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## MYTHOLOGIES

#1

Don D'Amassa  
19 Angell Drive  
East Providence  
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October 1974

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

--Leonard Cohen

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

MYTHOLOGIES will be published as often as I can spare time and money. It may be had for 10c or two ten-cent stamps. Contributions will be considered but are not actively solicited.

In deference to a remark made at Discon by Jodie Offutt, print run is 75, more or less.

There WILL be a letter column next issue.

Cover this issue is by:

DAVID MACAULAY

## MYTH

While I was a sophomore at Michigan State University, I occasionally used a three day weekend to drive the 850 miles home to Rhode Island. There I would drop off the hundred or so books I had accumulated since the last trip, have a square meal or two, and start back. I invariably made this trip alone, primarily because I always filled every available cubic inch of car space.

I prefer to make long driving trips at night. There is less traffic, it's cooler during the summer months, service in gas stations and restaurants is usually much quicker, and I generally feel more relaxed while driving. The particular trip I have in mind was no exception. I crossed the Peace Bridge into Canada, made good time across to Port Huron, and re-entered the US. The sun came up just as I was reaching Flint, Michigan, and it suddenly occurred to me to be hungry. I kept an eye peeled and, sure enough, discovered a small restaurant just opening for the day.

Everyone has eaten in this place at one time or another. Deep and narrow, it had a counter with swivel seats down the left wall, a single row of brown, padded booths along the right. There was a rest room at the rear, the windows were cloaked with Venetian blinds. Behind the counter, cans of Chef Boy-Ar-Dee and Campbell's Soups stood in neat little pyramids. There was a pot of hot coffee, a cakestand full of reasonably fresh donuts, and a handwritten price list. Everything needed dusting.



Behind the counter stood a prime candidate for the title of Mother America. Short and somewhat heavy, though not obese, she had drab brown hair caught in a net. Her face was almost perfectly circular, with good complexion and a charming smile. The moment I entered, there was no question but that I was welcome; she poured coffee as she handed me the menu. I was a bit fuzzy after the long hours of driving and wasn't feeling capable of much small talk, but the fact that I wasn't holding up my end of the conversation didn't seem to bother her.

As I drank the coffee and pondered the menu, I found that I just wasn't in the mood for breakfast. As far as I was concerned, it was still late at night; if the sun wanted to come up at such a late hour, why should I be concerned? I considered a bit, then ventured to interrupt the monologue that had been going on nearby.

"I know this is going to sound strange, but do you think I could have a can of beef ravioli?"

She paused a moment, mouth still open, her thoughts still revolving around the new bridge construction she had been describing. "Sure, if that's what you want."

"Thank you," I replied, handing back the menu. "Have to keep up with the traditions of my Italian blood." An inane remark, I admit, but remember that I'd been up all night.

"Oh," she said, looking distressed. "Are you Italian?"

"Fraid so," I confessed, looking properly sheepish. "Half, anyway."

Her smile slowly slipped askew as her chin and nose rose about three inches. "We don't serve wops in this place!", she blurted out, then turned on her heel and stormed off.


The preceding is meant to introduce a subject that bothers me rather than amuses me, so all of you readers looking for funny fannish stories can skip further along to the Fable section of this issue. With depressing regularity, I meet people whom I come to like and respect, only to discover sooner or later that they denigrate entire classes of people for one reason or another. Some don't like Blacks, some don't like Jews, some don't like women, and...obviously... some don't like Italians.

Most people have conflicts with their parents, and I'm among the majority. For many years my father has sounded like a slightly more couth version of Archie Bunker, opposed to civil rights agitation, student rights, welfare, and the rest. Throughout my adolescence we argued. On one occasion I raised the possibility that I might some day marry a Black. I was

told that I had an obligation to my family not to do such a thing. The battle that followed almost resulted in the premature termination of my college career. As the years have passed, he has either liberalized his views or, more likely, learned to temper them in my presence. About Blacks, anyway. Now he has a new target. The remarks are usually phrased to sound like compliments: "You've got to hand it to the Jews; they're shrewd businessmen." "The Jews really know the advantage of a good education." "You've got to hand it to the Jews; they really stick together." "You can't every outsmart the Jew; he's too clever." The notion of superiority/inferiority only appears to be reversed. His point remains the same -- they're different.

