the rise of the personalzine. There is now a substantial treasury, and eighteen open memberships. It appears that unless Apa45 receives an influx of new members, it is doomed to slow extinction. Because of its special place in the memories of some of us, Apa45 is making a special effort to recruit new members. The age requirement has been removed from the constitution and membership is now open to anyone.

Now, an additional inducement. To fill the 18 remaining slots, the normal entry rules have been relaxed. To become a full member of Apa45, you must only take the following two steps:

1. Send twenty-five cents to me, the Official Editor.
2. Send twenty-five copies of a contribution of at least six pages to the OE prior to March 1, which is the date of the next mailing.

Membership slots will be filled on a first-come first-served basis, but both of the above requirements must be met. Because of the size of the Apa45 treasury, it is unlikely that any dues will be collected for at least two years. Activity requirements to maintain your membership are at least six pages every six months.

I have high hopes for the March mailing, and have already been promised over 100 pages of material from current and prospective members. If you ever wanted to join Apa45, this is the time.