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Mythologies 19

mythologies

Edited by Don D'Amassa
Produced by Sheila D'Amassa

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My apologies to all for neglecting to include the address in
the last issue.

MYTHOLOGIES is published erratically, but it seems to be about
twice a year. It is issued for the amusement of its readers and
to badger them into writing letters. It can be had on a one
issue at a time basis for \$3.00 each; back issues are available.
The best way to get it is for a letter of comment.

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

---Leonard Cohen

MYTH

In a world that is growing increasingly smaller, at least in terms of psychology, and more crowded, I suspect that unless we as a people learn to tolerate our neighbors we will at best turn into a planet of bitter, unhappy people. If we even survive as a people. We have found so many reasons to dislike others during our history, race, religion, politics, skin color, country of origin, social class, personal habits, sex. And while it may not seem as significant in macrocosmic terms, we seem to be just as intolerant of even less important things as well, such as whether or not people enjoy sports, the books they read, the music they listen to, the social events they attend.

In this country in particular, we are often called a civilization of "joiners", as though we define ourselves in some sense by which organizations we join. John Smith may describe himself as a middle of the road Democratic Methodist, from the lower middle class, a member of the Rotarians and the American Legion. But we seem to spend just as much time defining ourselves in terms of what we are not. We group others into classes as well, and point with pride to our non-membership. Snobbishness works in areas other than ancestry and social station.

Science fiction fans probably get exposed to this early, the first time someone tells them they should be reading something worthwhile rather than that crazy Buck Rogers/monster/Sci-Fi stuff. Or maybe as teenagers they run into parental disapproval of the music they listen to. I can remember one day only a few years ago when my boss and I were walking through the factory and passed a work area where the radio was playing. My boss looked smug and turned to me. "How would you like to have to listen to something like that all day?" It was Wings. I didn't tell him that I had just bought myself the album.

During high school, I became the personal project of the Vice-Principal and the head of the English Department. The former noticed that I was always carrying science fiction with me, so one day he stopped me and glanced at my copy of I, ROBOT.

"Don't you ever get nightmares reading this stuff?" Well, I didn't know any better in those days, so I spent some time trying to explain to him what science fiction was all about these days. Naturally it did no good, and over the course of the next several weeks, he would come to see me about twice a week, each time bearing half a dozen books that he thought I should read. It gave

me great satisfaction to hand him back four or five each time, since I had already read them. I was a prolific reader long before I discovered the genre. Once he brought a stack of Russian novels in, and it turned out I had read them all, and he hadn't. Eventually, he gave in.

The woman who headed the English Department seemed to find it a source of amusement. Rarely did a week go by without some slighting reference to my reading material. As she continued, I reacted by parading my interest. I stopped reading any other kind of book in school. Whenever we had an outside project, I found a way to slant it toward SF. The tension grew and by the time I graduated, the two of us thoroughly despised each other.

Or take music. I have always been interested in music, but the particular form has varied frequently. Currently it is rock and jazz, but I still listen to my classical, folk, and smattering of country -- mostly instrumental. Recently, in a music apa I joined and in a couple of other places, I've spent some time talking about music, something I almost never did before. One of the most bizarre positions I've ever encountered is the, "If it's popular, it must not be any good" argument. The rationale is that if it appeals to such a broad group of people, it must skip all the refinements and appeal just on gross terms. I have been amused in particular when one of the groups most popular with this elitist group becomes popular, because once it is no longer fashionable to enjoy them, we are treated to retroactive explanations of how superficial their work was, and how we were fooled into thinking they had talent. A standard joke between David and I, when we are talking of some new group or performer, is to allude to looking them up to find out if it is acceptable to like them.

I have never understood how this mechanism works in people. Why is it that disagreement is almost always assumed to be hostility? I've had acquaintances with whom I've drastically disagreed on some pretty important issues, and I am sure there would be a few issues upon which a noticeable disagreement would make being friends with them impossible. While I was attending Michigan State University, there were two people I came to know somewhat well, two people who fought so determinedly that I used to invite them over together to see what would happen. But as much as they fought, they frequently went to the grill together afterwards.

George was a Trotskyite, having dropped out of the Leninist union when the latter started charging dues, because he considered dues anti-revolutionary. Or it may be that he dropped out of the latter to join the former. Dalton was a founder of Young Americans for Freedom, worked for conservative candidates, was a member of the John Birch Society. If these two could get together, argue issues which were obviously inflammatory, and not end up strangling each

other, than why can't the rest of us disagree without getting pissed? A current acquaintance of mine votes for every office, even dogcatcher, on the basis of the candidate's position on one issue, abortion.

There are certainly in this world situations in which disagreement, personal opinions, can and should be cause for anger. I am still smarting from one that happened over a year ago.

Various professional societies send promotional literature to our company, trying to drum up new members. The American Production and Inventory Control Society is one such organization. Although I work in southeastern Massachusetts, I live in Rhode Island, and I am a member of the Rhode Island chapter. But my boss saw one such notice from a Massachusetts chapter and decided that he and I were going to attend.

We arrived early, and there were only a couple of people there at the time. As the announced starting time approached, a steady stream of people began to enter, and it soon became apparent that the membership was about 40% female, very unusual for this type of organization. My boss began muttering under his breath about "They're taking over every where" and "Watch out, Don, they'll be after your job next." Since he knows my opinion on the subject, one would think he'd refrain out of a sense of consideration, but I don't think he really believes that I believe women should have a place in business. After all, it's obvious that they should be back in the kitchen, right?

But that really didn't matter, since he and I had long since defined our relationship to each other, and it wasn't likely to alter much. But as time passed, and more drinks were consumed, we were finally ushered to several tables in order to hear the guest speaker and eat the catered meal. My boss sat to my right, and two seats to my left -- at a round table -- sat a very distinguished black man. We had been eating for about ten minutes when my boss entertained the table with a "Martin Luther Coon" joke. Needless to say, conversation was distinctly chilly for the rest of the evening, and there's no way in hell I will ever be able to attend another meeting of that chapter. In this case, the exercise of an opinion caused embarrassment to another, and had we been friends in the first place, we would be no longer. But it was the act, not the opinion, that would have precipitated the change.

Another incident, peripherally related. A few years ago, I found myself sitting with two friends in a bar. On my left was a white male about twenty eight years old, liberal, outspoken. On my right was a black female approximately the same age, even more outspoken. While she was working for us, she was once pinched on the rear by the president of the company, a man thankfully no longer with us. She responded by reaching around and pinching him back, and with considerably more oomph.

The conversation went something like this:

HE: "It really bothers me to know that people like you are going to hate me and there's nothing in the world I can do about it."

SHE: "I don't hate you. Why should I hate you? You haven't done anything to me."

HE: "But somewhere inside you, you have to hate all white people because of what they've done to you and your people."

SHE: "You mean because I'm black? Shit, then I'd have to hate every black person because one black person did me harm, and one man because one man took advantage of me, and every woman, because one woman did me dirt. If I'm going to hate people, and I do hate some people, it's going to be because of what they did, not because of what they are."

HE: "But people don't work that way. White people as a class repress black people as a class, so there has to be class hatred. You might not even know that you hate white people, but you do."

SHE: "Don't you go telling me who I have to hate and why. If you ask me, you hate yourself and you're looking for an excuse to make me do it for you. Well, I'm not playing that game. Go straighten out your own hangups and let me worry about mine."

It struck me as one of the most perceptive comments I'd heard in a long time.

Why do people get so tied up with their own opinions that they view any difference as a personal attack? Let me cite another recent example. A fellow I know lost his boss, and is now reporting to a man he dislikes intensely. During the initial confusion, the new boss acted rather badly, made some mistakes, committed a few thoughtless acts. My friend took it as a personal affront, to some degree of which at least he is completely justified. But now whenever the new man tries to do something to counter that first flurry of incidents, it is invariably interpreted as a fresh insult.

For example, several duties were shifted away from my friend, partly because the new man did not realize he was doing them in the first place (the new boss has very little supervisory experience). At the time, my friend was offended that they were taking away his responsibility. Now some of these and some other responsibilities are being shifted back to him, and his response is without exception that they are trying to overload him so that he'll quit. Which isn't true.

One of his earliest complaints was that under the new arrangement, my friend would not be exposed to anything new, would learn nothing

that would aid him in developing his own career. But when he was recently offered the opportunity to travel on business in place of his boss, he insisted it was just a ploy to set him up to make a big mistake so he could be fired.

Why do we react this way? One of my favorite fannish stories is the time I first met Frank Balazs at a convention. He and I had been in an apa together, RAPS, and there had been some healthy debates in that forum. At, I believe, Boskone, we spent some time talking at a room party, and he finally commented that he was surprised that I was so sociable in person when I was so argumentative in writing. Now admittedly the argument in RAPS had been stronger than most, but the fact remains that any sort of contradiction is likely to be interpreted as anger or insult.

In another apa, more recently, I interposed myself in an argument between A and B. Generally, I agreed with A's argument, but a number of the details struck me as either incorrect or as weakening the basic position. I thought that B's argument had been pretty well rebutted by A and others, so most of my comments on the discussion were aimed at A. A interpreted my comments as sarcastic and critical of her personally. On the second go-round, I was in fact sarcastic, as I was miffed at being thus misinterpreted. A responded that I had misinterpreted his argument (willfully, as a matter of fact). Resigned to the fact that we obviously weren't communicating at all, I dropped the subject.

Some of the problem may be with the inherent shortcomings of the written word. It is possible to read sarcasm into innocuous comments and react to them accordingly. But there has to be a predisposition to find sarcasm there, at least most of the time, and most people seem to me determined to take insult even when none is intended. As a matter of fact, both A and B are on the MYTHOLOGIES mailing list, will probably recognize themselves, and may well interpret this as a fresh attack. So it goes.

Obviously tolerance can only go so far. In Rhode Island we recently had a series of incidents involving the fundamentalist leader of a tiny sect who does not believe in medicine/ His daughter had a suppurating wound on her forehead which he refused to have treated until the state assumed custody. I am one of the last people to want any agency, government or otherwise, interfering with my religious beliefs, with my family, or with any of our bodies, but at the same time to allow him to accept permanent damage or even the death of his child because of their religious upbringing strikes me as wrong, because it seems to interpret children as being the property of their parents. Toleration must stop here. We can tolerate his beliefs, even tolerate his very vocal objections to one thing or another, even allow him to refuse medical treatment for himself. But tolerance must stop when it affects the lives of others, even his children.

Coincidentally (or perhaps not) another member of his parrish has also been in the news. She teaches (music, I think) at a public school. Her newfound religion requires her, she says, to keep God uppermost in her mind at all times, and to spread his word. When she insisted on delivering religious training in her classes, she was suspended, and is currently fighting the case through the courts.

I am reminded also of a case several years ago, in another state, where a political candidate rented radio time for some ads, and then launched a series of "Vote the niggers out of office" spots. The radio station was appalled, but at the same time, very nervous about throwing the ads off the air. In a pluralistic society, we have to tolerate a wide variety of opinions, even some that we may find offensive. But do we have the right to deprive those who hold those opinions access to the public airways? Or is that a bad precedent? If I remember correctly, they were eventually removed on the basis that they were fomenting violence by increasing racial tensions, or some such. I'm still not comfortable with the issue.

A final example. While attending college, I moved off campus, and lived in a number of different accommodations. One year I found myself in an apartment building that was filled mostly with foreign students, Taiwan, Korea, India, Pakistan, and Kenya for the most part. And that same year, I came into possession of a cat.

The cat was supposed to stay in my room, but I had been saddled against my will with an untrustworthy roommate who had a tendency to leave the door open. One day I came home from class to discover that the cat had escaped, come downstairs to the kitchen, and eaten some meat that Dr. Gupta had left out to thaw. I went immediately to his room to apologize and offer to pay for the meat, but he wasn't there, so I wrote a brief note, apologized abjectly, and told him I would check back to find out what I owed him. Later that evening, Dr. Gupta was at my door, furious.

All that I could make out from his tirade (his excellent English deteriorated when he was upset) was that I had mortally insulted him by allowing the cat to eat his food, that offering reparations was an even greater insult, that he would never speak to me again (we had been passingly good acquaintances), that it was an insult to him and his country and his religion, and that if I didn't move out of the building by the weekend, he would take steps. I didn't move out. And he did take steps. Many of them. He moved out.

To this day, I don't understand if there was some significance to the incident that was opaque to me because of the difference in our cultures, or else a personal idiosyncrasy of Bholu Gupta of Bombay. But what saddened me is that the incident could demonstrably not even be talked about. It also cured me of my naive belief that Third World countries were invariably victims.

GHASTLY TALES

Further excerpts from real, published science fiction.

DIONYSUS: THE ULTIMATE EXPERIMENT by William Ruden, Manor Books, 1977

"Eight of the nurses have spent a week lying motionless in beds to simulate weightlessness..."

"Could a man and a woman make love, perform the sex act in weightlessness, in order to not only satisfy a basic human need--but to procreate the future inhabitants of the so-called Red Planet?"

"There was only one way to find out. No machine could duplicate this human sexual response. No, a man and a woman would have to be put in a space flight, monitored all the time to determine whether the energy expended in the act of orgasm might be, like the mating of the queen bee, a final act."

AGENT OF ENTROPY by Martin Siegel, Lancer Books, 1969

"'Polaris,' the captain laughed, "It's funny. I know a star by its looks in space. Dirtside they all look alike to a spacer. Bars, filth, noise, crowds..."

"That's the mistake of science. To classify and classify and classify until all that exists is made to fit into meaningless forms."

THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL by Julian Shock (J.N.Williamson), Zebra, 1982

"Are they buggy with weird antennae-things growing out of their heads? Or little bitty guys with mummy skin and wrap around eyes, the way they look in UFO movies?"

"Flight of the Vampires" by J. R. Fearn

"The more I studied the birds the more I could see a faint stream of energy being projected from their tails. I think I guessed right in assuming that they utilized the radiations of space as an ordinary bird utilizes air, pushing against its different densities and

cleaving through it, given just the right energy wavelength by nature to expel against it and hurtle them forward."

"'You mean,' I whispered, 'that when they were making their vampirish attacks, they were actually making blood tests?'"

"The Third Bolt" by Francis Deegan

"...the third bolt was discharged directly into the light stream from our great sun, where it will pick up particles impregnated with the magnetic force of our sun's rays, and thus be held on course toward our sun..."

"It was necessary to carry 15,000 gallons of fuel oil for the unwieldy rocket ship..."

"Another Dimension" by George Scheer

"For anything in the shape of a spaceship to leave the Earth, the initial acceleration to get out of the pool of gravity by circling the Earth in an ever-increasing spiral course so that the acceleration would not be harmful, would require too long a time to build up as well as more fuel than could be carried. In a straight course, no living being could survive the necessary acceleration."

"We had very little trouble with the bits of celestial refuse in outer space, but it was becoming more and more apparent that we were to have some trouble avoiding the larger bodies, some many miles through, which were approaching. Our simple glide was becoming more of a weave as we changed our course for the larger bodies thousands of miles before we reached them, and rayed the smaller ones which came too close."

"Invasion of the Micro-Men" by Richard Shaver

"I, Mutan Mion, of the Space Cadets Corps of the Nortan Space Navy, on leave from the Dreadnor WARDARK had been long absent.""

"In my hand I held a new portable thought augmentor with which to show my friends my truly glad thoughts at meeting them once more."

"The penetrative rays used by the Nortans penetrate many miles of solid rock, giving a perfect visual image of anything within range, even through rock. By attachments to the apparatus, the penetra will also augment anyone's thought within the vision range, the conductive penetray acting as the aerial wire leading to the brain of the subject--the augment apparatus being similar to a radio, but tuned to the short waves of thought."

"Life without mental intercourse is a sterile emptiness..."

"Among the Jotuns, the customary practice of the use of the growth devices they obtain from the ruined Elder cities is to overdevelop the women from childhood on. This overdevelopment of certain parts of the body results in an unbalance of the woman's system -- and the consequence is a stupid creature of unusual appetites."

"Men are governed by the interior induction of two penetrative forces about them, which shapes the intent of their thought. The disintegrant force gives destructive intent thought, while the integrative force gives creative, good intent thought."

"The vast circular air lock doors gaped for us, and we were swallowed up in myriad overwhelming sensations as the mental examination of the watchers for the Gods of Enn sent the impressions from the God-minds over the telaug rays and gave us a swift glimpse of the scintillant, infinite beauty of the endlessly complex thought within their minds."

THE UNIVERSAL PREY by Jefferson Swycaffer, Avon Books, 1985

"Blast it, he LOOKED like a James Tyler. People often -- no, nearly always -- looked like their names, in her experience. Nearly always."

"Starship Invincible" by Frank Kelly

"Moran rocked on his two legs; defying and adoring the angry lights that broke the bleakness of those dark skies. Ebony infinity surrounded him, engulfed him, submerged him with a roar of mental surf, yet he remained a rounded entity, complete and unbroken as he had been since he had been cut as a flap from his mother's flesh, since he had emerged as a skein from her skein."

"We're doing better than Garth figured. I've balanced the chronometer readings with the space-path calculations and made allowances for light distortions due to etheric faults, but still our speed is pretty nearly inconceivable."

TOMB SEVEN by Gene Snyder, Charter Books, 1985

This really isn't a quote, because the relevant background would be too lengthy, but what is otherwise a fair thriller is marred by a couple of really silly mistakes. Basically the plot concerns the discovery of the remnants of the ancient astronauts in Mexico, and various plots to gain control of their treasure. At one point, one character has tapped into the main computer banks and is looking for some information, with the aid of a computer specialist. They can't find it, and the protagonist suggests that maybe the info is kept on a PC. The computer specialist assures him he can run another program and find out. Second, in the unearthed tomb, they find written characters and realize they were dealing with an advanced civilization 200,000 years dead when they see familiar symbols of calculus.