Over the years, my father and I have come to an accommodation of sorts; we avoid controversial subjects, primarily by keeping our visits infrequent. I try to keep in mind that he was the first generation son of immigrant forebears, that Italians were at the bottom of the social order in Esmond, Rhode Island, when he was a boy, and that many of his prejudices are imprinted by his environment. But as time goes by and my exposure to people increases, I find my tolerance level for bigotry is declining, not only for my parents, but for everyone I know. I suppose I am becoming bigoted about bigots. And at risk of being accused of paranoia, I am finding more and more remarks to be loaded, either sexually, racially, or along some other arbitrary, irrational line. *this father*

My mother is a very pleasant, rather quiet person, reasonably tolerant of other people's opinions. Years ago, she and I visited the Montreal World's Fair. The first day we were there, we saw a bewildering display of casts, slings, wheel chairs, crutches, and bandages. It was so prevalent, I commented upon it, suggesting that perhaps a convalescent hospital had organized a field trip.

"No," replied my mother. "You find lots of sickly people in Canada. It's because Canadians are allowed to marry their cousins." 

What does one say?

I no longer live with my parents, but I still find myself confronted with this kind of behavior. I work for Sheridan Silver, a division of Lenox China, situated in Taunton, Massachusetts. I'm the production control manager which, simply stated, means that I tell the factory when to produce how much of what. There is a very nice woman named Mary who works for me. She has two sons, both grown and moved out.



She is a pleasant, generous person, conscientious about her job, willing to go out of her way to do a favor for even her casual acquaintances. Her younger son is an epileptic, and he frequently suffered from the ignorance of people about the nature of his disease when he was younger.

A couple of weeks ago, Mary seemed very preoccupied. After several hours, she told me that her son was getting very serious about the girl he was currently dating. Now, I know that Mary has always been very protective about her sons, but the older boy is nearly thirty, and her concern did seem a bit excessive. Then she let it slip.

"She seems to be a very nice girl. She's intelligent, attractive, well educated, and her family is quite well off. But she's still Jewish."

I was so startled, I must have stood speechless for at least a couple of minutes. The remark was so totally out of character with the picture of her that I held in my mind, I experienced a momentary sense of unreality. It was as if I had physically stepped into the pages of Laura Hobson's GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT. The relationship between the two of us has not been the same since.

Equally disturbing is an incident involving one of our factory supervisors. Vera is one of the few genuinely kind people I've ever met. But the other day she remarked: "You know, I've had several colored people work for me, and they really try to make piecework. It's not that they're lazy or anything, they just can't move fast enough to do well on the job. It's something physical."

Neither is fandom exempt. At Nycon III I overheard one fan express disgust that a Black might well win a Hugo that year. A recent letter in Amazing indicated that three Indians were denied admission to a recent midwestern convention. There have been other incidents of this kind, some involving well known fans.

I could go on relating incidents like the above for many pages; so could anyone reading this, I'm sure. But there is one more I do want to relate, because I think it is particularly germane.

Across the street from us live a couple we have gotten to know fairly well. Janet is 28 and comes from a very traditional family. Mustapha is of Turkish descent, via South America. He teaches economics at a local college, is well off financially, well liked in the neighborhood. Shortly after they moved in, they began receiving hate letters.

Mustapha is dark complected, so they had both expected some raised eyebrows. But the letters, all in the same handwriting, followed the general line: "How can a nice girl like you live with a dirty n-----?" The culprit was a 17 year old boy, who could not be prosecuted because of his age. His family couldn't be bothered to do anything about his activities, so our neighbors have been waiting for the boy to turn 18. All this is background.

Now, several weeks ago, there was an unfortunate incident in our neighborhood. A fraction of a mile from our home is a Portugese-American Club, in which there is a bar. A man named Medeiros, who lives only a few houses away from me, became embroiled in an argument with another man. Medeiros came home shortly before 2:00 A.M., but before he could go to bed, someone drove into his driveway and began honking. Medeiros stepped outside to investigate and was promptly run down, dying almost instantly.

