



# MYTHOLOGIES



# MYTHOLOGIES

#6

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July/August Issue

"Then let us compare  
mythologies.  
I have learned my elaborate  
lie."

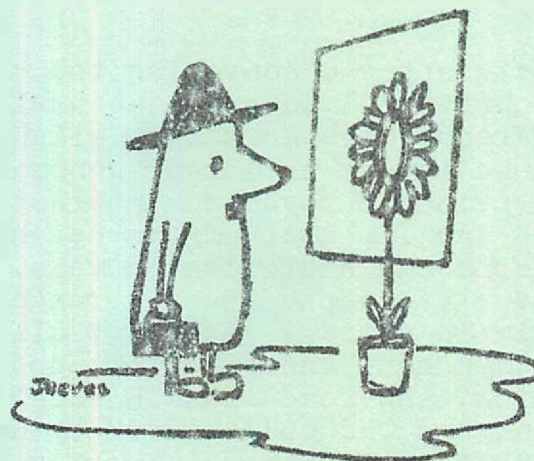
---Leonard Cohen

MYTHOLOGIES is a personally  
oriented fanzine dedicated to the  
mutability of realities.

MYTHOLOGIES is available for loc  
or editorial whim only. And nat-  
urally for accepted contribution.  
One sample issue costs 70¢ in  
stamps or 75¢ in coin.

MYTHOLOGIES will appear six times  
per year. Circulation this time  
will be about 225. All uncredited  
material is the fault of the  
editor.

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"The people...never appreciated freedom till they'd lost it.  
They were always willing to sell their birthright. Or was  
it that, being untrained in thinking, they couldn't see  
through denagoguery, couldn't visualize the ultimate  
consequences of their wishes?"

--- Poul Anderson, in "Sam Hall"

# MYTH . . .

Shortly after discovering the wonders of SF at the impressionable age of fourteen, I began to accumulate a library with astounding speed. My parents were more than slightly startled at my fervor, particularly because it was no longer generalized reading, nor did it coincide with my previously revealed interests-- murder mysteries, histories of World War II, etc. My mother had long been a prolific reader of westerns and historical novels, and it was inevitable that she would eventually sample these strange new books I was piling up in every available corner. At first all went well; she chose authors like John Wyndham, Andre Norton, and Edmund Cooper. Then, in rapid succession, she read STRANGE RELATIONS and THE LOVERS by Philip Jose Farmer and THE CLIMACTICON by Harold Livingston. All three had very strong sexual themes. Shortly thereafter I was told in no uncertain terms that I was to purchase no more sexually oriented SF.

Although I rarely disobeyed clear instructions from my parents, the thought of obeying this particular order never even crossed my mind. It wasn't that I was fond of sexual stories (the books concerned aren't particularly prurient, in any case) but that I seemed to have an almost instinctive resistance to any attempt to censor my reading. I continued to buy each and every book that I saw, regardless of its theme, and made no attempt to conceal them. In any case, the SF field was almost universally free of the "taint" of sex at the time; this was long before BUG JACK BARON, IMAGE OF THE BEAST, or I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. The subject never came up again.

While teaching high school in Michigan quite a few years later, I was told that it was against the law to teach anything about birth control anywhere in the state, in public or in private. This struck me as a good subject for a class discussion, since I felt strongly about censorship and was sure I could provide enough goads to keep the discussion moving. I was then informed that it was illegal to discuss the fact that one could not talk about birth control techniques in Michigan. This struck me as an even more clear case of censorship, so I looked forward to the discussion with increased anticipation, although I had to be a bit more careful about controlling the direction in which the conversation would move. Then came the ultimate blow. The principal informed me that it was against the law to discuss the fact that it was against the law to discuss the illegality of discussing birth control. I threw up my hands in disgust and dropped the idea, much to his obvious relief, but I've always wondered if the Michigan state legislature would have to meet out of the state in order to amend the law.

More years have passed now, and there is little doubt that censorship is once more on the rise in the US. The recent incidents in Kanawha County may have been the most melodramatic, primarily because of the frequently violent methods employed by the bookbanners when the schoolboard displayed an unusual amount of backbone. It was no surprise to learn that money and outside organizers had been sent by the Ku Klux Klan, the John Birch Society, and other right wing groups, clear indication that the question is as much political as moral in nature. As with recent similar events in Scituate, Rhode Island, the

would-be censors managed to ignore the fact that the controversial books were on optional reading lists, not texts required for courses. It is obvious then that the protestors were not concerned solely with what their own children were reading, but that they want to tell the rest of us what is and is not fit to be read by our children, and presumably by ourselves as well.