Last time around, I mentioned that this time I was going to explain a little bit about how inventories worked, and so I will. The same caveat applies as before; some of this is oversimplified in order to not bore all of you out of your skulls, but I think I will have covered all of the essentials.

Firstly, what is inventory? In a manufacturing company, it is all those materials that you have purchased which will ultimately be going to the customer, plus a valuation of the labor you have expended upon them and the overhead associated with that labor. I will go into that in a bit more detail later. First I want to explain what is inventory and what is not. There is a difference between raw material and supplies, although not every company believes the same things to fall into the same categories. For the most part, if what you buy is going to eventually become part of the product (including the packaging), it is a raw material. If what you buy is going to be used to make the product but is not going to reach the consumer (like polishing wheels, tools, etc.) it is either a supply or is accounted for in some other fashion. There are exceptions. Many companies treat part or all of the packaging materials as supplies or "expense items", sometimes even including the box. Others are so fantastically detailed that they even include the label on the box as a raw material.

What's the difference? Well, a raw material cost is included in the cost of that specific item. If the price of a box rose ten cents, the price of the item would eventually rise ten cents, if the box was treated as a raw material. If the box is an expense item, that ten cents is "expensed", which means that the increase (the entire cost, in fact) is spread out over the entire range of products. This expense is picked up in the overhead mentioned earlier.

So let's see where we are. For each product we make, we have certain specific costs assigned to it. We also have general costs of supplies (as well as salaries, heat, light, insurance, and all the other general expenses) which make up the overhead. The direct labor is the cost of actually paying individuals to do the actual work necessary to make the raw material into a finished product.

We'll get back to that in a moment or two, but let's look at how financial people lump inventories together. There are really three kinds of inventory. Raw Materials are all those purchased parts which have come in the door, but which have not been changed in any fashion. This would include empty cartons, coils or strips of metal, uncut jewels, whatever specific raw material you are dealing with. If you buy components from another company, such as vacuum tubes or transistors or printed circuits, then those are raw materials.

On the other hand, if you have done something to change the nature of that material, cut it, melt it, paint it, in some cases even just open it up, it is now Work in Process (known lovingly as WIP). If you walk around in a factory, chances are pretty good that virtually everything you see around you is in WIP. Some people break this down further into something called Semi-Finished Stores,

but it's not a particularly meaningful distinction, it simply means that some subassembly has been completed and is now waiting to be included in a greater assembly.

Finally we have Finished Goods, which are fairly self explanatory. These are the items that are ready to go to the customer with no further expenditure of labor other than shipping.

OK, so we take our raw materials, add labor and overhead, and produce finished goods. Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Think again. There are more ways to value inventory than might seem apparent. After all, the price of raw materials changes frequently. If you have 1000 widgetts in stock, all in the same box, but from three different production runs, the box for the runs might be 15 cents, 17 cents, and 20 cents. Do we value them all the same? There are three major methods of valuation.

Standard Value: At regular intervals, usually annually, someone decides to assign a value to every raw material that will be reasonably accurate for the next twelve months. If an item currently costs ten cents and we expect a ten percent increase during the course of the next year, we might assign it a standard value of fifteen cents, assuming that half our purchases will be at ten cents and half at twenty. For the first six months, we pay less and experience a "favorable material variance" (we bought at less than the standard price), but for the second six months we experienced an "unfavorable material variance" (spent more than standard). At the end of the period we readjust to correct errors of the past and to anticipate what we expect in the future.

LIFO: Last in, First Out. Here we assume that we will maintain a certain level of each raw material below which we will never drop. These are valued by looking at actual price paid as of the date the system is established. Subsequent purchases are ignored until we next take an inventory. At the inventory, we find out how much we are in excess of that basic level, and assume that the oldest purchases are still there, but the most recent ones are gone. This tends to keep inventory levels lower than the next system, FIFO.

FIFO; First in, first out. Levels are developed as above, but this time we assume that the items expended were the first we purchased. This tends to place inventory value higher.

So by whatever system, we have now assigned a value to our raw materials. What about our labor? Well, generally we set a standard labor cost for every operation, and then calculate favorable or unfavorable variances from there, depending upon what we actually pay. The difference is applied to overhead. If there is a favorable variance, we paid less than we expected to and can therefore reduce our overhead. If we paid more, we have to increase our overhead. Generally, an estimate of standard labor cost is also made on an annual basis, with a proportion increase based on expected labor increases. The labor cost here is what is known as "direct labor", that is, labor expended on the material. Other labor, such as moving it around the factory, repairing it if we do something wrong, etc., is indirect labor, all of which is thrown into the overhead.

But how do we assign overhead to each item? If a company makes a large variety of items, it might seem unfair to apply just as much overhead to one item as another. The usual method is to assign overhead rates by department or work center. For example, if we determine that our overhead expenses are four to one, that is, four dollars overhead are spent for every one dollar of direct labor, then the company as a whole has a 400% overhead rate. But individual departments have different

rates. A department with lots of heavy equipment might have an overhead rate of 900%, while the packaging department might have only 100%. A department of 10,000 square feet might have a rate of 500% and a department of 5,000 square feet only 250%. Although not perfect, this tends to assign the right amount of overhead to the right item, always assuming that costs have been calculated particularly accurately.

But we have overhead variances as well. At the beginning of the year, we may have assumed (through history and sales forecasting) that a particular department would have to produce 1000 direct labor hours per week for the year. But actual sales might result in working only 900 hours per week. Since we spent 10% less direct labor dollars than we expected to, we have "absorbed" ten percent less overhead than we expected. The difference is an "unfavorable overhead variance", and that comes directly out of the profit of a company. It is not a good thing. Conversely, if that department works 1100 hours, we have had a favorable overhead variance.

This leads to some interesting situations. For example, if a company spent five million dollars, but had sales of only four million dollars, there would appear to be a problem. You might assume the company had lost a million dollars. Sounds logical, doesn't it? But suppose during that same period, the company's total inventory went from one million dollars to one and one half million. Then the company actually had a paper profit of \$500,000, and while you might jump up and down and insist that they actually lost money, the wonders of modern bookkeeping are such that this company would actually be profitable. Of course, you can only build inventory so long, particularly with the rising interest rates. Since most companies borrow the money to build inventory, and have to pay interest on the loan, too much inventory increases your carrying cost, which goes into the overhead, and suddenly you have unfavorable overhead expenses again.

How do we decide then if we are making money? Well, one method is to examine the "inventory turn ratio", which can be measured in any of several ways, but it is essentially how many times do you have to replenish the average item in your inventory? If you carry an average inventory of three million dollars and your annual sales are nine million dollars, then you have a three time inventory turn. The higher your turn ratio the better, and the acceptable turn ratio differs from one industry to another. Obviously grocery stores must turn frequently. Someone once told me forty times a year was considered fair. In my industry, four times is considered good.

This leads to many internal conflicts. For example, manufacturing people want as much inventory as possible and so do sales. Sales wants a big finished goods inventory so that no matter what they sell, the stock is available. The actual production people want a big work in process inventory so that they have plenty of work for their people, so they won't be pressed to rush particular jobs. The Materials people want a big raw material inventory so that no matter how wrong the sales forecast is, they will have the materials on hand to make the "right" item when the actual orders come in.

The real art is to balance all these conflicting interests so that most of the time the sales people can ship immediately what they have sold, so that a variety of work is always available to the manufacturing people, and that the overall inventory is kept as low as possible. The most frustrating part is that you can guess right 99 times out of 100, and the one time you are wrong is the one time you are going to hear about for the next two or three years. Which is why good Materials people often know more about the customers than the sales people do, more about the strengths of the factory than the manufacturing people do (and the weaknesses), but are generally viewed as useless pencil pushers who don't know how the real world works.

BIZAPRE EVENTS

STALKING THE NEOFAN WITH GUN AND CAMERA.

(reprinted from Kosmic City Kapers #5 edited by Jeff May, 1975)

In 1966 I was rabidly infected with the need to recruit people into fandom. A two-year veteran of organized fan activities myself, I felt a moral obligation to extend the advantages of my hobby to everyone I could locate, willing or unwilling. Michigan State University fandom was a hotbed of activity, with five people in Apa45, four members of the N3F, and almost a dozen people who had attended one or more conventions. I was impatient for the summer vacation so that I could return to my home in Rhode Island and organize the fringe-fans of my high school years into the Rhode Island Science Fiction Federation.

Shortly before I left for home, the latest mailing of Apa45 arrived. I glanced cursorily at the waiting list and spotted "Chet Clarke" and an address in Worcester, Massachusetts, not far from my home. My horizons widened: "The New England SF Federation". Remember, NESFA was just a glimmer in Tony Lewis' eye at the time. Fully possessed by the crusading spirit, I wrote to Chet and proposed visiting him at the earliest possible opportunity. So began the fateful hegira that resulted in Boston, rather than Providence, becoming the center of New England SF activity (or so at least I like to think).

I chose a Saturday morning, shortly after unpacking my 1500 books and stuffing them into what few nooks and crannies remained in my parents' home. I called Chet to make sure he would be home and received the necessary directions. All was in readiness. I set off in my Corvair. Ten minutes later I was sitting in a gas station while the nice gentleman informed me it would take about six hours to repair the ignition.

Chet was very understanding and we arranged for me to drive up Sunday afternoon, following dinner. He also mentioned that he had found that one of the second-hand bookstores in Worcester remained open on Sundays, so I could indulge myself if I so desired. I did.

Sunday dawned, a drizzly grey day, which I was able to ignore in anticipation of the fannish activity to come. Directly following lunch, I set off once more. Worcester is about an hour's drive and, for the most part, an uneventful one. But in the town of Sutton, Massachusetts, I heard a dreadful hissing sound and the Corvair listed hard to port.

Let me tell you about Sutton. Sutton is a rather small, very attractive town, consisting mostly of forest and a tourist attraction called Purgatory Chasm. The Providence-Worcester Road (Route 146) crosses Sutton at one of its least densely populated parts. As a result, when I discovered my spare tire was also flat I faced an hour's walk.

By three o'clock I was back in action and made it to Worcester without further mishap. After minimal delay, I found Chet's house and parked the car. As I hastily got out of the car, I dropped my car keys. There was a metallic clink as they landed somewhere inside the driver's side door. As perplexing as this was, I knew there was a spare set of keys in my wallet, so I controlled the urge to scream and set off to meet Chet.

Things went well. Chet was an affable sort, though I had the distinct impression that his mother thought I was going to lead him off into the world of the oddball. We chatted a bit, then decided to set off for the bookstore before it closed. It was then that I discovered that I had the wrong wallet. The identification clearly said "Kenneth D'Ammassa", which is not now and never has been my name. There was no extra set of keys to my car in my brother's wallet.

Borrowing a screwdriver, we set off to take the panel off my door. No way. Not a screw manifested itself. Special equipment was apparently needed. Needless to say, there wasn't a garage open on Sunday in the area. We fished around with a coat hanger for a while, and success smiled on us at last. But as I pulled back slowly on the hanger, my key chain broke. Fortunately, only one key fell off before I had snatched everything out of the door; unfortunately, it was the ignition key.

Through diligent search, we found a keymaker who was open. He told us that if we removed the lock from the glove compartment, he could use it to make us a key. Back with the screwdriver, I removed said lock, and we whisked it over. Ten minutes and \$7.50 later I had an ignition key. Off we went to the bookstore.

The store was one of those dark, cramped, rather rickety buildings, crammed full of paperbacks with torn covers and hardcovers so old that you can't read the title on the spine any more. I rummaged around, found one or two paperbacks, but was generally unimpressed. As I started to pay for them, the cashier noted that I was buying science fiction.

"If you're interested in that stuff," he told us, "you ought to look in the basement." So down into the basement we went and found enormous piles of pulp magazines. There must have been at least a couple of thousand, stacks of Doc Savage, the Avengers, Dusty Ayres, Phantom Detective, Ka-Zar, and Dr. Death. And the price? Hold your breath -- twenty five cents each, five for a dollar.

And all that was left in my wallet, or rather my brother's wallet, was \$1.00 and some pocket change. In MY wallet, tucked in a secret compartment, were three \$20 bills.

There should have been a happy sequel. I should have come back the following week with lots of money. What did happen was that on the way home, my alternator retired. The towing charges, repairs, and sundry used up the \$60, and by the time I had raised a new stake, naturally the bookstore had gone out of business.

Chet Clarke was never heard from again, a result that I had not expected, though I trust this had nothing to do with my visit. On the other hand, maybe he bought all those pulps and retired to an estate somewhere after selling them at a substantial profit. Who knows?

THE PRACTICAL JOKE WAR

(reprinted from Harbinger #5, edited by Reed Andrus, 1977)

I was fourteen years old when I first discovered SF, and for the next couple of years, I was convinced I was the only person in Rhode Island who ever read the stuff. At least, I was never able to find a kindred spirit. But about the time I turned sixteen, I discovered three souls who were at least inclined toward SF, if not exactly as devoted to it as I was. Dave and Dick were reasonably well balanced individuals, but the third was John Warren, and John was a separate ball game.

My earliest recollection of John was on the day he was asked by his father to deposit several hundred dollars in cash in the bank adjacent to our school. John was a bit of a scientific wizard -- not an inventive genius by any means, but capable of juryrigging any number of Rube Goldberg devices. John decided to safeguard the cash in an inside jacket pocket of his sports coat during the morning, then deposit it during the lunch time break. Sounds reasonable, right? John wrapped them in a handkerchief and wired them into his pocket.

Wired? Well, you see, the other end of the wire ran through his coat sleeve, down past his hand, in through a hole he drilled in the lock of his briefcase into the briefcase itself. This meant, naturally, that he couldn't stray more than a few inches from the case. Inside the briefcase, you see, was a burglar alarm. Do you have the picture? Good.

I'm sure that it won't surprise you very much to learn that it wasn't too long before John absentmindedly reached into his own pocket and set off the alarm. Because his right hand was wired to the lock, it was difficult for him to work the key properly, and he bent it, jamming the lock. They eventually used carpenter's tools to cut through the leather flap and turn off the alarm.

On an

On another occasion, John invited me to visit his rather extensive chemical laboratory. (He had ugly acid burns on the backs of both hands as the result of an accident shortly before I knew him.) John demonstrated the explosive properties of pure sodium when exposed to water. A month or two later, John embedded a lump of sodium in a water soluble jell, then flushed it down one of the toilets in the high school. The resulting explosion blew out a pipe in the school basement.

One weekend, shortly before St Patrick's Day, John enlisted Dave Driscoll in a planned master stroke. The administration of our school was 99% Irish Catholic, and it was -- quite honestly -- a suspendable offense to wear orange clothing on St Patrick's Day. John and Dave decided to protest.

The night before, they sneaked onto the school grounds. The center lane of the driveway was repainted bright orange, as was the flag pole. Flying from the flagpole, with the ropes carefully secured up and out of reach, was the flag of Britain.

The practical jokes were attracting too much attention from the school authorities by then, so John reluctantly decided to keep a lower profile and confine his depredations to his friends. I became more frequently involved with this same circle about then, and suddenly found myself in over my head. One afternoon, while I was home alone, John planted a smoke bomb with a timer in my bathroom, and only the fact that it malfunctioned allowed me to avoid an embarrassing confrontation with my parents.

From this incident, there erupted the Practical Joke War. Dave, John, and I -- occasionally some others in isolated incidents -- became involved in an elaborate three sided battle of wits. To this day, I don't know how we avoided getting caught. Initially, our efforts were crude and unimaginative, including such things as firecrackers down drainpipes at midnight, hotfeet, letting the air out of each other's tires, and the like. But things didn't stay calm long.

John had made use of a friend named Matt Brady to deliver a bogus telegram to my door (my parents had never met Matt, who looked considerably older than he was). I had managed to explain it all away as a mistake. The telegram indicated that Carlos Garcia was arriving at the local airport that evening per our request and expected to be paid in cash for his services upon arrival.

I found out that it was Matt, so I sent him a real telegram challenging him to a water pistol duel at midnight the following Saturday. The duel was pretty pointless from Matt's point of view, but we fought it out at great length. It wasn't until the following morning that Matt discovered I had filled my pistol with bleach, and that his clothes were pretty thoroughly ruined.

On guard, I let it leak out that my parents were going to be away the following evening (they were) and I talked Dave into joining me at my house. Sure enough, that evening Matt was sneaking around in my front yard, for what purpose I never did discover. We waited until the proper moment, at which time Dave sprayed him with a garden hose and I dropped five pounds of flour on him from an upstairs window. Matt promptly surrendered and left us with the original three sided war.

The three of us went camping one weekend, and I awoke the first morning to find myself sewed into my sleeping bag. There followed a series of minor incidents, culminating the second night when John and I, by pre-arrangement, woke at two in the morning, struck the campsite, and drove off leaving Dave -- who was a very sound sleeper -- blissfully unaware of our departure.

This started a trend that lasted for quite some time. The three of us -- in various combinations -- began preying on our friends again, particularly during the 1964 elections. Dick, the mildly SF oriented person mentioned earlier, came from a family of right wing extremists, so one evening we plastered their house and yard with Socialist Workers Party posters. Upon leaving, John drove off in his car, and I was to drive Dave home in mine. We had gotten into the habit of leaving each other places when the unwary passenger did not get into the car quickly enough, and I caught Dave outside my locked car.

Dave had no intention of being caught this time, so he jumped up onto the hood of my car. Nonchalantly, I drove him home, on the hood of my car. But for weeks, Dave waited for a chance to reciprocate, and one evening my guard was down, and I found myself perched on the hood of his car. When Dave indicated his intention of driving me home in the same fashion, I suddenly remembered the can of shoe polish I carried (for darkening our faces on evening raids). I quickly whipped it out and began covering over his windshield. Dave quickly let me in.