A day or two later, Janet and Sheila were discussing the incident when Janet attributed it to the natural emotionalism of the Portugese people. If anyone in the world should be sensitive to racial slurs, it should be her. If, with her experience, she cannot recognize the unfairness of stereotyping people because of racial or other arbitrary divisions, what hope is there of ever removing or even substantially reducing racist attitudes in the country as a whole?

What is it then that makes friendly, sociable, unselfish people so irrational in this one area of interpersonal relations, so unfair in their characterization of other people? Is it that we are so basically insecure about our own worth that we have to prop up failing egos by ascribing failings to others? Perhaps it is just xenophobia, a fear of those who don't think of things in quite the same way.

Whatever its cause, I suspect this may well be THE ultimate question facing humanity. This may well be the root of all wars, with economic, political, and philosophical matters simply being a justification for the rational part of man's mind. If we are ever to build a lasting human civilization, it is unlikely to be before we deal with this basic flaw in human nature.

Until then, those who are botassed by such things are going to have to accept the dichotomy in the personalities of our friends and relatives. But accepting the existence of these attitudes doesn't mean we have to accept their expression. It's time, past time, that we started responding to softcore prejudice. How many of us have the courage to tell a friend that he's a bigot when he tells us he "Jewed a price down", or that women don't have analytical minds, or that Blacks want something for nothing? Very few, I'm afraid.



## BIRCHERS

by Lee Carson

When I see Birchers bending to the right  
Across the lines of straighter, saner men,  
I wonder if some thought's been stinging them.  
But thinking doesn't penetrate or sway.  
Stormer and Welch do that! You may have heard them  
Loaded with fiery quotes a wintry eve  
Upon reading such. They cluck among themselves  
As their ire rises, and turn many colors  
As their stir cracks and crazes their reason.  
The foe's heat makes them shed these broken shells,  
Exposing inner fires and scattering poison shards--  
Myriad conspirators to be unmasked;  
You'd think the government had fallen.  
They are staggered by the load of proof,  
But they seem not to break; though once they are dragged  
So low for long, they never right themselves.  
...I was once a stinger of Birchers.  
And so I dream of going back to be.  
It's when I'm weary of recriminations,  
And life becomes a darkling wood  
Where your soul burns and tickles with the lies  
Whipped against it, and your psyche is weeping  
From slander's having lashed across it open.  
I'd like to get away from Earth awhile  
Show the Birchers the impartial Reality that is,  
Let them learn and finally understand  
And then come back to it and begin over.  
May no McCarthy wilfully misunderstand  
And black my reputation and snatch me away,  
Not to return. Earth's the right place for Truth;  
I don't know where it's likely to go better.  
I'd like to go by snaring in talk a Bircher  
Spiralling an abstruse discussion ever upwards  
Toward Truth, until he could stand no more.  
That would be good both going and coming back.  
One could do worse than be a stinger of Birchers.

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## FABLE

### Moving at a Nail's Pace, or, Undertired in Oklahoma

Flat tires are, alas, an inescapable fact of life, somewhat akin to childhood diseases and crooked politicians. The trick to managing a successful recovery from a flat tire is to always maintain a tight rein on your temper, and keep your sense of humor freshly polished and ready to hand. But Lawton, Oklahoma, is an entirely different kettle of dust.

When the army, in its wisdom, determined that I could be of most use to them as a public relations clerk at Fort Sill, I really couldn't quarrel with them. There were, after all, worse places. So Sheila and I went amenably, if not happily, about the task of moving ourselves and a small portion of our belongings from Rhode Island to the city of Lawton, which adjoins Fort Sill.

In Lawton, flat tires are epidemic. I trace this phenomenon to the annoying local habit of throwing nails, broken glass, and other sharp objects of uncertain parentage into the street. As a result of this manifestation of civic pride, our eighteen month stint in the land of the Okies dealt us 37 separate and therefore distinct flat tires.