The list of authors and books banned in one place or another is impressive, including Hemingway (an atheist), Faulkner, Joyce, Orwell, Salinger, Huxley, Barth, Baldwin, Henry Miller, D.H. Lawrence, Edmund Wilson, Hubert Selby, William Burroughs, John Steinbeck - particularly OF MICE AND MEN and THE GRAPES OF WRATH, Erich Fromm's THE ART OF LOVING, Karl Marx, PLAYBOY, MS, EVERGREEN REVIEW, JAWS, THE SUMMER OF '42, and a variety of anthologies. SF authors are not exempt. Tarzan has been banned because it was erroneously believed that he and Jane were not married. Doris Lessing and Howard Fast were at one time members of the Communist Party. LORD OF THE FLIES, 1984, BRAVE NEW WORLD, JURGEN, SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, THE EXORCIST, and ROSEMARY'S BABY have all been prohibited at one time or another. JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL was recently removed from a school library because it hinted at reincarnation, obviously an assault on Christianity. Harry Harrison wrote a few years ago in SF HORIZONS that one editor removed Harrison's comparison of something as being soft as a baby's behind on the grounds that it might be offensive to some. SF as a field has been notoriously prudish in this regard, partly because it has long been looked upon as a form of adolescent literature, not fit for adults. With such a wide variety of material being banned, I am inevitably led to recall Shaw's line: "Censorship ends in logical completeness when nobody is allowed to read any books except the books nobody can read."

Not even the giants of literature are exempt. Shakespeare has been removed from school libraries, because THE MERCHANT OF VENICE may be anti-semitic and OTHELLO might be anti-Black. Recently Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Boccaccio have been taken to task for their bawdy language. Merrill Sheils reported the following in a recent NEWSWEEK: "In April, two New Hampshire legislators introduced a bill that would impose a \$1,000 fine or a year's imprisonment on any public school teacher who assigned books containing words the state defines as obscene. During the debate in the state legislature, one opponent observed that the bill's provisions would mean jail for a teacher who taught Shakespeare or Chaucer. 'That's right,' snapped one of the sponsors. 'And those books ought to be read in college, not before!' And people have asked me why I stopped teaching English.

Literature isn't the only target, of course. A small group of women recently caused a free art show to be closed because of their protest about nude sculpture. Motion pictures and TV have been open battle-grounds for years, particularly episodes of MAUDE, ALL IN THE FAMILY, and some PBS productions. William Dean Howells, writing in the early years of this century, remarked that public pressure was so strong in some areas that motion pictures were required by law to be shown only in fully lighted rooms. D.W. Griffith, criticized for years because of his alleged sympathetic portrayal of the KKK in BIRTH OF A NATION, insisted that "We have no wish to offend with indecencies or obscenities, but we do demand, as a right, the liberty to show the dark side of wrong that we may illuminate the bright side of virtue." But even though motion pictures are entirely voluntary experiences, we have seen

the banning of FRITZ THE CAT, BLAZING SHADOWS, THE EXORCIST, YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, THE KILLING OF SISTER GEORGE, I AM CURIOUS YELLOW, DEEP THROAT, TOM JONES, JOHN GOLDFARB PLEASE COME HOME, and even, believe it or not, some Walt Disney Studio nature films that were judged to be too explicit about the sexual habits of animals. I recall one outraged parent who petitioned for an injunction against a film which showed the live birth of a baby Buffalo.

Most censorship is justified in this country because of questions of morality, usually sex, sometimes violence or drugs. We generally don't admit to political censorship. There seems to be a fairly consistent pattern of rationalization to the following three categories:

1. Children may be exposed to sexually oriented material before they are emotionally capable of handling it.
2. Emotionally unstable adults who commit sex crimes often admit to reading pornography, thereby leading to the conclusion that they are influenced in their behavior by their exposure to such material.
3. Free access to material of this type implies tacit approval and thus contributes to the moral decline of our civilization.

The first justification could be applied with equal validity to alcohol, tobacco, automobiles, firearms, etc. The Supreme Court has observed that it is not consistent with free expression and free speech to deny material to adults on the basis that it might do some harm to children. The second justification is equally specious. I am reminded of the old argument that since a very large percentage of all heroine addicts admit to having started on marijuana, then marijuana must lead to heroin use. It could be demonstrated equally well that nearly 100% of all heroin users started on milk, and that we should therefore wipe out all the cows in the country.