The final major campaign of the Practical Joke War followed our joint trip to see the film, "The Birds". John's bedroom had a very accessible window. In fact, one evening we had shoepolished the panes entirely so he wouldn't notice when the sun came up. Well, with the Hitchcock film fresh in our minds, we came up with a fiendish idea. Dave and I drove all over town, locating dead birds lying in gutters. When we had accumulated a dozen or so, we drove close to John's house, parked the car in a field, and waited for dark.

When the last light was gone, we scouted the house, making sure that John and his father were both downstairs. Then we set a ladder up against the side of the house and quickly carried our booty up to John's bedroom. We placed the various dead birds strategically around the room, under the bureau, in the closet, inside pillow cases, etc. We then stole back down the ladder. Then, as a final touch, Dave threw a rock through John's open window. The last we heard as we raced back to the car was John running upstairs.

To even things up, we set a date that weekend for a three sided duel. This time it was Dave and I in my car against John and someone I don't remember in his. The idea was that neither car could leave a certain prescribed area of streets, and that our copilots would lob balloons full of water at the opposing car. But John trapped me out in the country, and he had more ammo than I did, and his balloons were full of ink, not water. I took several direct hits before a lucky turn in the road intervened, and John's car ended up in a ditch.

Looking back now with the great perspective of age, I find my participation in the Practical Joke War to be slightly embarrassing, and more than a bit scary. We all somehow managed to avoid repercussions from the adult world, and at the same time, none of us was ever hurt physically. We deserved to get caught and punished, I suppose, although that never occurred to us at the time.

Years went by after I graduated from high school, and I never saw John again. Dave I saw once, for a brief visit, but that was only after several years. But in my senior year of college, I received a letter from some bank in Schenectady, New York, on official stationery, informing me that my account was overdrawn by a thousand dollars. I was upset and puzzled. I knew I had no account in their bank, but my name is unusual enough that it didn't seem possible for it to be a routine error. It was about then that I noticed the name of the putative bank President, John W. Warren. Apparently John had sneaked some letterhead out of a bank and fired a late shot in the war.

That was over eight years ago, and things have been quiet since. But every once in a while, when I start remembering those days, I wonder if John is still planning some new ploy.

---1985 Update. Even as a teenager, I had suspected that John might be unbalanced. He shot me in the ass one day with a target pistol as a joke (I was so mad I smashed a lamp over his head, one of the most violent acts of my life). His house was set far back on several acres of land, with a long, meandering driveway almost completely overgrown by weeds. His father spent only a few weeks a year at home (I don't know why), his mother was dead, and John lived pretty much by himself. Occasionally people would decide to park and neck in his driveway, and he would invariably lean out the window and fire a hunting rifle at the hood of their car. Once, when pursued by a carful of thugs who took objection to something I said, I led them into his driveway, then escaped by driving across the neglected garden while John took potshots at them from his bedroom window. But deep down, I think I always knew he was not quite right.

When I wrote this article, John was working as a reporter for the Providence Journal. It didn't last long. His personality began to disintegrate, he had what is politely called a nervous breakdown, was committed to a mental home, and as far as I know has been there now for 10 these many years. So this story really doesn't have a happy ending. Dave became very straight, and he and I found we had nothing in common any longer. Dick and I met and we socialized with him and his new wife for several months, until one night we found that they had moved with no forwarding address, and we never heard their voices again. So it goes.

BREAKING DOWN'S NOT HARD TO DO

It started out as a fair week. Oh, admittedly Sheila's car had a hole in the radiator that was going to cost about \$300 to fix, but the car has almost 200,000 miles on it, so I really couldn't complain about that. A certain amount of maintenance has to be expected, particularly after that much use. But I was less pleased on Wednesday, when our VCR broke down. Now it is true that we had put about 600 hours use on the VCR in the 96 days we owned it, and isn't it funny that the warranty expired on the 90th day, but that's life. So I called Lechmere and told them the story and that, since the warranty had expired, I realized I would have to pay for it, but should I bring it to them or directly to RCA. Well, they said, in-home service would be happy to come fix it, and they'd call back in a couple of days to set up the appointment. I didn't even get upset when the "P" on this typer started intermittently not working. All I had to do was backspace and hit it again, after all.

But Thursday wasn't much better. A burnt out light bulb popped first thing in the morning, harbinger of a new day. And lo and behold, the dishwasher wasn't working. Sheila called for a repairman for the dishwasher, and Lechmere called back to tell us that since the warranty had expired (which I had told them in the first place), we would have to bring it in to be fixed. So that night I brought the VCR in and was told that they'd call with a quote in a few days. When I got home, I went out to work in the library, and couldn't get in because the lock had broken and I couldn't get it to turn.

Obviously, I was starting to get pissed off. I took part of Friday off so I could drop off the lawn mower at the Sears repair center. Sheila reminded me that we would have to replace the kitchen light, which can no longer be turned off, broken switch. David told me that the "H" on the computer keyboard had stopped working, and the right paper guide on the typewriter had stopped working.

The weekend went peacefully. But Monday morning we awoke to no hot water. The fuel tank had run low enough that sludge had clogged the nozzles to the burner. The dishwasher repairman showed up that day, charged me \$25, and left. The furnace repairman corrected that problem and a tank full of fuel was delivered. I returned the rented VCR after work. When I got home, there were two flat tires on Sheila's car. I sent David to the store for milk, and started to change the tire, but the spare was flat. When David got back, the milk carton was leaking in the bottom.

Tuesday I dropped off one of the tires to be patched. Then I called Lechmere to check on my VCR. I used the downstairs phone, as the upstairs extension phone had ceased to work. We tried the dishwasher, and it promptly broke down again as well. I picked up the repaired typewriter from Sheila; she'd had it fixed near where she works, and the patched tire.

Wednesday the repairman came in and fixed the dishwasher again. Lechmere was insisting that the VCR was now at RCA; RCA said they never received it. After several calls, I located it at Lechmere. They suggested I pick it up and take it to RCA myself. I pointed out that RCA had just closed. Oh, they said. We ran the dishwasher; it still didn't work.

Thursday I wrote a nasty letter to Lechmere, took the dishwasher partly apart, and managed to fix it myself. Anyone who knows how unhandy I am can consider this a minor miracle. I told David I couldn't afford to fix the computer this month, because I want to repanel the TV room. The TV naturally is now developing a resolution problem which requires a periodic sharp blow to one side of the set. And my stereo needs a new needle.

Friday was relatively calm. The backspace on the computer stopped working, but nothing else broke down. The weekend was peaceful. But Monday our other car developed a rattle that I can't pin down and is going to have to be taken in. On the other hand, Lechmere called very apologetically and offered me a brand new VCR because of all the problems with my own. I took it. And we got a call from Sears that the lawnmower was ready.

Tuesday I left work early to pick up the mower. Actually, I had left work early Monday, but it turned out to be a holiday in Rhode Island and the repair center was closed. But Tuesday I showed up. I knew when the man came back that there was a problem. They had lost my lawnmower. Eventually they let me in the back room and I found it. They had sent the paperwork to the pile that said "Call for pickup", but sent the lawnmower to be held waiting for approval of quotation. So it hadn't been fixed. "But the grass is up to my knees," I complained. "It'll be up to your waist then," he answered. "Parts take a week to ten days."

A week later I managed to pick up the lawnmower, which appears to work. The computer, kitchen light, library lock, and Sheila's radiator haven't been fixed yet, but the only new thing to go was another light bulb. Things were starting to look up.

I took another day off work and had the equipment man from the oil company over to look at a new heating system. We were able to work out something for a new oil burner. I asked if he knew anything about insulation, and he did. So he checked out the outside of our house.

"What are you planning to do with your shingles?"

"Well," I said. "We'd like to get rid of them and restore the original clapboards. The house is about one hundred years old."

"So what are you going to do with the shingles?"

"Put them out for the trash."

"That's what you think. The dump won't take them."

You see, our shingles are made of asphalt and they include asbestos. They are classified as hazardous waste. They cannot be sent to any dump in the state, or buried in the ground, or burnt. I checked at work with our hazardous waste disposal expert, who told me we would have to rent a hazardous waste dumpster and then truck them with a permit to a designated site. Cost? Oh, only a few thousand dollars. Nothing to it.

Now the rattle in my car is getting worse, and there are only 4000 miles left on my warranty. The electric fan in the TV room fell apart and is now taped together. While driving home from work, one lens in my glasses broke, apparently a tension crack. I can unlock the garage with a little effort, but the stereo needs a new needle (to be honest, I need a new stereo). One speaker in the car stereo system has stopped working, except once in a while, and one speaker in my boom box has developed a flutter.

I am not a superstitious person. I don't believe that inanimate objects can share an innate antipathy toward human beings. But sometimes my incredulity is strained by events. Sometimes I think there's a resonance between man and machine that just does not operate in my case, or operates at counter purposes. But why me? For whatever reason, I strongly suspect that if by chance you are reading this at the time I expect you to, based on the scheduled mailing date of late October, it will only be because I refrained from touching the mimeograph for the duration. I think I can trust myself with the stapler, but one never knows. After all, when I tried to write a check at the barber shop yesterday, my pen ran out of ink.

SOURCES

A brief entry this time, just adding some information I learned since last time. Last time I tried to list all movies made from full length science fiction and fantasy novels. I had ignored short stories, since that would lead to endless listings of Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, Alfred Hitchcock, Thriller, etc. TV shows. Even Fred Brown's "Arena" was made into an episode of Star Trek. But here are a few tidbits I've picked up since.

EDGE OF RUNNING WATER by William Sloane was filmed as THE DEVIL COMMANDS
THE DEVIL RIDES OUT - Dennis Wheatley
PANIC IN THE YEAR ZERO was novelized by Dean Owen but is based on two novelets,
"Lot" and "Lot's Daughter" by Ward Moore
THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH - Norton Juster
BRIDGE TO EARTH by Robert Moore Williams was filmed as the infamous PLAN 9 FROM OUTER
SPACE
THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY by Ramona Stewart
ALIEN by L.P. Davies was filmed as THE GROUNDSTAR CONSPIRACY
ROLLERBALL is based on the short story by William Harrison
THE TWONKY is based on the short story by Henry Kuttner
TURNABOUT by Thorne Smith
THE UNDYING MONSTER by Jesse Kerruish
WHO? by Algis Budrys
ZOTZ by William Karig
ALTERED STATES by Paddy Chafevsky
FENGRIFFIN by David Case was filmed as AND NOW THE SCREAMING STARTS
JEWEL OF THE SEVEN STARS by Bram Stoker was filmed as THE AWAKENING, also known
as BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB
THE BEAST WITHIN by Edward Levy
DOCTORS WEAR SCARLET by Simon Raven was filmed as BLOODSUCKERS
The title of the film version of PUPPET MASTERS by Heinlein was THE BRAIN EATERS.
The title of "Dune Roller" by Julian May was THE CREMATORS
THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS by Guy Endore was filmed as CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF
"Farewell to the Master" was the basis of THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL
"Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes became CHARLY
THE UNSLEPING EYE by D.G. Compton was filmed as DEATH WATCH
THE SURVIVOR by James Herbert was filmed as SOLE SURVIVOR
The film title of NIGHT OF THE BIG HEAT by John Lymington was ISLAND OF THE
BURNING DOOMED
NO BLADE OF GRASS - John Christopher
MOON PILOT was a novel before the movie appeared.
THE MONITORS by Keith Laumer
SARDONICUS is based on the novelet by Ray Russell
MISSION STARDUST is based on the first Perry Rhodan novel, ENTERPRISE STARDUST
MEPHISTO WALTZ - Fred Mustard Stewart

THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU by Wells was filmed also as ISLAND OF LOST SOULS
DR JEKYLL & MR HYDE by Stevenson was also filmed as I, MONSTER
THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD by Lovecraft was filmed as THE HAUNTED PALACE
HUASER'S MEMORY by Curt Siodmak
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO WANDA JUNE - Kurt Vonnegut
GLADIATOR by Phili Wylie
GREEN MANSIONS by W.H. HUDSON
THE GODSEND by Bernard Taylor
THE FURY by John Farris
LORD OF THE FLIES by William Golding
THE MAN by Irving Wallace
HAWK OF THE WILDERNESS by William Chester was filmed as LOST ISLAND OF KIOGA
THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES is based on the Wells short story
MIDNIGHT by John Russo
THE MILLION EYES OF SUMURU is based on the Sax Rohmer series
THE MIND OF MR SOAMES by Charles Eric Maine

Another oddity is the novel, NOMADS, by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. It is a novelization of a movie that apparently is never going to be completed. It's a shame too, because it might have been a good film if handled well.

So far I have managed to videotape 28 of these titles. Just what I needed. Another collection.

And before I close the subject of SF films, upon Sue Anderson's recommendation, I recently watched (and taped) ELECTRIC DREAMS. I pass on the recommendation; it's one of the few genuinely warm science fiction films I've ever seen.

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This is a postscript to BIZARRE TALES. When I typed the last stencil of that article, I expected the story to be over. It wasn't. I took this Thursday off work so that I could mow the lawn. It hadn't been done in over two weeks, so I had to lower the wheels and cut it once, then raise them and cut it again. All should have gone well, except that the lawnmower balked, rather dramatically.

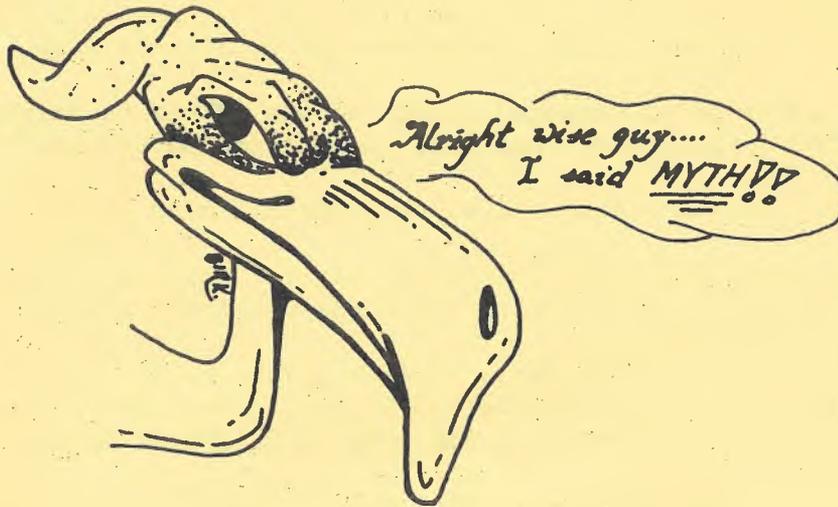
I suddenly heard a loud clanking noise and immediately leaned over to turn it off, assuming that something had fouled the blade. Before I reached the switch, there was a loud bang, the lawnmower jumped a couple of inches into the air, the starting handle flew off, and hot oil exploded from every opening. Needless to say, the lawnmower is kaput.

Possibly I have developed a previously unsuspected psi power, an ability to destroy machinery by a laying on off hands. The next day at work I made a point of handwriting my memos instead of typing them, so that I wouldn't break the typewriter. I also told people I wasn't going out onto the manufacturing floor any more because, in a thoughtless moment, I might lean against the wrong piece of equipment and put the company out of business. Possibly I should rent myself out to neo-Luddites? Maybe the government can send me on an inspection tour of all Soviet missile installations? There is an untapped potential here that deserves to be made use of?

But meanwhile, Sheila's car is going in for a new radiator next week and I still haven't located the mysterious vibration in the Nissan. Who knows what tomorrow might bring?

W A N D E R I N G
W A N D D E R I N G
W A N D E R I N G
W A N D E R I N G

URINALS →



I dreamt that I was a silent observer at a latter day Camelot, a gathering of knights of the realm to discuss their exploits, both past and future. As my attention crystallized, I saw that Sir Vay was measuring the room with his eyes, while Sir Lee glowered angrily at the table.

"We must do something to add new blood to our ranks," he insisted. Sir Vivor was the only man of his company to return from the Battle of Purple Prose Mountain, and Sir Plice has taken vows and jointed the priesthood. Yet no one has chosen to enter our ranks for low these many years."

Sir Kumambulate walked slowly around the room, deep in thought, while Sir Tenly rose to answer. "I am convinced that you are correct. Surely we must do something to counteract this trend.

Sir Vant entered with a tray of hot mulled wine and gave a cup to each of the many knights scattered about the room. Sir Face felt an inner turmoil which he tried to disguise by quickly quaffing a drink of the wine, but it was hot enough that he sputtered in pain. Sir Prize jumped back, startled at this unusual behavior. Then, to prove his manliness drank half the goblet with equanimity.

Sir Passe, not to be outdone, downed his entire goblet with a single smooth motion of his arm, but Sir Rocko was less concerned about his image and quietly stood blowing on his to cool it down.

Sir Feit, who had been drinking all day, waved Sir Vant away. He had had enough to drink already. "So what do we do about it."

"I think we should put a stop to it," insisted Sir Cease, and several of his fellows shouted approval.

"What difference does it make?" replied Sir Ender. "No one's interested in chivalry any more. We're a dying breed. We might as well give up now and save ourselves a lot of effort."

"But we're getting to old to pursue adventure ourselves. Possibly we could hire people to act in our places," suggested Sir Rogate.

"But we're getting too old to pursue adventure ourselves. Possibly we could hire someone else to act in our places," suggested Sir Rogate.

"Do I detect a note of defeat, old boy?" opined Sir Mise. "Are you saying that we are washed up as a symbol of hope?"

"I wouldn't say that that is precisely what is being said here, nor would I say that that is not what is being said. I think that we need to examine the semantic context of the statements that are being made, insofar as they affect our comparative abilities to reconcile our different viewpoints." Sir Kumlo Kuchion paused for breath, then resumed. "Forthwith and betides, it would behoove us forsooth to instill each of our statements with that verity and clarity which is identified by the hoi polloi with our stature as representatives of a higher order of honor and meritoriousness."