I am not easily aroused to ire, and accepted the first dozen or so philosophically. It provided me with much practice and I was soon able to completely change a tire in less than six minutes, without dirtying my hands. But after the second dozen, my temper began to fray. I experienced flats at home, at work, and in between. On four separate occasions, passersby stopped to ask the inevitable question:

"Why don't you turn it over? It's only flat on the bottom."

But these weren't Lawtonians; they were outsiders like me. I never heard a Lawtonian make a recognizable joke, or even attempt one. If they had a sense of humor at all, it was dry to the point of dessication.

For example, one rainy morning I drove into a gas station with my latest flat tire and rolled it over to the attendant. He mulled a bit, looking it over, sizing up the job.

"Didn't I fix a flat for you just the other day?" he asked.

"That's right, and one last week, and two the week before."

"Don't seem to be your lucky week."

"Doesn't seem to be my lucky year."

No reaction, but then it wasn't a particularly funny line. Undaunted -- or at worst, minimally daunted -- I essayed further.

"Seems as though I get flats lately without even having to drive anywhere."

He scratched his chin, ignoring me.

"Maybe I've got mice," I suggested amiably.

The attendant ruminated a bit, took out his handkerchief, and wiped his hands. "Nope, can't be mice." I shrugged, leaned back against the wall as he bent to examine the tire. After a moment, he looked back up at me. "Y'see, if it'd been mice, you could see the toothmarks on the outside here somewhere, because they'd've had to've chewed clear through the tire to get at the tube."

I stared piercingly, suspecting that he had turned my own joke around and handed it back, but he appeared to be totally without guile. I bought myself a Coke from the vending machine and looked up at the sky while he began disassembling my tire.

"Doesn't it ever stop raining around here?" I asked, to keep the conversation going.

"Oh, it'll stop pretty soon, I reckon," he volunteered.

"Yeah," I answered, recalling that I hadn't seen the sun in over a week. Funny, I always had thought of Oklahoma skies as being cloudless and the weather interminably dry. "The forecast last night was rain through late July, turning to partly cloudy in August, clearing up in September."

I expected at the very least a polite chuckle, or maybe a noncommittal grunt. I got: "Oh, I don't expect as how it'll rain for that long. Never has before."

I was silent, stunned, disbelieving.

A month passed, and so did the rain. And one evening, as the thermometer was edging past 100 for the 19th day that month, I found I had a craving for ice cream. "Wife," said I, "I have a craving for ice cream."

"Congratulations," replied Sheila, looking up from her magazine. "You're pregnant."

Polite chuckle.

Without much effort I persuaded Sheila to bundle David into



the car and shortly afterward we were nerrily weaving through traffic toward the local ice cream parlor. Five minutes later I was changing a flat. Sobered, but still determined, I pulled back into traffic. We passed a building with all of its windows smashed in.

"Vandals," said Sheila.

"No," quoth I. "Visigoths."

In due course we arrived at the ice cream parlor, at which lines of people overflowed into the parking lot. Resignedly we took our place in line. At one point I leaned down with my nose almost touching Sheila's elbow: "What's a joint like you doing around a nice girl like this?" I intoned solemnly. All around us, people moved away. This allowed us to be served considerably sooner than I had expected, and we were soon carrying our confectionary delights back to the car. There, alas, our little blue Fiat displayed a decided list to starboard. Naturally we were miles away from the nearest service station, and very few Fiats carry a second spare.

For ten cents and a telephone call, I was able to coerce a friend into picking up the tire and me and taking us to a gas station. A quick patch job -- there were already five patches on this single tube -- and back to the Fiat. There I changed the tire and took David and Sheila home. But I still had no spare. Since my regular station was closed, I had little choice but to return to the station I had just left.

The attendant gave me a look that implied I was punching holes in my tires intentionally, but I was able to prevail upon him to patch this tire also. Finished at last, I placed the tire in my trunk with a sigh, but when I closed the trunk, I could still hear the sigh. With an air of inevitability, my car heaved over to port as the left rear tire went flat.