The third point is, I believe, the underlying reason for most of the current wave of censorship. People feel that there is something wrong with our society and they are looking for a convenient scapegoat. Censorship becomes an act of patriotism, justified on moral rather than political grounds. After all, we would never abridge someone's right to disagree, would we? Censorship becomes a moral cause, the defense of home and culture, of our own self-images. Ben Lindsey, a prominent American jurist, observed that the first great censor was Pontius Pilate, and the target of his censorship was Jesus of Nazareth. The rationale in that case was the moral climate of the culture; they weren't motivated by political concerns, or so they said. Censorship has, undeniably, become a political tool. Frederick Walters points out that "If today we ban the display of pornography, perhaps tomorrow the ban will encompass dissident political views or unpopular religious sects, etc. And since repression, left to reproduce itself, tends to mutate into suppression, it is also conceivable that individuals or groups will themselves be dealt with in much the same manner as the offensive book or whatever else offends those who have placed themselves in the position of deciding what is normal and acceptable and what is deviant and therefore unacceptable."

At times the political thrust of censorship is quite blatant. A recent pro-censorship pamphlet asks: "Why is the destruction of our culture compounded with the destruction of our language by the use of semi-literate, revolutionary jargon, idiomatic slang and underground gibberish?" This overt political censorship is directed most obviously

at the public school system, often with only the trappings of moral outrage. As mentioned earlier, most of their targets are optional readings, or books merely provided by school libraries for interested students to read of their own volition. Indeed, courts have ruled consistently through the years that schools could not require a student to participate in activities of this sort to which the student or the student's parents have moral, ethical, or religious objections. The question of how much control a parent should have over his children is one that has yet to be dealt with satisfactorily in the courts, but in the case of this type of parental objection there has been a clear bias in favor of the individual parent. The use of public schools as a battleground for political groups has long been viewed with dismay. Textbooks now need to be so politically neutral that they have lost most of their interest, accuracy, and usefulness in the classroom. One publisher, for example, carefully devotes the same number of pages in its history textbooks to Republican administrations as to Democratic ones, balancing Lincoln carefully against FDR. Horace Mann observed that "It is obvious...that, if the tempest of political strife were to be let loose upon our common schools, they would be overwhelmed with sudden ruin." He was right, but we let it happen anyway.

None of the above should lead one to think that censorship is always an open and shut, black vs white, good vs evil issue. There are some sticky questions at times. Should one prevent publication of plans to build a workable atomic bomb out of tinkertoys? Should a member be expelled from an apa because of real or imagined insults? One case is that of Victor Marchetti, an ex-CIA official who decided to write a book (THE CIA AND THE CULT OF INTELLIGENCE, with John Marks) in which he exposed various aspects of the CIA's operations which, though known to the various governments concerned, have been kept from the US public. The Supreme Court recently refused to overturn a lower court ruling forbidding Marchetti from publishing anything which the CIA had not previously censored. The court ruling was that this was not in fact a case of prior censorship, but simply enforcement of contract provisions. It appears in this case that the courts took action because of the contemplation of a breach of contract rather than its consummation, but nevertheless, the basic question remains. As with the Pentagon papers incident, the Supreme Court seems to be leaning in the direction of prior censorship, disguising it cleverly as something other than what it is. This is a particularly frightening development, because the general public can never therefore determine the effects of the case, because we are unlikely to ever know what it was that the courts considered should be kept from us. Although this was supposedly done in the national interest, Eisenhower pointed out that "As it is an ancient truth that freedom cannot be legislated into existence, so it is no less obvious that freedom cannot be censored into existence."

When does editorial judgment become censorship? This is a question that has been much talked about in SF circles lately because of the stated policies of Roger Elwood. Obviously a rejection - no matter how unsound - on the basis of substandard quality does not constitute censorship. The Harlequin Book division which Elwood will be editing is designed for a specific, circumscribed audience, and it is simply a matter of economics that they be provided with what they desire. We may question whether or not Elwood is correct in his evaluation of what this audience wants to read, but I don't think we can justly question his right to act according to his evaluation of the market. I don't believe we can call this censorship. On the other hand, Elwood still

has a great deal of influence over the SF publishing of Pyramid and, I understand, Bobbs-Merrill. His objections to sex, strong language, and non-Christian attitudes and beliefs is here applied to fiction designed for a general audience. This is just as much censorship as the newspaper editor who fails to print news stories which contradict or reflect unfavorably on his own political, religious, or philosophical beliefs.