He would have continued in this vein for some time, and Sir Pent writhed in discomfort in one corner. Sir Ennade slowly began humming to himself elsewhere in the room.

Sir Munn was miffed, as he had a prepared speech he had wanted to deliver and now would never have the opportunity. Annoyed, he followed as Sir Eptitious quietly sneaked out of the room.

Sir Cuss began juggling wine goblets as a way to take his mind off his problems.

At the same time, Sir Kulayshon moved among the knights, collecting the monthly membership fee from each in turn. Sir Charge was a month overdue, so was forced to pay a ten percent penalty as well.

"Why don't you be quiet?" yelled Sir Inge. "We've all heard you go on like this before. You never say anything worthwhile and no one listens to you any more anyway." He went on needling the speaker for some time, and finally relative quiet was restored.

"How is Sir Jerry doing?" someone asked. That fair knight had been injured in a jousting accident. "Sir John is with him," someone replied. "Resetting the bones in his arm, I believe."

"I just don't understand the situation," remarked Sir Cumstances. "How did we find ourselves in this plight?"

"I have the answer," said Sir Kumscribe, and his remarks drew everyone together around the table."

But I woke up before I heard what his plan was.

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BYPASSING TIME AND SPACE WITH ISABELLA FIGHOLLER

by Mason D. Adams

After a great success in slaying dragons by feeding them Wendy's new multi-grain bun, Isabella Figholler decided to bring King Arthur and the boys a real 20th-Century treat: a sack of Dunkin Donuts. (She reasoned that if members of the Court found them inedible, they could always be used to insulate the walls of Camelot against a hard winter.) However, the trip in the time machine had an unexpected effect on the goodies: they became self-aware, and objected to being eaten. Sir Galahad picked up a chocolate coconut donut, which started kicking and screaming and trying to bite back. Naturally, this caused a great deal of consternation, particularly when Merlin's attempts to quiet the raging pastry proved ineffective. Finally Isabella borrowed Merlin's staff, raised it on high and intoned: "Donut! Go gentle into that good Knight!"

Elaborate Lies

PSEUDOSCIENCE

DAVID AXLER

Berman's comments on alchemy, as you describe them, do have some basis in truth -- there is a very definite mystical level to alchemy, in which the leaden dross of the mundane mind was to be converted to the gold of the enlightened thinker. Transmutation was supposed to occur mentally, but after that occurred, the individual should have been able to perform the physical version. However, if he was truly enlightened, he wouldn't want to waste the time on such trivia. See, for example, Alison Coudert's *ALCHEMY: THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE*, esp Chapter Four, "Elixir of the Soul".

This reminds me of my senior year in college when I really wanted to laze around during my final semester. I had one required course, a second in SF, and one elective remaining. For the elective, I chose a course in existentialism, because I'd heard it was a real gut. During the opening lecture it was explained that the course would be taught in an existential style; we weren't required to do the readings, attend the recitations or lectures, write papers, or take exams. Grades would be self assigned at the end of the semester.

The professor went on to explain that if we truly understood existentialism by that point, we could feel free to give ourselves A's in the course. But, he continued, if we truly understood existentialism, we'd also realize that such a grade is meaningless, and we'd give ourselves F's instead. So as long as we were willing to give ourselves F's, we could give ourselves A's. The rest of us were to give ourselves B's and C's depending upon how well we thought we'd done.

Naturally when word of this reached his superiors -- somewhat later in the semester -- it completely changed. He was forced to write all the students a letter explaining that he wasn't serious, and that we'd all have to take a final exam...though he'd include a question in which we could state the grade we deserved and the reasons therefore. Needless to say, he was also denied tenure at the end of the semester, though I still suspect that it was more his

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leftist leanings than his teaching style which affected that decision.

Back to Berman...The "How" versus "Why" style of questioning, to my mind, is not at all tied to pragmatism and objectivity. Rather, it relates to the old notion of the "Great Chain of Being" first promulgated by medieval monks, in which man's place in the cosmos was that of a single, albeit important, link in a chain which began with the smallest, most insignificant creature and led all the way up to God, with stops for angels and demons along the way. If one's place in the universe is perceived as preordained and predefined, then asking why a thing happens is fairly irrelevant -- obviously it happened because God wanted it that way (and seeking all of God's knowledge is not a good idea, as Faustus reminds us)-- while asking how it happens is searching for additional info about God's structure for the universe and his wishes for our behavior therein, a more desirable end.

Berman's comment about the world being flat until people thought it was round is an intriguing mix of Zen koan and the Sapir Whorf hypothesis, which describes how one's linguistic set defines one's perceptions of reality (in short, what you can't say, you can't perceive). If he claimed that reality was understood differently in the past (and thus that people reacted differently to it), I'd go along with him; when he maintains that it actually was different, well, I can't go along. I am not living in what the Australian Aboriginals (and Kate Bush) refer to as "Dreamtime", and neither is he, no matter how much he may want to.

Berman's perceptions of science are pretty weird in some ways. Methinks he wouldn't be hurt a bit by reading some of Sam Florman's essays, as collected in THE EXISTENTIAL PLEASURES OF ENGINEERING and BLAMING TECHNOLOGY. For that matter, he also should take a look at Thomas Kuhn's THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS, probably the single most unheralded book about how the sciences really work -- I've wondered for years why no SF author has integrated Kuhn's stuff into a novel (though Benford's TIMESCAPE comes close).

I've only read bits of Jaynes' work. It seems to me, though, to be based on a very mechanistic perception of existence, in which mind is reduced to an extension of body but still kept separate. He also seems to see culture as an extension of individuals, without recognizing that the reverse is equally true.

TERRY WHITTIER

It would be wise for all of us to keep an open mind with respect to all ideas that are put forth in a calm, somewhat organized manner. All theories (as opposed to facts, which can be proved with sufficient technique, perseverance, and existing evidence) about such things as

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the way men think, the reason they act, and the future course of any activity...command at least a modicum of respect. It is just as valuable to be right as it is to make a mistake. We can learn more from mistakes than from being correct. It is my personal belief that everyone is not only entitled to their own unique silliness, but I feel that I have the opportunity to learn something from any and all flaky ideas. I'm talking about reasonably sane, serious arguments.

((It's okay to have an open mind, but not so open that your brains fall out. Obviously I presented the piece on these three because I thought their ideas were interesting, if flaky. In the case of Jaynes, at least, I suspect the arguments were tongue in cheek in many ways. He could have checked on many of his historical errors with minimal effort if he really wanted to know of flaws in his position.)))

ROY TACKETT

Continuing with this idea of a "holoistic" world of enchantment and magic (which are, of course, euphemisms for ignorance and superstition) it would seem to me that if we are looking for a source of the Western way of thinking about the universe we have to go back beyond Newton and Descartes to, perhaps, William of Occam. Actually, the view of the world by the ancient Greeks was not too much different than our own and this carried over into Rome. The Christian philosophers set themselves the task of reconciling Greek knowledge with Roman Law and Christian Theology to produce a Christian view of the world. Christian theology being what it is, that was a formidable task, but Thomas Aquinas managed a fairly reasonable synthesis with his SUMMA THEOLOGICA. Aquinas died in 1274 without completing his work but, essentially, he achieved what might be called a holoistic Christian view of the universe with God and the angels occupying the highest spheres, man and his works at an intermediate level, plants and animals down there at the bottom. All were, of course, united for the Divine Purpose which was beyond man's knowledge.

Just about 75 years later though, William of Occam was saying that Aquinas was wrong. Reason, said Occam, could only be applied to things, material objects which could be named and whose relationship to one another could be clarified. Matters of the spirit, as it were, had to be accepted on faith. So it was Occam who set the shape of modern Western thinking.

IAN COVELL

I hadn't heard of any of the books you interpret for us, and would probably not have read them even if I'd seen them; I'm not quite back to the non-fiction stage. It seems obvious when you correlate the

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three books that there's a wish to (re)discover a precious moment when humankind was in total harmony, not just with itself but with its environment. Science and technology -- as many SF books have posited at various times -- really have become the enemy; it diminishes and destroys emotions, capabilities, possibilities simply by having as its base the idea that the universe can be quantified. It's a pleasing notion -- witches understand it -- that we could control our lives by pure will if we hadn't somehow been denuded of that power of belief, or rather lack of disbelief, that science has removed. As I read your article, novels and phrases sprang through my mind like gazelles: Douglas Adams' line "How to fly: throw yourself at the ground and miss"; Mark Clifton's SEVEN KEYS TO EDEN where only those who reject positive scientism can control the power of the new planet; Daniel F. Galouye's THE INFINITE MAN where the single being who has been trying for many centuries to accommodate the increasingly mad discoveries of humankind that continually restrict his ability to alter the world as he sees fit, etc. Where I tend to agree with one or two of the authors you quote is their idea of a connective mind throughout all humanity; I can think of no other explanation for ESP, ghosts, mediums and the like except that mind DOES communicate to mind among all humans alive...Like a lot of other fans, I presume, I can never get away from the feeling that SOMETHING underlies life, but it is nothing so abstruse as the things called gods, rather, it's the accumulated knowledge and experiences of all human life.

Berman's thesis: Ask Why not How, is the basis of religion, and thus unanswerable. He's talking of meta-reality, at least as I understand the term (analogising it to meta-mathematics and meta-language, whatever that is), like the inhabitant of Flatland trying to see in three dimensions -- any number of theories can be advanced for why an event occurs, but there are no experimentless conclusions to be drawn; it's all faith.

Jaynes, weirdly enough, reminded me of the theory that deja vu is the resumption of a normal mind after it's blanked for a precious split second: the feeling of renewal is correct, but he begs the question of why we aren't just instinctively reacting now?

David Stever

I was given a copy of THE ORIGIN OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE BREAKDOWN OF THE BICAMERAL MIND the very first day after I moved out here in 1978, but even now I've never cracked the covers on it (though I have had it recommended by a handful who have said I should sample it). I seem to have approached the areas that the three books discuss from the other side, from the writings of Robert Anton Wilson and Timothy Leary, with their beliefs that one can control one's mind development,

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 if not one's evolution into different beings and/or higher consciousness.

I think that the same objections I came up with when thinking about Bester's concept of "Jaunting" will suffice. "If it could have happened, it would have, and since we haven't heard of it, it can't happen." All my wishful thoughts to the contrary, I will not be evolving, all by myself, I will be eventually dying, and I will be continuing to think with the wrong side of my brain. Oh well.

((Why is it the wrong side of your brain? The other side might be even less satisfactory than the side that functions. Frankly, I dislike any of these theories that imply the power to be is somehow not in our possession. You control you, for the most part; what you don't control is your environment. Some people are damaged enough that they cannot control themselves any longer, but for the majority of us, we are essentially in control of ourselves. We just find a lot of excuses to relax that control.)))

SUE ANDERSON

THE other half of my brain recently nudged me to tell a Jaynes story. The scene: Chicon, 1982.

Pat Ortega, a Los Angeles based artist who had some of the most impressive entries in the art show, was asked to talk to the fans about her technique. She does (still?) carefully arranged, detailed anatomical and portrait illos of aliens from various SF works (Niven's, etc.). Now, leaving aside her tirade against the bad evil artists who STEAL the writers' work by drawing THEIR ideas without first getting PERMISSION, to the Bicameral Mind part.

She was asked to tell how she goes about her work, and it went something like this. "Well, first I read the description, and get permission from the author to do the picture. Then I put on a record album and play it over and over while I work. For instance, for the Puppeteer (or whatever) I listened to the soundtrack album from STAR WARS, maybe fifty times. And while I listen to the music, God tells me what to draw."

What do you think? I bet she isn't cruel, either.

((While rejecting Jaynes, I don't reject the working of the unconscious mind. I have had too many examples myself. Most of my attempts to write fiction or serious articles (most MYTHs) start as a general idea, which I studiously don't think about for several days or weeks. Then I reach a point where everything spills out in a rush.)))

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DON AYRES

The quote from Ferguson is rather curious: "The American experiment was consciously conceived as a momentous step in the evolution of the species." By whom? If by the Founding Fathers, then it means that they knew the "evolutionary" direction. If not them, then who is the director of this? It also incorporates the social Darwinist misconception that evolution is an "improvement oriented" process; this is why "devolution" has no reality to a biologist: evolutionary processes are survival oriented, which may or may not conform to somebody's notion that the change is forward or backward.

JOYCE HIBBERT

Since Berman contends that our present way of thought is inferior to being part of nature, which I think is fair enough, then how could one man, Newton, be so powerful as to cause this warping singlehanded? Surely everyone else should have been working against it.

Science is a faith, but not in the sense he means it. Science is a faith because we are expected to believe anything it says, no matter how unlikely, and any scientist who propounds any belief contrary to accepted dogma is villified by the faithful. But you define yourself as a rationalist, which generally means science is your religion.

I'd like Ferguson's argument a lot better if it wasn't so "God Bless America". Why is America the place where this happens? Why isn't it happening all over the world? A lot of people are working toward the breakdown of false dichotomies, working towards a better future, but they're not a majority. If her theory is generally correct, it would explain why they're not a majority -- because other people are just incapable of thinking that way. Not selfishness or stupidity, but a different way of thought, a regressive way of thought. Which is, to me, the danger in the theory. To think in a certain way, to work toward a better future, because one has had the good fortune to know the right people to explain it to one, the right environment to make one listen, is one thing. To think in the same way because other people who don't think that way are throwbacks (and thus subhuman) looks to me like asking for trouble.

((It sounds to me like Ferguson's way of saying, I'm not one of you low lifes. I'm a fully evolved person. I don't know that I would "define" myself as a rationalist, and I do know science is not my religion. I would love to have some aspects of Berman's theory be true, but he never gave me any reason to feel that way. There are no magic answers; they are just another excuse to avoid being held responsible for our own lives.))

RAPE

PAUL SKELTON

As to the "Big Dan" case, or rather Gene Wolfe's letter on the subject, I was intrigued by his closing comments. "...the right they claim to remain Portugese in America." They were Portugese. If they wanted to stay Portugese, and be treated as Portugese, surely they should have stayed in Portugal, where they already had these requirements satisfied? You don't migrate to a new country and then demand that the natives, the majority, change their ways to suit you. That is called invasion, not immigration. Oh, there is always a bit of give and take, but in situations of unresolvable conflict, when push comes to shove, the immigrant must bend. You can't pick and choose which parts of a culture you are prepared to accept in such a situation, which laws you will abide by and which you will flout or ignore. Society does not and cannot work that way.

Surely the Portugese migrated to America because they wanted to become Americans. They wanted the benefits that living in America would bring them. Perhaps they were persecuted in Portugal, in which case the benefit that they most wanted was freedom from persecution. They are in a position of wanting the rights and benefits of living in America, without accepting the responsibilities. They want to be Americans, but complain at being treated as Americans.

I am not arguing that they should lose their cultureal heritage, only that they must integrate it into their new society, and any part of their culture and mores that is not integratable will have to go. The "right" to rape women in bars is one such non-integratable more.

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

I recently read an article about Hmong tribesmen of Laos who had recently migrated to Los Angeles. Hmong courtship rituals conclude with a simulated rape of the female partner by the male. Westernized Hmong women are increasingly taking the Hmong men to court, saying that simulated rapes were, in fact, real rapes. The Hmong men are, understandably, quite confused.

((I ran these two excerpts together for obvious reasons. I think Skel misses part of Gene Wolfe's point because he has not been imbued with the ideal of the "melting pot" in this country, to say nothing of the recent mania for cultural heritages. Although we frequently fail to live up to our ideals, one of the oft-stated goals of this country is to provide a society in which even the most disparate worldviews and contradictory philosophies can share a single roof. What we want now is a stew rather than a broth, an adhering mass of

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varied particles rather than a homogenated mass. What bothers me most about the situation is that the defendants in this case were pretty much pariahs in the Portugese immigrant community, prior to their suddenly becoming martyrs.)))

DAVID AXLER

Richard Brandt's mention of the double standard reminds me of the reception that writer Pat Califia has received from both the gay and straight feminist communities. She's been writing for several years about the place of S & M within the gay/feminist world, and has not gotten a lot of positive response. To quote her, "There is little objective difference between a feminist who is offended by the fact that my lover kneels to me in public and the suburbanites calling the cops because the gay boys next door are sunbathing in the nude. My sexual semiotics differ from the mainstream. So what? I didn't join the feminist movement to live inside a Hallmark greeting card...Is there a single controversial sexual issue tht the women's movement has not reacted to with a conservative, feminine horror of the outrageous and rebellious?...The only sex perverts that this movement stands behind are lesbian mothers, and I suspect that's because of the current propaganda about women being the nurturing, healing force that will save the world from destructive male energy." (From "Feminism and Sodomasochism," COEVOLUTION QUARTERLY 33 (Spring, 1982), pp. 33-40)

Catherine Doyle's mention of the Israeli cabinet's planned curfew reminds me of 1976, when I was a grad student (in Folk and Intercultural Studies) down at Western Kentucky University, a classic backwater of undergrad education. During my time there, the federal government found out that the women's dorm curfew was an hour earlier than that for the men's dorm, and told the university administration that the two would have to be equalized or the government would withdraw its Title IX money from the school (placing it rather rapidly in bankruptcy). The administration's response was to move the men's curfew back an hour...till the football team went on strike, at which point both were set at the respectable time of eleven PM.

The consensus of writers in issue 17 seems to be that rape is primarily an issue of dcminance and power, a notion that I'd agree with in most cases. The thing that I'm not clear about, because I missed the original essay, is precisely what you mean by "forced" sex. Are you referring specifically to physical force, or are you also including emotional and/or verbal forms of compulsion? Within a marital situation, the latter takes on resonances that go beyond power and dominance, because sexual refusal becomes a communication mechanism in its own right. The issues in which such communication occurs may have power as their subtext, but they're not necessarily about power.