I was at this point nearly hysterical. Over seven dollars in one night just for flat tires! Taking a firm grip on myself, I calmly removed the tire and rolled it into the station. "You're never going to believe this..." I accosted the attendant. Eventually I convinced him that I wasn't a flat tire fetishist and he went to work.

As he slowly disassembled the tire, I fought against the urge to laugh hysterically, buffet my head against the wall, or throw myself into the grease pit. I convinced myself that the odds now favored my never having another flat for at least ten thousand years.

"Mister," said the attendant, as he slapped the patch into place, "You've got the absolute worst luck I've ever seen."

I nodded. "I'm considering selling the car and buying a horse. The traffic's so bad, it wouldn't take any longer to get to work. I sure wouldn't have to worry about flat tires any more."

He regarded me thoughtfully for a moment. "No, I don't think that would help. Can't ride a horse inside the city limits any more."

At great cost, I managed to control my urge to throw him into the grease pit.

Worse was to come. As I neared three dozen flats, my inner tubes began to look like patchwork quilts and I knew they would soon be irreparable. I decided to order new tubes and new tires. Twelve inch wheels are very difficult to outfit, but there happened to be a Fiat dealer in Lawton, so I felt confident there would be no trouble.

"Well, Mr. D'Amassa, they'll take about twelve weeks to order, you see, because we have to send all the way to Italy for 'em."

We called every tire store and automotive dealer in the area, but could get no more acceptable date. Then Sheila had a stroke of brilliance and acquired for us some slightly off size but perfectly acceptable inner tubes from a fellow who sold boat trailers.

But the crowning blow was on the very last flat we had before we left Oklahoma forever. We had brand new tires, new tubes, with brand new patches on them already, and it was almost time for me to say goodbye to the army. I was still broke from having to replace the tires and tubes on a Spec Five's salary, and more than a bit miffed that I was still getting flats with astonishing regularity.

I left the car at the garage, telling the attendant that I was very interesting in knowing exactly what had caused the flat tire. I suspected my next door neighbor had been throwing nails over his fence again. When I returned from a nearby newstand, my tire was ready. As the attendant ran up the bill, I asked him if he had found the cause of the flat.

"Sure did," he replied, taking my money and counting out the change. He looked up and smiled, handing me some coins. "It had a hole in it."

And with that, he turned away. Right on.



## METEOROLOGIST'S SOLILOQUY

by George Fergus

From THE TEMPEST by William Quivershaft.

"To report, or not to report: that is the question:  
Weather: is't nobler in the mind to suffer  
The winds and snows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sky of cyclones,  
And by opposing end them? To inform: to forecast:  
Yet more; and by a word to say we end  
The earthquake and the thousand natural shocks  
That ground is heir to, 'tis a pacification  
Devoutly to be wished. To inform, to forecast;  
To forecast: perchance to predict: ay, there's the rub;  
For in the weather report what news may come,  
When we have shuffled around these weather maps,  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long analysis;  
For who would bear the (low pressure) centers and (cold) fronts of t  
time,

The oppressive fog, the thunderstorm's panoply,  
The pangs of cancelled picnic, the sun's delay,  
The inclemence of sleet and the spills  
That patient onrush of the tornado makes,  
When he himself might their quietus make  
With a silent weather bureau? Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat in hurried evacuation,  
But that the dread of something unannounced,  
The undiscovered meance from whose path  
No householder returns, frightens the will  
And makes us rather bear those ills we hear  
Than succumb to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of innocence  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of foreknowledge,  
And hurricanes of great force and moment (of inertia),  
With this report air currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of Norma. Hark thee now,  
The whirling Ophelia! Storm on the horizon,  
Be all my winds remember'd."

## Bob Hope Entertaining the Troops During WW III

by Paul DiFilippo

[The scene is an outdoor amphitheatre somewhere in Europe. There is a carrion smell in the air. The focal point of attention is a ramshackle stage. Enter Hope. He is carrying the traditional golf club, but is using it more like a cane. He is obviously ill.]

Hope (coughing): Hi, men!

[The troops don't respond. Most of them are doped to the gills.]