The danger isn't so much that fundamentalists, extremists of left and right, and outright nuts will become a majority as it is that most of us will sit by, convinced that no really good book will be denied to us, that our personal freedom will never be compromised. It is unpleasant to take a firm stand on an emotional issue, and no one likes to be placed in a position in which it appears that he is defending immorality. Lethargy in the face of hostile opposition is more comfortable by far. Many former supporters of busing for integration, for example, are unwilling to accept that a great deal of unrest, even violence, was inevitable, and that this does not in itself constitute an invalidation of the principles they once held to be true. Poul Anderson says in "Terminal Quest" that: "Most humans were pretty decent; their main fault was the way they stood by when others of their race did evil, stood by and said nothing and felt embarrassed." Edmund Burke warned us that "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. We have already begun to see the erosion of this liberty. Will we do anything about it?

.....

"...Swift's GULLIVER, Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, Orwell's NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR are great works of literature because in them the oddities of alien worlds serve merely as a background or pretext for a social message. In other words, they are literature precisely to the extent to which they are not science fiction, to which they are works of disciplined imagination and not of unlimited fantasy."

Arthur Koestler

"All that Koestler says here is inarguably true, and perfectly irrelevant."

Damon Knight



# THROTTLED VOICES

by Paul Di Filippo

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"...the potential for war in the area seems higher than ever.

"In other news:

"The Government today announced plans to drastically reduce its use of bureaucratic jargon.

"'Things have simply gotten out of hand,' said one high-placed spokesman. 'The proliferation of nonsense and meaningless verbiage in official reports has reached the point of ridiculousness. Uncountable man-hours of time are being wasted composing and reading these reports. Also, in their vagueness, they are often a source of confusion.'

"The remedy being proposed for this plague of 'bureaucratese' is an overhaul of the American language.

"The Government has issued a style-sheet containing a pared-down vocabulary list of 2000 words, exclusive of technical terms, which will be the guide for writing all future reports.

"'If they can't say it with 2000 words, then it shouldn't be said,' our source proclaimed.

"The new strictures are effective immediately."

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"...and so it seems that protests against The War will continue.

"Our last story tonight deals with some Government renovations currently in progress.

"It appears that ModAm, the simplified language instituted in federal offices several years ago, has proven so effective in facilitating paperwork that it will now be applied to spoken situations in certain branches of the Government, including the armed forces.

"We find ModAm ideal for command situations," one military leader told us in an interview today. 'Its clarity and brevity permit no misunderstandings in stress conditions. And for everyday use, it's just plain time-saving.'"

"Civil servants have been using the speech for years, on their own initiative.

"'It's quick, saves bother,' summed up one Government worker recently.

"Starting tomorrow, use of the speech in Government offices will be actively encouraged."

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"...damage in the millions of bucks. No one knows where the anti-War protestors got the Atomic bomb.

"The Government said today that the switch in public schools to ModAm from English got much study before any decision was ever made.

"'We know what we are doing,' a Government spokesman told us today.

'ModAm now adopted by major number of people. It is spoken by very many. It is better than English. Public feeling is for it. We must keep up with the times. Our children must have every good thing.

This is a thing the American people have been secretly waiting for all their lives.'

"At the start, English will be offered to the ones who want to take it. As long as demand is great, it will remain on school programs.

"PTA's across the country have wholeheartedly approved the switch."

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"...no anti-War protest for the last six months.

"Today the last English course in country's public schools dropped.

"'ModAm is complete success,' last teacher said. 'Better students turned out. Less questioning. My job useless. Good to get on to other things.'

"Private schools the last place where English gets much attention.

"'We will teach English as long as America exists,' one dean said.

'Our tra-di-tion-al tongue should not be allowed to die un-la-men-ted.'

"Public colleges and un-i-ver-si-ties have dropped most English courses.

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"...the War plans go good. The Enemy is on the run.

"Last English book in country printed today. 'ModAm Bible showed di-rec-tion,' book maker said.

"Library bucks cut from Government spending. Big saving this year, less taxes.

"Loss of down-town book trade easily dealt with by city governments.

"'Was never much anyway,' one mayor said.

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"War is.

"Government is.

"American People is."

\* \* \*

Forever and ever. Amen.