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Doug Barbour comments that "it seems to me with my limited experience that pleasure in the act comes only when the other (here I am arguing heterosexually) is also experiencing pleasure, and is therefore willing to give herself to you. But I speak as someone with no interest in pain whatsoever." He seems to be confusing a number of things here. Specifically, he seems to be implying that sex which isn't hetero involves pain, a notion which many gay and/or bisexual individuals would most likely take issue with. Furthermore, even in the purely heterosexual world, there are a fair number of people who of their own free will choose to blur the lines between pleasure and pain, between willing and unwilling submission.

It may well be that you or I or Doug aren't interested in such activities as parts of our own sex lives, but we shouldn't confuse these things with rape. The key issue here is simply freedom of choice. People who enjoy S & M, B & D, and all those other "kinky" forms of sex are, generally, only interested in them if their partners are equally so. In fact, one critical and ignored aspect of such behavior is the negotiation period which often takes place in advance, defining precisely what limits each partner wants. (The dangerous sadist is not the one who has a verbal and social contract with a willing partner, but the one whose pleasure comes from the exercise of unrecognized and unwanted power.

Someone who is being raped, on the other hand, does not have a choice in what s/he is doing. The question of the victim's "pleasure" is exceptionally misleading. It is true that some women do experience physical pleasure during rape, but to equate the forced functioning of an individual's genitourinary system with choosing to participate in and enjoy this act is to gravely err.

Some years back a female friend honored me by trusting me enough to tell me about what had happened when she was raped. One thing she mentioned was that, to her surprise, she had begun to physically enjoy what was happening. To her, this was the most shameful thing about the incident -- that her body had in effect betrayed her by giving in to her attackers. (The latter, when they noticed this response, took it as "proof" that she had been in need of their ministrations.)

Salmonson proposes that men must ask themselves the question, "Why do men -- why do we -- rape?" because each of us plays a part in maintaining a society in which rape exists. I'm not sure I buy this approach. The early twentieth century Russian radical philosopher Plakhanov argued that inaction is, in and of itself, a political action, and I see a similar assumption at the root of Salmonson's question -- unless I am working to change or destroy the rape tolerance of society, I am therefore a maintainer of rapists. Or, as they

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put it back in my sit-in days, "if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem".

The thing is that there are a lot of problems, and no one individual can repair all of them. What s/he can do is improve things in some specific area where s/he has some competence while trying as best as possible to not make things worse elsewhere. (And when we're talking about something as big as a society, there are also Heisenbergian effects -- one simply can't tell what all the ramifications of a given act may be.) So, by not being a rapist myself, I am therefore choosing not to be a direct part of the problem.

But Salmonson seems to want me to be my brother's representative, as it were, to take explanatory responsibility for the actions of all males simply because of the genital equipment with which I was born. That, I'm afraid, is not a fair request. I am not all men, but one man; though society and I may reflect aspects of each other, I am not all of society, nor do I encompass all its variations. I can only be responsible for my own acts. To explain the actions of another, especially actions that I wouldn't take myself, is a tough request; the best I could do would be second guessing. Better, I think, to interview some rapists and find out from the source.

Joy Hibbert's comments on marital rape raise interesting issues. I think that it's dangerously reductionistic to describe such situations purely in terms of power, because there are a lot of other issues involved. The actions which involve controlling sexual behavior within a long term relationship often are a form of communication between the partners, and this communication is conditioned by prior expectations of behavior (both from past experiences in and out of the relationship and from societal training). The withholding of sex, and the physically or verbally forcible acquisition of same, can have less to do with power than with the need for or fear of intimacy, for instance.

((One of the problems with prosecuting marital rape is that there is a presumption that marriage entitles one to sexual access, at least within reason. If there were acceptable sexual outlets outside of the marriage, I suspect marital rape would be considerably less common.))

JIM MANN

While people must show responsibility to others, in the end everyone is responsible for their own actions. Jessica Amanda Salmonson says that the men who wrote on rape should have discussed themselves as rapists and as maintainers of a society that rapes. Bullshit. I discussed "them" not "me" because I don't rape, any more than I

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mug little old ladies or rob banks. And Society does not do these things. Individuals do. One of the problems with current law enforcement I think stems from the belief pushed by many intellectualoids that society is somehow to blame for things individuals do. Individuals thus have a convenient excuse: "It's not me, it's my upbringing."

((The truth, of course, is that both the individual and his environment contribute. The wrong conditions provide the excuse or the final straw for many people. This doesn't absolve them of responsibility, but it makes things a lot less pleasant for those of us who don't go over the brink into criminality. My feeling has long been that the proper public policy is strict enforcement of the laws at the same time that we move to correct adverse social conditions. Most of the victims of lower class crime are lower class people.)))

DAVID PALTER

I confess to some annoyance with Jessica Amanda Salmonson. She is dissatisfied with the discussion on rape because for one thing all of us male readers have avoided the issue by failing to reveal our OWN reasons for having raped or for wishing to do so, and for another thing it is boring as she says to to read men's opinions of rapists. Is there an implication here that women's opinions would be more interesting? If so, this is blatant sexism. Men and women are of inherently equal ability to interestingly discuss rape. There is no reason to believe that all of your male readers are actual or would-be rapists, although perhaps some are (and even that is purely speculation). No, not all men are rapists in fact or by inclination. I hope that Joy Hibbert will also appreciate the fact before she goes on the rampage she threatens (page 41) of going out and killing as many men as possible. Let us note here that it is not only your male readers who are suspect as potential criminals.

And no, I have never seen a ghost, but I offer this encouragement to all would be ghost watchers: even if you never in your lifetime get to see a ghost, you may subsequently have the experience of being one.

((I think what Salmonson meant was that she was tired of the same old discussion, leading nowhere, which in many ways this undoubtedly is. Men and women may be inherently equal in their interesting opinions, but society provides alternate experiences that might be interesting. I suspect that most female discussions of rape are equally boring and repetitive. One of my readers was in fact raped (twice, in fact) many years ago. I have heard her talk about it quite openly and her opinions and comments are interesting, but she has so far indicated no interest in joining in, other than a phone comment to the effect that society has caused rape to have more significance to women than it deserves.)))

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JOY HIBBERT

To my mind, the most important thing about pornography, including romantic fiction, is that it is available to young people whose sexuality is not yet developed, filling their minds with ideas of masculinity and femininity based on dominance and submission, without making the difference between fantasy and reality clear. So another generation grows up believing this to be natural.

As to S&M, in my admittedly limited experience, male dominant porn is extremely realistic. In practice S&M should be almost like a dance, everything consented in advance and with little connection to every day reality unless that too is agreed upon. The magazine I saw put forward the view that violence against women is something that men do to make them behave. One story told of a woman who didn't do enough housework, until her husband tied her up and tortured her one night. Another told of a woman whom men perceived as blatantly sexy, and who thus deserved to be dragged to a deserted house, raped, have her breasts torn with a pair of rose cutters, plus other things. To me, this has little to do with harmless fantasy. Contrast this with male submissive porn where it's made clear that men are deliberately doing things that will lead to punishment of a ritualistic kind, with the women dressed up in leather and the like. So different sorts of fantasy have different levels of danger to uninvolved people - a man can't force a woman to dress up in a leather leotard and dominate him verbally, but a man can force a woman to be dragged to a deserted house, etc. The reason I don't mention female porn in this context is I don't know any.

Perhaps if you could see bits of your body being used to sell practically anything, hints or rape used as advertising material, yourself portrayed as something that exists to be forced, you'd be less likely to call it "over reaction". As usual, I suppose, men are only willing to pay lip service to feminism as a gesture. If it inconveniences them, it's "over reaction". Just because men are apparently too unimaginative to think up their own fantasies, they need them pre-written.

Re Brian Earl Brown's letter. If rape is an act of power rather than lust, and if this is a question of male upbringing rather than something inherent in the male body, what will happen if chemical castration is accepted as a suitable punishment? Surely men will find other ways of abusing women, possibly using instrumental rape. In which case, is chemical castration a good idea?

Rape is almost always seen as an attack on virtue rather than the body. That's why all sorts of irrelevancies about past sexual behavior get

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dragged into court. Seems rather contradictory -- if a woman has been promiscuous she's more likely to know that it was rape this time. But the courts say that a promiscuous woman is more likely to bring false accusations.

If society as a whole didn't have a warped idea about sex, there wouldn't be difficulty proving rape. It is only because society as a whole considers vaginal trauma and bodily bruising to be a normal part of sex that these signs of rape are not accepted as such. In cases where rape is difficult to prove from the vaginal trauma viewpoint, there should be a backup accusation of assault or whatever, based on the other bruising. But it would help if judges did not go around saying that women tell lies and thus juries should require other evidence.

Why does Ed Rom think the divorce rate is anything to do with hate of the opposite sex? Isn't it just the way people grow away from each other? None of us are the person we were three years ago. Why should husbands and wives be expected to grow together rather than apart? Part of the problem in marriage could be the meeting of stereotypes thing, but such couples can't really be suited anyway if they can't open up fully with each other.

((Essentially, I agree with you that pornography and romantic fiction contribute to the perverse orientation of society about sexual matters. So does most other fiction, drama, music, every aspect of human endeavor. Banning these things doesn't solve the problem. It's like throwing a bandaid on top of a rash. You have to change the underlying predispositions. Banning pornography MIGHT reduce the level of violence against women, but I personally suspect the opposite would happen. And I just don't think that abridging a freedom, no matter how distasteful that freedom might be, is going to accomplish anything positive.

I also see your point about advertising, but whatever gave you the idea that only women are exploited. I am so sick of seeing that in order to be a real man I have to drink beer, smoke Marlboros, wear a cowboy hat, engage in sports, and indulge in breast fetishism. I don't mean to trivialize your argument, but again, it's a sign of the underlying cultural preoccupation, not the cause.

Finally, I agree with part of your comments about proving rape. But what do you do with date rape, where the compulsion is verbal, non-violent. I am perfectly willing to accept that the vast majority of accusations are true. But we cannot, I believe, take the position that it is better for one innocent man to go to prison than that ten guilty ones go free.)))

JACKIE CAUSGROVE

While I agree with Klug about the desirability of shorter sentences for rapists, my reasons vary a bit from Marty's. I feel that 1) the general public tends to feel uneasy about sentencing people for crimes based essentially on one person's testimony, the victim -- who may or may not have other reasons for accusing another of a crime. 2) This uneasiness increases geometrically with the severity of the sentence. 3) Reduced sentences would be more likely to offset that uneasiness, on the grounds that even if the jury is erring, a person won't be locked away for life, or face a death sentence, on the off-chance that they really are innocent.

Keeping rapists off the streets -- even for 2-5 years -- is preferable to having them go free from a possible life sentence. This is avoiding the question of the purpose of imprisonment, of course. Ideally a convict should undergo some form of rehabilitation. But that is an inexact science at best, and in the meantime the fewer rapists free to prey at will, the better.

The theory that people who are victimized are somehow "asking for it" seems more prevalent today than it ever was. The common insurance practice of "Shared Risk" feeds that concept -- nothing bad can happen to you if you do everything Just Right. Let a drunk driver ram into a car, and insurance companies will attribute part of the damages to the injured party should they not be wearing seatbelts. It doesn't matter that the wreck would never have occurred without the drunk driving at a high rate of speed, or on the wrong side of the road. Damages would (or might have been) less if belts had been worn. The victim is wrong, ergo must assume part of the blame. Go into a bar in a rough area, act friendly to the patrons, and if you get raped on a pool table, it's your fault for not having behaved more circumspectly. No way can I hold with that. Certain actions are wrong, no matter who does them, or where. Rape definitely falls into that category. Killing another may have alleviating factors that reduce one's responsibility (murder? manslaughter? Even justifiable homicide?) There are no such mitigating circumstances that can affect the crime of rape.

((((Can't entirely agree. There are degrees of severity of rape. The man who has sexual relations with a girl without knowing she is a minor, thereby committing statutory rape is not as guilty as the man who deliberately seduces a minor. Neither is as guilty, or I should say neither is as heinous as the man who refuses to stop when the woman changes her mind, or the man who thinks the woman wants to be raped. And none of these are as bad as the man who abducts, assaults, tortures, or murders during rape.)))

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AL SIROIS

On rape as power trip, I concur absolutely. I refer you to Kate Wilhelm's novel, THE CLEWISTON TEST, wherein one of the main characters, who may or may not be becoming deranged from a drug she may or may not have ingested, realizes that she has given in to her husband's sexual tastes and preferences with little if any protest. He has never harmed her or been blatantly inconsiderate; but things always have been done his way. When she realizes this, she becomes angry, and she ends up leaving him. And he cannot understand why. I liked the book; I found it disquieting and I found myself examining my own little sexual tyrannies. I've never forced myself on anyone, and I consider myself a very sensitive and considerate man -- but how much of this is "real" and how much just lives in my head? I don't know, but I'll be more considerate in the future.

I really liked Marty Klug's suggestion about making rapists financially liable for rape. But I'd carry this idea further. I'd like to prosecute any kind of intimidation. A friend was almost mugged the other day. He's an artist and his studio is in a bad section of town. He was walking down the street carrying his camera case, when he was accosted by four guys, two in front and two behind, carrying chains. To escape these turkeys, my friend ducked into a bar. He's white; the bar was for blacks, and he said that he figured his assailants didn't think he'd go in. But he did. Aside from a few "hate" stares, he had no problem. When the coast was clear, he split.

He was pretty irritated about the incident. Who could blame him? He feels that he would like legal recourse. He wants to sue those guys for intimidating him. Well, it sounds good. I agree that the courts are sufficiently clogged and that as a culture we are suffering from what George Harrison termed the "Sue Me, Sue You Blues". But wouldn't it be nice to sue muggers for mental anguish? I'd like to extend the idea to include the jerk who takes up two spaces in the parking lot, or who cuts me off while I am riding my bicycle.

((I'd like two bits for every car that used its turn signals in front of me improperly, for that matter. Don't people know you're supposed to use them BEFORE you hit the brakes, not afterwards?)))

JUDITH WEISS

Your glancing comment on the feminist/porn debate has finally motivated me to loc MYTHOLOGIES. This issue is very important to me now, because the future of the women's movement hinges on whether we see ourselves as actors or victims, whether we can move beyond the cultural stereotypes we grew up with, or just reinforce them under

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new guises, and the porn debate is symbolic of that struggle, which is why passions are running so high.

I am sending you the enclosed material because your comment on the assumptions behind the anti-porn movement is perceptive, and I thought you might appreciate how some feminists have extended and evolved your perceptions. If you find this material thought provoking, I highly recommend two of the books mentioned, PLEASURE AND DANGER, and POWERS OF DESIRE. I have appreciated the debates on rape and friendship that you've been running for the past few issues, and I don't want to sound superior, but they seem incredibly culture bound and myopic to me after being exposed to the cutting edge of the inquiries into sexuality as a social construct. In much the same way one might feel restless reading a John Updike or Ann Beattie novel after being exposed to the speculations on the possibilities of human relationship by Theodore Sturgeon, John Varley, Chip Delany, or Joanna Russ.

Cardinal political rule. Don't let the enemy define your terms for you. You refer to two friends: one is "pro-choice", the other is "pro-life". Does that mean the former is "anti-life"? You bet your ass that's what's implied. How about describing the latter as "anti-choice", a much more accurate term? But no one picks up on these things. The mass media have christened the anti-abortion movement as "pro-life", or rather, they have christened themselves and the media has accepted the label, and so has everyone else, including abortion rights activists...This is not a trivial issue. Labels have a lot of power.

((Excellent point on the labels. The mass media recently confessed that their coverage has been prejudiced in favor of the anti-abortion forces, and even spokespeople for those groups have admitted the same.

A couple of people have pointed out that these discussions in MYTH are really just rehashings of the surface, that anyone who has spent the time to research the matter has already worked through these arguments. That's absolutely true. But the one thing that I think is the obligation of all of us, and in long range terms the most effective tactic, is consciousness raising. A segment of my readers have not been exposed to this sort of discussion before, and if one person can have his or her eyes opened to an injustice as a result of these pages, I'll feel as though I've contributed something to the improvement of the human condition.)))

SCIENCE FICTION

DAVID PALTER

It's interesting that you do have an interest in the new pulps. I

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have read and enjoyed a few of these although on the whole it is not the most promising genre (the Destroyer series in particular has some very successful elements of humor at times -- although like all these series, it has continued too long and become repetitive). I am also reminded of another type of pulp revival -- L. Ron Hubbard's recent novel BATTLEFIELD EARTH, which has all the classic pulp characteristics (including that of serial continuity, since sequels are in the works).

((BATTLEFIELD EARTH is not related to the other books Hubbard is writing. Several people have suggested it was actually written, at least for the most part, nearly forty years ago and just recently published. I can't say I enjoyed it, although I enjoyed parts of it. The new book, THE INVADERS PLAN, is so hopelessly boring that I find it hard to believe it's by the same man who wrote FEAR, TYPEWRITER IN THE SKY, FINAL BLACKOUT, and other titles.)))

SHERYL BIRKHEAD

I'm certain GHASTLY TALES is for real, but you must admit it is hard to believe.

((Actually, I don't find it hard to believe at all. I suspect that even a significant portion of readers are semi-literate, and it only seems appropriate that some of the editors have the same short coming. One publisher mentioned to an acquaintance of mine that they had recently added some staff so that they could read the manuscripts they bought before sending them to the typesetter.)))