Hope: Well, I just want to tell you that we've got a great show lined up. With me are what's left of the New Seekers -- they didn't quite make it out of Washington in time -- Ann Margret and Raquel Welch -- together, they still make one helluva girl -- and the entire provisional government of the US. Actually, that last group isn't going to do any entertaining. They're just here because it's safer than back home. Let me tell you about that.

The radiation level is so high, that last week the Groundhog wouldn't even come out of his hole -- that is, he wouldn't have if there were any groundhogs left! You know what the big hit record is in the States now? "Gimme Shelter"!

[He waits for laughter; there is none. He continues.]

You've all heard the joke about the wife who got a mud pack treatment and was beautiful for 3 days -- then the mud fell off. Well, almost the same thing happened to my wife. She got a treatment, looked fine for 2 days, and then her hair fell out!

And how about the mutated plague that got loose when an HE bomb hit one of our CBW labs? The situation's so bad, that the hippies aren't even asking for spare change any more -- now it's spare organs for transplants! Hey, what weighs 150 pounds, has greenish skin, 6 legs, and no intestines? Three former 200 pound linebackers in the tertiary stage of the plague!

[Hope grows confused; he has apparently lost his place. He continues.]

And speaking of mutations, Bing Crosby was waiting in the maternity ward for his daughter to deliver when the nurse walks in and says: "It's a boy and a girl, Mr. Crosby."

"Great," says Bing, "twins."

"Ah, not exactly," the nurse replies.

Anyway, I'm sure you guys are sick of me, so I'll bring out the girls.



Ann and Raquel hobble out, leaning on each other. They look like the singer out of "Thunder and Roses". The band, which is only half complete, strikes up a snappy tune. Unfortunately, at this point, an enemy heat-seeking missile -- which has homed in on Miss Welch's still unblemished heroic bosom -- explodes, completely destroying the camp, to no one's dismay.

## BYPASSING TIME AND SPACE

WITH ISABELLA FIGHOLLER

by Beowulf Thornville

In 2024, Isabella Figholler journeyed to Mars for the specific purpose of meeting Madeline Rinkle, the noted parapsychologist who had localized the psi centers of the brain and found a means to stimulate them. The Martian Academy of Sciences, in honor of her achievement, had adopted a new terminology for extra-sensory functions which used variations of the Rinkle name.

After the formal reception, Isabella adjourned to a less structured party, at which the chief diversion was a game of craps using the dodecahedral Martian dice. The game went heavily against her, and, by midnight, she had singled out one unsavory looking individual whom she suspected of tampering. Finally, her suspicions confirmed, she grabbed the native by the collar and brought him into the presence of a local judge, who was empowered to try, convict, and sentence.

"So," the judge said, "you are charging this being with using telekinesis to increase his winnings, are you? The penalty, upon conviction, is death, you know. This is not a matter we Martians take lightly."

Taken aback, Isabella exclaimed, "What, death for merely rinkling the Martian Dice?"

During Isabella Figholler's stint as Seer-in-Residence for His Eminence Rayle of Mizar IV, she was saddled with the care of the young son of the ruler. Although blessed with an education befitting his position, the prince was very gullible and would frequently come running to Isabella for verification of one story or another. The last such occasion took place on a mild -Eighth-Month day.

"Izzie, Izzie," the naive heyr exclaimed, "look what I've found. This ad says that if I send them two boxtops, they'll mail me a map showing the location of the fabled Anchorite iron deposits. It says they're located in a vast crevice in the southern hemisphere. Why, I'd be famous and adored if I found them."

"Child, when will you ever learn?" she replied. "It's all a hoax. Haven't you ever heard of the myth of the free mail ore chasm?"

Paul DiFilippo

On that note, I bring to a close the first issue of MYTHOLOGIES. There will definitely be a second issue. Whether or not there is a third issue depends on the 75 people who receive the first two. With three or four exceptions, I have met or corresponded with everyone on the initial mailing list, and have come to value your opinions. To continue to receive MYTHOLOGIES, all you have to do is continue to express them.

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