AL SIROIS

I didn't enjoy THINNER as much as you apparently did. I confess that I gobble King novels, but I gobble most kinds of horror fantasy. It's my very favorite kind of junk reading. I found THINNER obvious, violent, sexist, and morally dubious. Not a very good book. The worst horror book I have read of late is Straub's THE FLOATING DRAGON. It out-Kings King, which I guess was the intent. The novel was a hundred pages or so too long, and even more self-indulgent than the worst of King's books (probably THE STAND).

((FLOATING DRAGON suffers from so much supernatural content that it gets boring after a bit. I hated it. THINNER is my least favorite of King's supernatural things. His best is THE SHINING, with DEAD ZONE, CHRISTINE, and SALEMS' LOT close behind. On the other hand, my sister in New York and her husband both think PET SEMATARY is his best.)))

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ERIC LINDSAY

I'm not at all sure that I believe in the novels you quote in GHASTLY TALES. Some are so bad that even a fan as cynical as I am must doubt they really exist.

((((Why all this skepticism? Garbage can get published, if you know how to go about it. Everything in each installment of GHASTLY TALES is real. I wish it wasn't so, but alas...)))

IAN COVELL

1) I'd be interested to know which series had been written or partially written by Gerard Conway, Roland Green, Robert Lory, Ray Nelson, Ron Goulart, since I enjoy a couple of these authors and revile a few others. 2) I know a coterie of English writers who in the early 1970s produced almost every single series produced in England. There were six of them and they wrote everything from westerns to historicals to science fiction. For the major part, there were only four, the man at their head being Ken Bulmer, who was writing roughly one book a month, alternating series, for several years.

((((Conway did, I think, all four of the series done by "Wallace Moore", Balzan of the Cat People. Roland Green and Ray Nelson both did the Richard Blade books. Lory wrote two series under his own name, the horrorscope horror series and the Dracula books (the vampire has a wooden pacemaker installed so that he can be controlled, and the heroes use him to wipe out the Mafia). Ron Goulart wrote the Avenger books, the Cleopatra Jones books, and supposedly many others. I didn't mention Barry Malzberg, who wrote the Mike Barry "Lone Wolf" series.

I'm familiar with some of the books you mention in England, such as the submarine series by Bulmer. I know Rob Holdstock is Chris Carlesen. (Care to mention any others?"))

DON AYRES

The cable release of THE TERMINATOR bears a videotape addition to the credits: "Acknowledgment is made to the works of Harlan Ellison". A source informed me that Ellison managed to convince the court that it plagiarized "Demon with a Glass Hand", of which the additional title was part of the settlement. You might also be interested in the BBC production of DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, which is quite faithful to the novel. It shows up on the Arts & Entertainment Network, running about 3 hours.

((((I think the story in question is "Assassin from Tomorrow" or "Soldier from Tomorrow", but otherwise you're right.)))

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UPDATES

MARY COLE

These last few months are the closest I've come to fandom in ages. Since February I've attended a couple small conventions in Troy and Albany, which were lovely. Time hardly allows for such things these days. I had made time for the conventions in order to be in the company of an old friend and revisited a somewhat simpler time for a while. It would be nice to escape the rat race for an extended period of time. Europeans have much the right idea in that they take annual 4 to 6 week or more vacations. That goes a long way toward keeping one's sanity.

((Unfortunately, in this country, there is a tendency to think of time off work as "wasted". I consider that to be a by-product of the fact that most people don't have much to do in their private lives, and define their own value as people to their success on the job. In fact, your work is one aspect of your job, and only defines your success in its own terms, if that.)))

D. GARY GRADY

I guess I should mention briefly what I've been up to. I've pretty much gaffiated from fandom, although I keep thinking about it. I'm a computer consultant for Duke University, which means I help people debug programs, recommend microcomputer systems, write documentation, teach short courses, etc. I've recently started (with some present and former Duke people) a consulting firm called Datalytics, Inc. I live in Durham about five or six blocks from Arthur Hlavaty, whom I see regretably infrequently. I spend a tremendous amount of time reading, mainly magazines (you wouldn't believe the number of subscriptions I have). But alas I have little time for fiction, SF included. I hope to improve.

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

Six years ago I was in college. I decided to be a writer, and ended up first working for a small wire service and then for Harper's Magazine, where I have been Washington editor since 1983. I've still written about SF: I've done the science fiction column for the WASHINGTON POST, and have written about interactive novels for ESQUIRE, an article which entitled me to two beers from Jim Baen as a result of an interview.

When I was 20, I realized that I could write, but couldn't write fiction. What SF provided me was an early exposure to a large number of professional writers which gave me insights into how the world of

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writers worked. I've read fewer SF novels over the years for the same reasons as Robert Whitaker Sirignano -- because, as I get older, I want to read SF novels that have the richness and resonance of non-SF novels. When I read an SF novel that is art -- say Aldiss' HELLICONIA WINTER -- it is an exquisite pleasure. Unfortunately, most SF writers are not in his league.

I'm curious. How many books do you read in a year? Do you keep track? It must be in the thousands. Have you slowed down over the years?

GHASTLY TALES is a feature I like. At the Potomac River SF Society, we love exchanging bad passages of this sort. My favorite bad sentence in recently read fiction comes from Philip Jose Farmer's DAYWORLD: "If people were judged gramatically, you'd always be in the acusative case."

((((I too always wanted to be a fiction writer, and until this year, everything I've sold has been non-fiction -- over a thousand pieces if you count the reviews. This year I sold a supernatural story to a semi-pro market, and I have a novel out on spec at the moment, but I still never expect to make it as a fiction writer except in the most peripheral of fashions. I wouldn't mind being pleasantly surprised though. I read about 400 - 500 books per year, but I sort of read another 200. By sort of, I refer to short story collections which I may have to read a couple of entries from, having read the others in prozines, and non-fiction reference works, some of which get read cover to cover, but some of which just get sampled.)))

FRIENDSHIP

JEAN WEBER

The letters on friendship were excellent, but I find some of your responses a bit naive. Many married people aren't what I'd call friends with each other, and in many marriages it is not acceptable for the partners to have outside interests in mixed groups, especially not the wife. Both circumstances are absurd to me, but I know they're true.

((((I thought that was essentially what I had said. Marriage partners should be meetings of two friends, but I know as well as you that that just doesn't happen in the majority of cases. My point about external relationships is that the perceived nature of marriage makes it virtually impossible for either partner to have cross-sexual friendships outside the marriage. There are exceptions, but few and far between.)))

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BILL BREIDING

I had a supervisor once who was very unreasonable. At this job I struck up a friendship with a coworker. We became very close. After seven months of working together and bumming around after work, we were pretty stable as friends. Our unstable supervisor made us that much closer.

One day our supervisor began picking on my friend for no apparent reason, badgering him and trying to find fault with his work. When he was unable to do this, he proceeded to assign him to tasks either beyond his ability or beyond his capacity as a worker. The verbal abuse grew by the day until it had gone on for a week or more. Finally I could stand it no more. I intervened and told the supervisor to lay off the abuse of my friend as I could see no reason for it, and to explain it to me. The supervisor's reply was that if I meddled in something that wasn't my affair one more time I would be fired. I retreated. The badgering continued. My friend seemed defenseless. What was my responsibility to him as a friend and coworker? Would I be able to live with myself if he quit or was fired without my trying to do something on his behalf?

I spoke up again when quite literally my boss had my friend backed up against a wall yelling at him. Once again I said I saw no reason for this behavior as a supervisor and to explain why my friend was being treated this way. Instead I was fired. Upper management supported my supervisor and wanted nothing from me or my friend.

The clincher to this story is that I was fired because I felt a sense of responsibility toward my friend, and after I was fired he continued to work there. Was it a set up? Was I the one the supervisor really wanted to fire and was I manipulated to that end? If not, what was my friend's duty toward me after this incident?

After the above problem and I had been fired, I came to terms with the fact that he remained. I felt strongly enough about him to pursue our friendship. He, however, became flaky, was inconsistent about staying in touch and would drop out of my life for long intervals, and would only reappear after I dug him up again. Did my actions spoil our friendship and make him feel guilty?

((You're not going to like this, Bill. Your supervisor may or may not have been at fault. I have no way of knowing. But upper management was right in backing him and your friend was right in staying. You and you alone (leaving aside the supervisor) were out of line. Even if the supervisor was wrong, upper management MUST back their line supervision, unless the case is clearly an injustice. If you have a management person who abuses his authority, you back him in the

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immediate case and then quietly reprimand or remove him. In the case of your friend, if he objected to the treatment he was getting, he should have done something about it. Your responsibility as his friend was to offer to help him, support him as necessary, but not to take independent action. By jumping unasked to his defense, you made the incident even more significant, and you may well have laid down a challenge to the supervisor that he was incapable of ignoring, just making it even worse from your friend's viewpoint. It is not a pleasant thing to watch a friend in this kind of situation, but you have to let them decide what to do with their lives; you can't do it for them.)))

JACKIE CAUSGROVE

I agree with Leland's quibbles about Lindsay's statement, regarding the defense of friends from the law. A lot depends on one's view of the law that's involved. Few people would turn in a friend for pot possession nowadays, or various other so-called "victimless" crimes, but I can't see myself protecting a friend from the law for committing a serious crime -- unless I was absolutely convinced of the innocence of my friend. (even then I'd be apt to counsel him/her to surrender and face the charges in court. Life as a fugitive is no fun and can be downright dangerous.)

Too often I've seen friends defend friends solely on the basis of said friendship. That's too close to herd instinct for my tastes. Us vs Them; My Country Right or Wrong -- blind loyalty is no virtue. No one in this world is perfect, not me, not thee. We all make mistakes, errors in judgment, and sometimes will screw up royally. When/if I screw up, I'd feel damned uneasy if my friends would come storming to my "defense" without pausing to think whether I'd done something wrong. I am responsible for my own actions, and that includes owning up to boo-boos as well as modestly accepting praise for doing something just right.

Joy Hibbert asks if you can really be friends with someone who differs strongly on a subject you feel deeply about. My answer, like yours, is "Yes". Commonality of interests -- a requirement for friendship in my book -- does not mean lock step thinking, 100% agreement all the way down the line. Some of my friends are totally opposite on topics I've taken sides on; some are at opposite poles on issue I care little about. You either like a person for whatever reason or not. To break off a relationship on the basis of a difference of opinion reveals a shaky relationship to begin with. To be sure there are some matters that can come up that undermine even a solid friendship. Those are few and far between though. Usually, when disagreements arise on issues of importance between friends, it's mutually agreed to disagree and just not bring it up again.

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((One problem is that there are many people who look upon any disagreement as a personal attack. I have had a number of clashes in fandom in particular where my arguments contrary to someone else's expressed opinion resulted in rancor. Attempts to explicate calmly just exacerbate the situation. These people read your arguments looking for things to construe as insults and there is absolutely nothing you can do to head them off once they've started. My self image is not tied to the things I believe. An attack on my ideas is not an attack on me. But for those who cannot make this separation, friendship apparently implies total surrender. Friends like this I don't need.)))

DON AYRES

There is one aspect about fandom that creates the aura of close friendship which is the extent of personal expression to be found in the zines, in the reading time, and the time spent in responding. I feel very strongly as though I know you, Donn Brazier, C.D., Gene Wolfe, and many others quite well, but the actual amount of contact is very slight, tending to focus on ideas (a reasonable extension of Joy Hibbert's note on young males focusing their relationships on activities, although this aspect carries its own amount of passions, perhaps as deeply personal as the sentiments exchanged by young girls). I am flattered that Mike Glicksohn numbers me among the missing, since our main contact was via TITLE. Mike Bracken may be surprised to learn that he is one of the fanwriters I have missed most although I don't think we ever corresponded. These are very peculiar and special relationships that we enjoy.

Brett Cox raises a point which you didn't seem to understand, which is the conflict between sexes when one party realizes that he or she needs to try the friendship in a romantic or sexual area as well as the way it existed before. Some people like to cubbyhole things, so that a friend is someone you do A,B, or C with but not D, E, or F. I was personally involved in a relationship or two where this is exactly what happened; there was no barrier to the two of us becoming lovers, except for the fact that we were friends and one of us could not break out of that label and its boundaries. I have had others tell me that all they wanted was for me to be their friend, while I considered that I had been that all along.

Another problem that enters here is the unspoken assumption that all parties involved are at the same level of emotional maturity, which is very unlikely. One party is likely to carry the brunt of the relationship at any given time, and that will determine the durability of the relationship. I do agree with you that your spouse had better be your best friend, but the bottom line has to be that you are

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together because that is what you both want, or it will flounder. Ideally, you are both at the same power level, although that may or may not be true. I have my doubts on the duration of the relationship otherwise, unless neither rebels against the dominant/subservient role.

((Yes I can see where the sudden imposition of a "romantic" element in the friendship can interfere. That was one of my points. Even if neither is romantically involved, one or both may suspect romantic involvement on the part of the other because, in our society, close friendship with a member of the opposite sex is assumed to have a romantic undercurrent.)))

SHERYL BIRKHEAD

There is the ongoing story of the "girl" in the trailer next door, 9½ months pregnant (child #2, boyfriend #2) who dropped over to tell me "Charles" said it was okay for me to take her to the hospital. So I took her and stayed. No one else was going to and I couldn't (if you will pardon the expression) conceive of being in such a lonely spot with no one there to be with. Anyhow, when I got home a friend came over and asked how my neighbor was, but he said "friend" not "neighbor", and I found that I didn't like that label. She WASN'T my friend. Was she? I did what I felt was best for anyone, not specifically that one person. It made me wonder about the different ways people use that word.

((And of course you'd feel pretty low saying, "She's not MY friend." One of the problems of being civilized and considerate is that you are constant prey for the uncivilized and inconsiderate.)))

BIZARRE EVENTS

LEE CARSON

On the matter of your making David Heal the butt of your odd myth about drugs. Would you care to give equal time to explaining why you liked and/or tolerated him to the extent you obviously did? There are many "upper middle class radicals" who never did drugs in the 1960's -- some from paranoia or shall we say a healthy respect for the Draconian laws then in effect. Some from a lack of desire or need coupled with that stubborn independence of mind that enabled them to be "radical" and risk their futures for principle, having also principle against habits of intoxication that would undermine support for the "cause". The political "counter-culture" and the drug subculture had a significant overlap, but were hardly synonymous, as you seem to imply. You say you cannot recall why you were depressed enough to conspire to obtain marijuana. I sure remember why I was depressed in

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those days. Heal is probably still teaching college in Iowa, by the way. He was so young when he got to MMSU, wasn't he? Bill Coll was never a major dealer; he was an addict to downers for some time. He once was an excellent acoustic guitar player.

((((I never intended to make Dave the butt of the story; only to use his unfortunate experience with drugs to make a point. My own abstinence doesn't imply a Puritannical avoidance. I imbibe, as a matter of fact. But Dave because of one reason or another became too involved, I think, and lost for a time his sense of proportion. I ran into him about a year after I graduated and he was so high he couldn't remember my name.

Why were we friends for so long? I don't know. We never were close, in point of fact. Dave always seemed too wrapped up in his own concerns. I think I envied him for the things which he was and had that I didn't. He was free of a lot of social pressures I succumbed to. I was always concerned about grades; he wasn't. Dave was a dashing, handsome, self-contained, sexually active, extrovert. I wasn't. I recall once that he and I and a couple of SDS girls went off for a weekend together once. We sort of unspokenly paired off after a bit, and it appeared that the anorexic one of the pair was going to spend the night with me until Dave decided to make an issue of my abstinence from drugs, and the atmosphere became quite cool. I ended up driving until some ungodly hour of the morning to get us all back to campus because I was so angry. And I don't think Dave ever realized why I was so angry.)))

D. GARY GRADY

Your tale of being pressured to consume marijuana was amusing and reminds me of several similar things that happened to me. There was a chap in Iceland who used to come to see me with widely dilated pupils. It turns out he felt a conversation with me made him feel far weirder than the drugs alone. (I have long contended that people who do drugs do so to acquire the mental state I have normally.)

If the average evangelist proselytized with the fervor of most drug users, we'd all be singing hymns. I've done very little experimenting with drugs myself. But at one Disclave I let Michael Dobson persuade me to try inhaling a little NO (nitrous oxide). The stuff made me feel slightly silly, which is a state I can reach easily enough at work, and I failed to see the need for the gas, but it wasn't unpleasant. Later I was engaged in conversation with Michael T. Shoemaker. I casually mentioned that Dobson was sniffing laughing gas and Shoemaker proceeded to tell me in no uncertain terms that NITROUS OX-HIDE WILL KILL YOUR ASS.

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DAVID PALTER

It is ironic that you avoided drug use as an effort to resist pressure to conform. The subculture that was pressuring you was itself formed in an effort to avoid conforming to the dictates of the larger or so-called mainstream American culture. And in fact neither the desire to conform nor the desire to resist conformity is a good reason to do or refrain from doing something. Personally I feel that I have good and sufficient reasons to refrain from using drugs (I don't even use the legal ones, aspirin, Nyquil, etc.) but these reasons have nothing to do with anybody else's expectations of what I ought to do. And I have no objection if others disagree and choose to use drugs. (As long as they refrain from assaulting me in a drug-induced madness, or robbing me to pay for their drugs.)

GAMES

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK

My main recreation at home is postal chess. That is to say, playing games of chess through the mails, and boy o boy could I tell you about some post office screw ups. So could any postal chess player. Postal chess is actually less expensive than playing on tournaments. This may seem astonishing, but consider. A typical postal chess tournament consists of 4 players playing two games with each opponent. Even at 14 cents per post card, a typical 40 move game comes out to \$5.60 for two games, or \$16.80 for 6 games. Most over-the-board tournaments start at \$20 or more, and you have to pay for hotel rooms, or transportation to and from the hotel, not to mention meals. And you play in a noisy room, crowded, perhaps with smokers.

I currently have over 54 games in progress, and I spend 1-2 hours a day in the process of figuring out moves. I love it. Some of these games are in the ICCF, the International Correspondence Chess Federation. The problems of playing with Russian players can be daunting. Aside from the six week interval between cards, you have to write the address on the envelope twice, one in Latin (English) letters and again in Cyrillic (Russian) letters.

PAUL SKELTON

Is that right about the secret room in the ADVENTURE cartridge? Or are you just indulging in a grand wind-up?

((Actually, there are two secret rooms. One is inside the white castle, and you have to get there to solve one difficulty level of the game. But the one I mentioned is real. David found the black dot once and I think he got part way toward the initials before something happened.)))

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DAVID AXLER

ZORK I is just the tip of the iceberg, as you've probably discovered by now. There are two continuations, plus at least a dozen others, just from that one manufacturer, plus from other sources. A few basic tips for all such games. 1) Make maps, noting not only the rooms and their interconnections but the precise terms used to get from room to room (they don't always work in reverse) plus the objects and/or residents of the room. 2) Most games recognize a minimum of 10 directions -- the four primary compass points, the four secondary points, plus up and down. In addition, one must sometimes use a specific verb, e.g. jump, climb, etc. 3) Every item you find has at least one purpose and possibly more. 4) One neat trick is to test out the game's vocabulary at the very start -- just sit there and type in assorted nouns and verbs and see which ones it recognizes. This can be crucial in many text games, because their parser programs are often limited and don't recognize the synonyms that you and I do. For instance, if "light" is the verb which turns on a flashlight, then it probably won't be applicable to a match. You'll need "ignite" instead. 5) When the game tells you a thing's name, find out what parts of that name are actually recognized as words. Often if you name a place while you're nearby, you can get moved directly to that place (skipping intervening rooms). 6) Many games have what's called an "end-game" section. After you've found what you think are all the treasures, the game will try and trick you into quitting (by announcing that the cave is closing, for instance); if you stay inside and walk about for a while, you'll be transported to an entirely new section of the cave, with new challenges.

((I recommend THE KOBAYASHI ALTERNATIVE from Simon & Shuster. It's a STAR TREK game, but don't get put off. It has some interesting twists and a hell of a lot of detail. I think one of the ten systems is reasonably clear to me, and even there I might be wrong.))

MANAGEMENT

SUE ANDERSON

The process seems logical enough. What happens when you get stuck with someone who can't count what's on the shelf? Promote 'em, I guess, to a position of safety. I worked for two manufacturing concerns, each for about a year. The larger firm made a great variety of products, under their own and other brand names -- and the project I was on was to "document" the packaging materials. For the longest time, they'd had no central record of what boxes, wraps, plastic bags, instruction sheets went with which products. Presumably, the employees in each department knew what to use. But suppose management

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wanted to bust the union? So they needed "documentation" to be able to recreate the system after a strike. I don't know that it came to this -- in fact, I'm pretty sure it didn't; the company was taken over by its largest creditor, and I hope the new owners reorganized the hell out of middle management.

((Actually, there's a much better reason for the documentation. You need it to prepare a bill of materials which tells you what your products really cost so that you know what to charge for them, and also, if you plan to computerize and sophisticate your materials ordering procedures, you have to know which materials go with which item. All of this allows you to budget, plan cash expenditures, and avoid problems because materials are missing.)))

DON AYRES

In its present configuration, our clerical staff is somewhat unusual in that we have three people who have worked off and on with me since 1980 and consequently know my way of doing things fairly well. Since I get most of the long term discovery assignments, there is a great deal of overlap on how many things get done from one case to another. One of the clerks is quite bright and capable of the self-assurance needed to follow the routine from day to day. I'd say that he's fully capable of becoming a foreman in your business; he's somewhat more authoritarian than I think necessary, but he learns his job in all aspects and is able to get loyalty from those who report to him so that I can get that extra effort from the team when necessary. On the other hand, I know that the clerks often trade off assignments and help out other cases which have an imminent deadline. My official line on this is that I don't care if other cases have overtime available and my clerks want the extra money. My unofficial line (at least to the attorneys) is that the company has obligations to meet and that my duty to the company is to do whatever I can to see that those obligations are met, whether I am directly accountable for them or not. Since resources such as clerks and copiers are limited, I scratch your back with the understanding that you'll scratch mine. In actual practice I suppose the clerks actually determine most of the time allocations. It's certainly a subject you don't discuss with the attorneys (each of whom is convinced that celestial mechanics is intimately tied to the priority of the execution of HIS projects), but we have an exceptional clerical staff.

Your comments on the matter of reporting to two managers (an embarrassingly common gaffe) is another problem I've had to deal with. In one case, I'd been placed in charge of a project after an absence by a department head. My immediate supervisor told me that he'd ordered this after he found my co-worker shopping at some odd hour of the day

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and asked me to downplay the hierarchy. I agreed, which was a fatal mistake. The problem ultimately was that my co-worker treated all decisions as a democratic matter in which, if we disagreed, we disagreed, and each was free to carry on as we saw fit. What never seemed to get through to her (and I really couldn't articulate it until I'd been sent to another case) was that if I was charged to head the project, my choice of handling matters -- rightly or wrongly -- needed to be followed.

(second letter) I read your essays on your management experiences with some interest, although they do not directly relate to my situation. Since the paralegal field tends to favor women, my supervisor and most of my co-workers are women. In our structure, we all report to that supervisor rather than directly to an attorney. This theoretically allows a disinterested party to allocate resources based on need rather than each attorney's conviction that none of his or her paralegals can be spared, but that another paralegal is desperately needed immediately. Nominally we are not part of management, although I have regularly supervised staffs of clerks and paralegals up to 25-30 in number. The two paralegals with the most litigation experience have both run afoul of office politics; myself and the other senior staff member. Seeing no likelihood of improvement in that situation, seeing myself given the responsibility for -- but not the authority and autonomy necessary -- managing the litigation through the discovery process, and seeing only an increase in the amount of time I would personally have to spend on the job (I'm on straight salary), I recently accepted the company's Enhanced Retirement Package.

I've now worked in large and small retail operations (K-Mart, The Warehouse records and tapes) and in a service/support area for a large corporation (Atlantic Richfield). So far, the only real appreciation I have gleaned from this scattered career is a great deal of laughter whenever somebody suggests that business is superior to government. It is quite true that bureaucracies can be inefficient and ponderous, but the real difference between government and business is that business writes their inefficiencies off their income taxes.

I have to disagree with your diminishment of the Toyota management; they were smart enough not to set themselves up with 3000 suppliers. GM could probably do the same thing if they set their minds to it, although I wouldn't care to see the politicking on that one.

I agree that a manager needs to have at least passing familiarity with the tasks of anyone who reports to him or her. Another oft-neglected matter is that of being on good terms with your lower level support staff. One of my lead clerks was finally put in a coordinating position a couple of years ago with a couple of new and inexperienced

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working with him. After I designed the forms I needed for document control, we reviewed them and he would go off to apply them as we had discussed. Then he would come back in a day or two to discuss any questions he had. He also created a form or two that he found helpful in meeting all of the goals set forth by the team. Over the course of a month, I transferred much of the work involved to him and the two clerks. I made checks to verify that he knew what I wanted, and when it was apparent that he did, eventually stopped. Naturally you can see how this freed me for other responsibilities.

((There are two conflicting problems in management. On the one hand, it is best that decisions be made at the lowest possible level, that your subordinates learn to handle as much responsibility as possible. But at the same time, when there is conflict and it cannot be resolved, the word of the boss must go. I've differed with my people from time to time. We frequently argue and usually I lose. For one thing, they are closer to the problems and generally have insights I don't. For another, if the matter is not a critical one, I prefer to let them have their head. If they're wrong, they'll find out and learn something from it. If they're right, I damned well better have given in. If we're both right, if it's just a question of style or detail, it is more important that they have the opportunity to exercise authority than that everything be done just the way I would have. Besides, they have this annoying habit of being right.

I'm all too familiar with the imposition of responsibility without commensurate authority. Under our previous owners (Lenox China), I was constantly haranged to do something to reduce the inventory from its 6.5 million dollar level, but was overruled constantly by my immediate superiors who didn't want to look bad. Under the new owners, we have already dropped the inventory 1.4 million dollars, and we have a better stock situation than when we had lots more inventory. And this has been the easy part so far. We haven't even gotten to the difficult steps yet.

Toyota does have a slight advantage over GM. The country is small, which makes their supply lines shorter. Their government plans the growth of the economy, so that there are not so many manufacturers, and there is considerably less specialization. But it is also true, as you say, that Toyota just plans things better.)))

SHERYL BIRKHEAD

What is the amount of lead time needed between a sales forecast and actual production turn out? If items are made up and there is a forecasting goof, do they just remain on the shelf and slowly get sold? In later winter a lot of stores have what they advertise as an inven-

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tory sale. Does that mean that they are taxed on whatever they have in inventory, and if the item doesn't sell well, it can theoretically be taxed and retaxed year after year?

((The lead time depends on the item. For example, for a coffee urn we would order material 4 months in advance and start production 3 months in advance of the date we expected to need them. For a candy dish, we order 6 weeks in advance and start production 4 weeks in advance. This is an oversimplification, because it also depends on the time of year and a number of other things, but essentially that's how it works. Also, if we make a run of 1000 pieces, the first few may be completed in, say, 6 weeks, but it might be several months until the final pieces ride all thru the system.

Yes, if sales forecasts something that doesn't sell, it could sit on the shelf. In our case, if we get too overstocked, we run a promotional sale for a while, but we still have items that sometimes sit for several years. This kind of error is generally attributed to the sales people who made the forecast, but a good production control department will in many cases ignore the sales forecast when trends are clearly different. Of course, sometimes we get caught with our pants down.

Inventory sales are just another excuse for a sale, although in some cases it might also be designed to reduce the amount of stuff that has to be counted in a physical inventory. You get taxed on your inventory on the basis of each month end, or essentially your average inventory over the course of the year. So yes, the same item could be taxed over and over again, although it isn't the item so much as the total amount of dollars that get taxed.)))

JACKIE CAUSGROVE

Dave Locke, with whom I live, has worked as Purchasing Agent, Purchasing Manager, Materials Manager, Distribution Manager, and various other slots in the material control area for most of the time I've known him. He's in an entirely different industry now -- Health Maintenance Organization, Customer Service -- but I've had years of exposure to his old jobs' requirements. The one thing I've noted is that -- on an ultra-simplistic level, stripped of complicating factors and terminology -- the task of managing material flow is not unlike the job a homemaker has to handle. Making sure supplies needed are on hand when needed (not too much or too little), purchased at attractive prices and used at the optimum time. Scatter that work among 3-50 people, amplify the scope by a factor of 100 or more, and it's essentially the same thing, just more complicated because of its larger size. I think I handle a two person household's inventory

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needs and materials management rather well, even without a computer (save the one we all carry within our craniums), but think I'd find doing it as a career boring as all get out.

((I once heard production control/material management described as doing one very simple thing over and over again, and then doing another one similarly in parallel, and then another and another. It's not as boring as it sounds though. One of the advantages of this field is that you're constantly doing something new.))

WAYNE HOOKS

I teach so I have bosses, hassles, paperwork and all the other trap-pings. However, I have no stake in the future of the school in that if it folds, I walk away and teach somewhere else, or I walk if I get fed up. The health of the school financially affects me but not to the same extent it would if I had capital invested.

Now, to the other area of my life, farming is different. I have capital invested, notes due and property at risk in case of failure. As an employee, I may lose my job, but not my house or land directly. As a businessman, I work seven days per week, making absolute decisions, which do not undergo scrutiny or review yet can make me or ruin me.

((There are obvious advantages to being your own boss, if you're willing to accept the risks. But most people aren't willing to accept even so much risk as to disagree with their boss.))

DAVID PALTER

I would rather discover more esoteric information (which you perhaps do not even have) about such things as what techniques are used in handling the silver to protect against tarnish? I know for a fact that silver tarnishes rapidly in our modern corrosive atmosphere, and yet you obviously would not want to sell a tarnished product (nor would you want to keep polishing it prior to sale).

((One of the advantages of my position is that it is the clearinghouse through which engineering, finance, production, marketing, and everyone else passes information. My official title is V-P of Materials and Communications, the latter probably because I issue more memos than the entire other staff. So there is little about the company that is not known within my department. The answer is, you cannot do anything to avoid tarnish. Tarnish is oxidation, and you can retard it, but you can't stop it. We bag all of our items prior to boxing, and this slows the process, but we reduced the thickness of the bags a few years back, and now the pinholes in the bags result in brown spots on the

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product. You can buy commercially paper strips which claim to retard tarnish if you pack them with the item. We have found that they make no appreciable difference. Frequently we open and repolish slow moving merchandise. But you have to remember that over 50% of all silverplated holloware bought in the US is opened, repacked, and never used. Quality becomes less of an issue when most of your product is going to end up in someone's attic. If you own silver, keep it away from hot air vents, wrap it tightly when not in use, keep dry, and polish it only when you want to. If it turns really black, try soaking it in a mixture of Tide and water overnight, then polish it. The Japanese claim they've come up with something that retards tarnish for three years, but no one's sure if it works yet.)))

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

I confess being one of the few fans who like to read about management, mainly because I enjoy reading about corporate cultures. (In fact, we reprinted the Rensalaer Polytechnic study you quote.) I think what the Japanese can teach us is that the most effective management is the kind that leaves the workers alone as much as possible. I once talked to a woman who ran an advertising agency in Georgia, who explained that she spent eighty hours a week supervising her employees. Why couldn't she hire people who could work by themselves? "Well," she said. "Then I wouldn't have anything to do!" That seems the worst possible style of management I know.

Have you noticed how management consultants are using increasingly bizarre methods to describe organizational behavior? I read one study where corporations were compared to various types of psychotics -- the paranoid style of management, the schizophrenic style of management, etc. Another one compared corporations to various sports teams, baseball, hockey, etc. I even heard a "New Age" management consultant claim that she could use acupuncture to heal the psychic wounds of a corporate "body". Do you think this is an increasing trend? Or are these people hucksters trying to stake their own claim to an ever expanding market?

((My favorite management consultant story is the young man I knew while still in college, taking many business course. When asked what field he planned to go into upon leaving college, he said he planned to go straight into consulting work, without ever working a real job. On the other hand, my boss feels that anyone who goes into management consulting must have been a failure at "real" management, and therefore his or her opinion cannot possibly be worth considering. If they have an MBA, it's even worse. I've read the "paranoid" style article. I think some people just look for a gimmick that will catch on and let them write a bestseller.)))

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SUE ANDERSON

Several of your case histories seem to involve changing the terms in midstream -- after getting involved in a web of responsibilities, person suddenly or gradually decides the web is too much and wants out. There's a whole spectrum of situations here -- how much is too much? The "can't be honest with her family if she's false to herself" business is glib, unconvincing, even reprehensible, but it ties in with the next question, of Karen spending so much time at work that her marriage was strained beyond the breaking point. It sounds like Karen let the change sneak up on her without ever facing it; the woman in the former case decided in advance what she was going to do, and so seems cold-blooded to us. But maybe she knew by that time that her husband was a hopeless twit? Maybe he'd been "quitting smoking" for ten years...and he'd been working on the first paragraph of a fantasy trilogy for five...couldn't decide whether to make the main character an elf or a pixie, and without that there wasn't any use going further.

Tell you one thing: There are a lot of people in this country who are now suffering from having let someone else carry them -- if the "responsible" party walks out, or dies -- or for that matter, if the Republicans cut disability payments -- the buckpasser is left with no way to cope. Call me paranoid, but no way would I willingly put myself in that state of dependency. I'm just glad I was never brain-washed into "woman's place is in the home" belief.

JACKIE CAUSGROVE

As a divorced woman who walked out on my husband and three teenaged kids nine years ago, some of your comments about responsibility stung, more than a bit. But it HAS been nine years, and the lives of those concerned seem to show little lasting effect from that upset. They appear little different than would be expected had I stuck to a deteriorating situation and had the complete mental breakdown I was headed for, rather than the few rocky periods I experienced. In some ways, better than if I had stayed.

The national myth was, for women in particular, that Home-n-Family came first. For men it seemed to be slightly different -- Financial Security for Home-n-Family. It was OK, in fact noble, to work 50-70 hour work weeks, scarcely ever seeing wife or kids, as long as the family finances were strong. Even if you died on the job, as long as your loved ones were left financially secure, you were a hero. Women were being strangled emotionally and stunted intellectually, children were being reared in an ipso facto single parent environment, men were denied the very joys of family life they had been taught that the

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American Way was about. It was more than a bit mad, and slowly the myth began to change.

What's referred to as the "Me Generation" wrought the greatest alteration in the accepted view of life/family/career. While you seem to be "tsking" at your acquaintance who cut loose from a marriage that was making him unhappy, I think he was behaving a lot more responsibly than you seem to give him credit for, and much more than a huge percentage of American men who do leave their families without any support whatsoever. His ex-wife was given ownership of their house, property and cash, and he provided child support. (I'm unsure just why you used the term "handicapped" when you mentioned the four children. Would you have used the same words if she had been widowed?) The fact that she had no friends outside the social circle of his friends seems to indicate a somewhat limited personality, which might well have contributed to the strained marriage. It seems odd for a woman to have no friends of her own.

Sadly, I've met a few women like that, who are all but destroyed emotionally when their husbands are removed from their lives, either by death or divorce. Some manage to rebuild their lives, but many -- too many -- spend what years they have left bemoaning the Fates, being objects of sympathy. Relatively few men seem to show the same reaction under similar situations.

There are no easy answers to the questions regarding responsibility -- where one's greatest duty lies, at which times does one obligation supercede another, or by what basis one chooses. Those are decisions to be reached by means of individual consciences, and often those decisions won't agree with the way you or yet others would've gone. Society is interaction, No Man is an Island, and all that sort of stuff, yet we also are not mute pawns in someone else's game, to be shoved around as if we have no volition of our own. A balance is struck between each of us and our environment -- which is affected not only by where we are, but where we have come from. Sometimes we'll make mistakes, and I think how we handle those errors reveals the most about us as people.

((I wasn't trying to point fingers at people who divorce one another. I really can't decide where the responsibility lies in these situations at all. And most couples who divorce probably should; staying together doesn't do the kids any good. I wasn't expressing disapproval of his leaving his family, just confusion. And I do feel sympathy for his ex-wife, who is handicapped in the sense that she has to find a way to manage four young children on her own, and cannot look for the new husband she wants without knowing that any prospective beau will have to come to terms with her situation.)))

AL SIROIS

I watched ABC-TV's news show 20/20 last Thursday night. One of the segments had originally been intended as a study of the plight of the farmers in that region; but during the investigation a more sinister story was brought out. Certain "religious" groups out in the Midwest are seizing upon the despair and frustration of the dispossessed and disenfranchised farmers. The region's problems, the "preachers" say, may be laid solely at the doors of Jewish bankers. "Your Zionist Jew," one of the farmers said on camera, "is a creature of pure evil." It may be some sort of tribute to human beings to say that they can swallow almost any kind of bizarre shit without chewing on it.

The most worrisome thing about this racist trash is that it is promulgated by "fundamentalist" groups which seem to be fronts for heavily armed groups of extremists. The growth in popularity of these sick groups parallels that of the Nazi Party in pre-WWII Germany. Ominous.

All this strikes deeply into what you have to say about responsibility to the self and to the community. In the current issue of THE WHOLE EARTH REVIEW are several relevant quotes. From poet Anne Herbert: "What do we want of our lives? Nervously, quickly, we decide and try to force the Earth to give it to us. She waits eons through our tiny, tinny prayers and galumphing machines, waits for us to listen to her great voice of what we're really here for." The problem is, those of us who are straining our ears to hear frequently find ourselves deafened by loudmouths.

From a LoC to WER from reader Les Brunswick, referring to an earlier Herbert article: "Anne Herbert's wonderful article mentions how peace and environmental activists tend to be panic-driven. I think part of what is going on here is a fleeing from despair. All our efforts really could fail, and this could mean the end of the human species, or even of all life on our planet. If you let that really sink in, you feel an immense despair. I think that many activists are afraid that, if they ever let themselves fully enter that despair, they would permanently stop all their efforts to save the world, and simply stay depressed forever. So they stay frantically busy to avoid fully feeling the despair. (A similar pattern of fleeing from despair is a main cause of our society's militarism and attempt to conquer nature.)

"But actually if you let yourself enter such despair and feel fully all that is there, you eventually come out the other side. The result is renewed dedication, but balanced by wisdom and realistic hope. There is also a calm in which you can realistically evaluate situations and choose the best course, rather than frantically grab at the first solution that presents itself.

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"And let me add that, in facing and working through such despair, it is of the greatest help to have a larger philosophical or religious perspective that allows you to accept the possibility of loss."

Now that's a letter I wish I had written. I think that Brunswick has said some important things here, and said them well. Could a subliminal feeling of encroaching doom, engendering despair within an individual, elicit a more conscious feeling of "screw it, nothing matters, I'm gonna go out and rape some chick," or "I'm gonna go out and mug Whitey," or "I'm gonna go burn some niggers"? By committing such violent acts, the individual avoids the void, as it were. Few people can face existential dilemmas anyway...most people aren't equipped with the smarts to handle heavy angst. It's too confusing, it makes no sense, it's not "real".

So, the farmers who have swallowed the bull about the Jews have voluntarily surrendered their ability to discern truth to the hate-mongers. These deluded farmers are refusing to accept responsibility for their loss. Ironically, it is hard to blame them in a way. Sure it isn't fair that they should lose their farms...but life isn't fair, despite what we are taught in school. It is true that the farmers have sold their birthrights for the words of fools, which makes THEM fools. Yet more blame can be placed on the vicious evil scumbags who seek to increase their own power and sense of worth by spreading lies and hate than on the soft-headed farmers who are, after all, blindly seeking to strike out at the encircling tentacles of an out-of-whack economy powered by the greed of the few.

If only one could make the farmers understand...You conclude your editorial by saying that the individual must not only accept responsibility in a community situation, but also must accept it for his/her own actions. "And thoughts," I would add. The thing is, I think it's lots easier to accept responsibility for one's self rather than for (or to) one's community. Most of the responsibility an individual accepts is on the personal level. And why? Because the community often acts as though its collective head were up its collective rear. Do I wish to accept responsibility -- culpability -- for what is happening in Central America? Or for what happened in Viet Nam? Or in Grenada? I do not.

((((And there is also the problem of becoming overwhelmed with a feeling of responsibility for things we cannot control. Like you, I don't feel a personal culpability for many of the policies of my government, any more than I feel responsible for every terrorist attack in the world. But it's harder to shed responsibility when someone you know is having problems, ones that you cannot help with, and there is this constant feeling that you should do something to help. Even if you

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have the opportunity, you don't have the right to intervene, and you might well make things worse. Someone I work with is probably quite close to a complete nervous collapse, partly because of recent changes in her job, mostly because she is terrified of the world in general. But there's nothing I can do about it. Any attempt to talk about her situation makes her yet closer to hysteria.)))

MISCELLANEOUS

DAVE D'AMMASSA

I have a couple of beefs about your SOURCES list. I think the film version of REINCARNATION OF PETER PROUD was called THE RESURRECTION OF PETER PROUD...I AM LEGEND was filmed twice. The first time was THE LAST MAN ON EARTH and starred Vincent Price. A later version starring Charlton Heston was called THE OMEGA MAN. I can find no film entitled I AM LEGEND. THE SHRINKING MAN was filmed as THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN. THE PROPHECY was merely PROPHECY on film. To get real picky, the Stevenson novelet was actually titled THE STRANGE CASE OF DOCTOR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE. A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT also inspired a Disney flop called UNIDENTIFIED FLYING ODDBALL, later released under a different title, which eludes me.

((Picky, picky. And REINCARNATION OF PP was filmed as REINCARNATION OF PP. So there.)))

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

I liked your movie list, but THE NIGHT STALKER isn't the only case of an SF/Fantasy movie being made from an unpublished novel. TIME AFTER TIME was taken from a novel by Karl Alexander which was published after the film came out as a novelization. Earl Mac Rauch reportedly turned out over fifty Buckaroo Banzai stories, which were condensed into the film -- which may be one reason why THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI is so confusing. I also believe ME TWO by Ed Davis, which was filmed as ALL OF ME, was an unpublished novel. (Wasn't Jeff Rice's book eventually published?)

((Yes, by Pocket Books, along with its sequel, NIGHT STRANGLER.)))

DAVID PALTER

The cover is particularly wonderful; I often feel that Brad Foster is too good for fandom, we don't really deserve him. He is a treasure.

((Fan art, even great fan art, by its nature gets less credit than it deserves.)))

MURRAY MOORE

Arranging the letter column by subject was unusual in my experience. But two of the three fanzines I've locced this year are arranged by subject. Trend or coincidence?

I don't go as far as you do to prepare lists of what could or should be done today/ this week but I definitely have a reading and television watching routine...My wife when exasperated with my reading accuses me of being a readaholic or a bookaholic. I find myself depressed at the end of a weekend if I review the week-end and conclude that I didn't read a sufficient amount, or see a good movie.

((When you get two or three pacakges of books per day to review, in addition to what you buy, and add that to publishing a fanzine, collecting and viewing movies, collecting and listening to records, and a variety of other hobbies, you really start to feel overwhelmed. For the first time in my life, I cannot keep up to everything, and I'm trying to write fiction at the same time.)))

D. GARY GRADY

I can't believe you don't see films in theatres. In many cases you're missing great gobs of the film if you watch on TV. I'm not talking about editing for television (which is bad enough); a large part of the FRAME is missing. It isn't unusual to see only about half the frame of a scope film on tv. Even the narrower 1.85:1 ratio films are not shown in their correct aspect ratio (tv is 1.33:1) which means you see more at the top and bottom than you would have in the theatre, stuff that was not part of the cinematographer's composition. Watching films like that is like looking at paintings only in books. You miss a lot.

An insidious effect of television is that people now sit four miles from the screen when they do manage to get to a theatre. They don't want to actually have to move the eyeball to scan the picture; they're looking for a screen that takes in the same angle as their home television sitting across the room. When you do force people to sit close to the screen, they remark on how wondrous is the experience. I think this is the secret of the popularity of IMAX; granted that the resolution is much greater than normal 35mm, the main impact comes from not having any seats far from the screen.

What made me get religion about this was seeing some STAR TREK episodes on a large screen at a convention. By golly, even old STAR TREK looked good given a decent image size.

I'm not surprised that Harry Warner neglected to report those crimes he mentioned. I have gone out of my way to report crimes, but the criminal justice system seems useless against anything of less than monstrous order, other than traffic violations. I had my life threatened by a trio of thugs when I worked for a service station back in high school. I had a maniac throw a beer bottle at my car just a couple of years ago. In both cases I reported the crime, complete with license numbers and descriptions of the culprits, and in both nothing was done not because of the police (who were helpful and efficient) but because the magistrates refused to bring charges since they knew from experience it would be a waste of time. Even more serious crimes draw wrist slaps. A friend of mine was brutally beaten by a couple of drug-crazed conies who were finally sent up the river (on drug charges, not assault). I know a woman whose son, a habitual criminal, threatened her with a

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a pistol. This threatened matricide drew a suspended sentence. I'm sorry if this sounds like the usual wailings one hears from the far night, but it's as true as it is disturbing.

I'll note that it is quite possible to get justice if you can afford a lawyer. It is evidently not uncommon for a reasonably well off victim to hire a criminal attorney to help the DA's office prepare a case. This is obviously a sad reflection of our legal system's service to the poor in criminal as well as civil law.

Let me be the 650th person to fall over in astonishment at a statement we thought we would never see from your typewriter: "I have read neither." MYTHOLOGIES]8, page 44: a page that will live in history.

((My bleeding heart liberal credentials are as good as anybody's, but while I say that stricter enforcement of laws and reform of the judicial system to bring quick justice to wrongdoers is not THE solution, that doesn't mean I don't believe it to be a necessary part of the solution. My quarrel with the right is that they frequently seem more interested in finding new, trivial, crimes to clog the courts, like draft card burning, wearing the US flag on the seat of your pants, smoking pot, advocating communism, being inoffensively gay, or any of several other recent crusades.)))

DON AYRES

May I thank your producer, Sheila, for her part in arranging for us to have this delightful field in which to frolic? I'd also like to encourage her to put in her 2¢ at least once in a while so that we remember that she's there too.

It is interesting to note that a particular film caused you to make the jump and buy a VCR, since that was the same thing that happened to me. In my case, the movie was THE COMANCHEROS, a John Wayne vehicle that retains more power than I had initially thought it capable of when I bought the machine. It's very interesting to study his later films, because the simpleminded stereotype is just flat wrong. Wayne treated prostitutes and Indians as individuals long before it was popular to do so.

((It is unlikely that MYTHOLOGIES would exist without Sheila. The mimeograph, like most machines, refuses to cooperate with me. It would, however, be impossible for us to co-edit things like this; we share a healthy diversity of opinion on many of the issues discussed here.

TRUE GRIT is on my list of films to get on tape as soon as I can. I'm up to close to 500 films on tape -- all legally, I might add. And I've watched all except for about a dozen saved for when I have time. Maybe I could start reviewing movies and get sent review copies of them as well.)))

SUE ANDERSON

At some point you say "Every one of my friends has at least one belief that I find offensive." That's a strong word to use. If you mean it, tell me what's mine so I can avoid hammering it in at RSFA meetings.

((I meant that to read, "every one of my friends probably has at least one opinion I would find disturbing". The point I was trying to make is that friends can dis-

agree, even dramatically, without it affecting their friendship.)))

ROBERT WHITAKER SIRIGNANO

TOPPER TAKES A TRIP was also a book and film. TOOPER RETURNS was filmed after Thorne Smith died and there was no book of it. Jack Finney's first five novels were all made into movies. "The Cosmic Frame" by Paul Fairman became INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN. It was also remade twice, once as INVASION OF THE EYE CREATURES.

THE BRAIN EATERS was the "title" of the Heinlein PUPPET MASTERS, except it wasn't. It was called plagiarism and Heinlein won the lawsuit. The film is pretty dull. THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS from Bradbury's THE FOGHORN. SHE DEVIL from Stanley Weinbaum's "The Adaptive Ultimate" which I've seen twice. It's a very bad film adaptation of a good story.

TARGET EARTH from Paul Fairman's "Deadly City". THE TWONKY, an Arch Oboler film, taken from Henry Kuttner's short story of the same name.

That's it for letters this time round. Time for a bit of late editorial at the back of the zine.

I am not a fan of the "Why this issue is late" essay, so this is going to be brief. Plans for MYTHOLOGIES have been revamped. I have been writing fiction again, with one minor sale, and plan to do some more. This is going to cut into my time for MYTHOLOGIES. I still expect to get an issue out in about six months, but I can't promise it will be on time, so don't get impatient if it doesn't show up when you expect it. But it is not dead, isn't likely to be dead. It's just a bit older and slower than it would like to be. Like its editor.

We Also Heard From: a lot of nice people and some interesting letters as well. A-mong those we could not include this time round were Brian Earl Brown, Patrick McGuire, Marty Cantor, Leslie Tarek, Daniel Farr, Ben Indick, Joel Rosenberg, Dave Szurek, Taral, Edd Vick, and others. Keep those cards and letters coming.

Particular thanks go to those people who have contributed in some significant fashion to the production of this issue, chief of which of course is Sheila.

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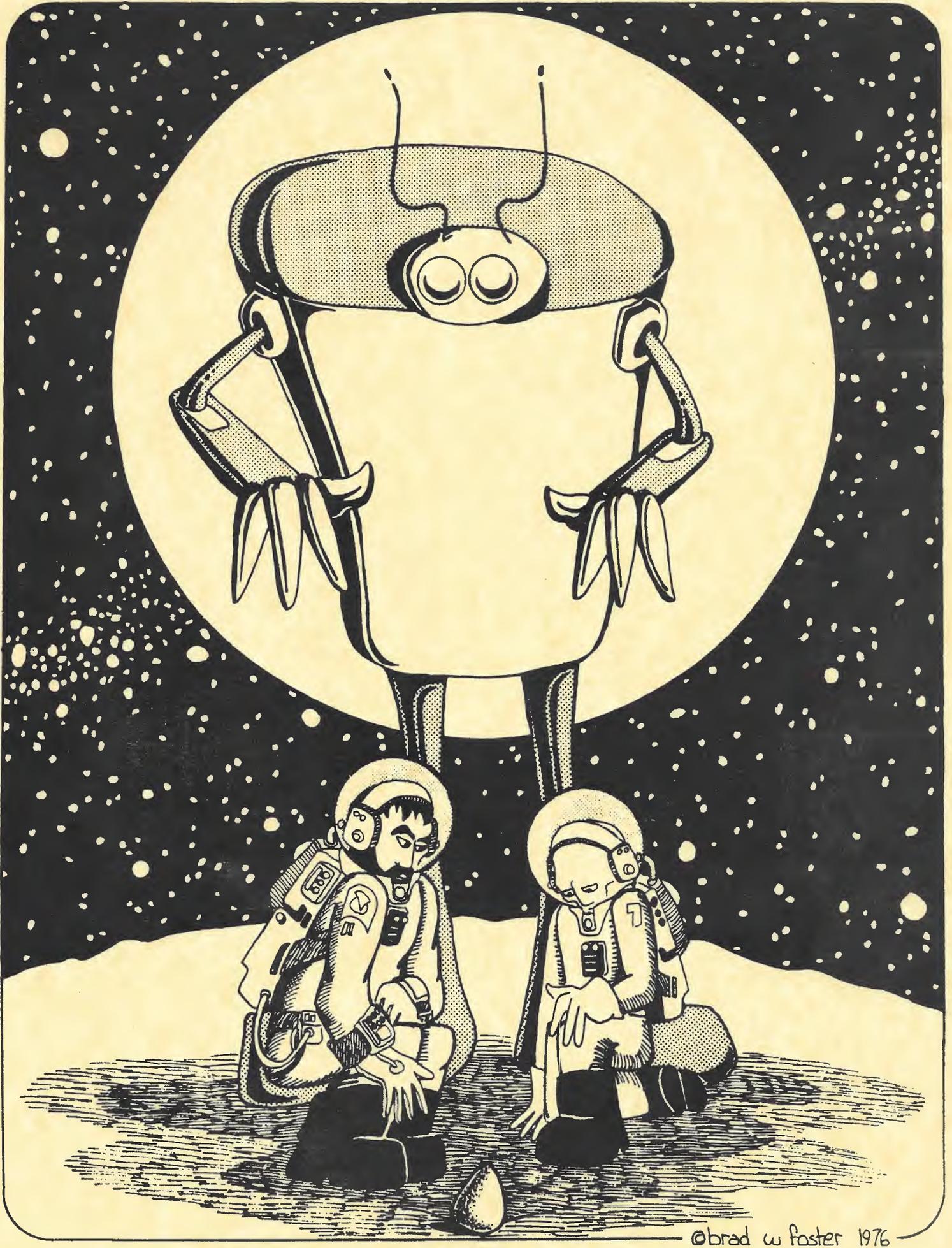
Jean Weber (said she was giving me her address but left it out so care of Eric Lindsay)

Judith Weiss, 2234 Fitzwater, Philadelphia, PA 19146

Terry Whittier, 2265 McLaughlin Avenue #3, San Jose, CA 95122

Martin Morse Wooster, PO Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907

That's all folks.



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