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### THE FINAL FIGHOLLERS

by Michael Carlson

The noted violinist Isaac Stern developed a technique for reaching low notes that immediately shook the music world. Violinists from all countries rushed to listen to this new method, and if they couldn't see Stern in person they sent friends, or bought his records, or even (a bold few) wrote him letters and asked him what his secret was.

Stern made no great mystery out of this; after all, he reasoned, it was visible whenever he played, and by his logic the benefit to the music world in general was a more demanding consideration than his own exclusive use. So in a matter of weeks it was common knowledge.

Of course knowing how Stern did it and being able to do it yourself are two different things, and many violinists soon discovered that although Stern's method looked fine to them on paper, they lacked the fine touch and quick fingers necessary to pull it off successfully.

There are always those, however, who do not give up, and one such fiddler was engaged with the Waterford, Connecticut Philharmonic. He had a solo in an upcoming concert, and insisted on hitting all the lowest notes using Stern's new technique. He was hardly facile enough to pull it off, unfortunately, and while one or two notes would vibrate in the low registers with intense brilliance, he would soon make a mistake, and the resulting noise reminded many of the town's older residents of the sound beached whales used to make, in the days when whales were beached on their shore.

This infuriated the conductor, but he tried to live with it, praying that just once the violinist would play his entire solo without mucking up. But finally the day of the performance rolled around, and during the final rehearsal the fiddler was still emitting mating calls with his instrument.

The conductor exploded in livid rage. "This is the last time I am going to warn you. If you want to play the solo tonight, you damn well better leave those low tones un-Sterned!"

\* \* \*

by George Flynn

The planet New Saigon, settled mainly by Vietnamese, was famed for its rapid-transit system. This consisted of giant birds native to the planet, which the colonists had domesticated and trained to carry passengers. Passengers occupied a capsule strapped to the bird's back, while the flight was directed by a pilot manning a station atop the head. So great was the speed with which these avian vehicles arrowed through the skies that they were familiarly known as "zings", from the sound of their passage. Among the crack pilots of Zing Air Passages was a young man named Ngo Pa Sing. He had always had excellent rapport with his giant mounts, and repeatedly set speed records. But in the spring of 2538 all this changed. On several occasions the birds reacted violently when Ngo attempted to mount them, and could be calmed only when he was replaced by another pilot. Once a similar incident occurred in flight, and it took all Ngo's skill to hang on and bring the zing to a safe landing. After this near-tragedy the management of ZAP felt that they had no alternative: saddened and baffled, they suspended Ngo from duty. Ngo then appealed to Isabella Figholler to help him.

Isabella had come to New Saigon to fight a plan to change the planet's name. The misguided proponents of this idea argued the planet should have a name reflecting its own attributes - Zingworld perhaps - rather than an imitation of an Earthly name. Isabella spoke eloquently, but what really turned the campaign around was her inspired slogan: "Let Saigons be Saigons." She investigated the problem, going so far as to visit the remote zing breeding farms. She learned that a new breed had recently been put into service; this made everything clear. By some biochemical mutation, the new breed had developed an allergy to certain people, one of whom was Ngo. Not all zings had the allergy, and Ngo could resume flying by simply restricting his assignments to the non-allergic ones. As Isabella explained to the ZAP directors, "The whole thing was very simple: There are zings Ngo was not meant to man."

## LOVECRAFT: MAN AND MYTH

by Tom Collins

Lovecraft: A Biography by L. Sprague de Camp, Doubleday & Co.,  
\$10.00, 510 pp.

Lovecraft at Last by H.P. Lovecraft and Willis Conover, Carrollton  
Clark Collectors Edition, \$30.00 (o.p.), trade edition \$19.75,  
272 pp.

Since this fanzine is the major one to appear from Providence, the home of H.P. Lovecraft, and since two major books about that author have appeared recently, with at least three more on the way by this fall, it is only appropriate that there be some discussion here of the books that have appeared so far, especially since they are so totally unlike.

Somewhere his friend W. Paul Cook said that he was sure Lovecraft's reputation would last, but that it would find its true level only when those who knew him were gone. I think it is fortunate, now that the first major biography has appeared, that they are still around to survey the wreckage, and try to correct some of the damage Sprague de Camp has wrought in his hefty (510 pages) biography, Lovecraft: A Travesty.

No, of course that's not its proper name, but granted that it is the first full-length biography of HPL, and that it will likely remain the standard work for at least another decade, if not far longer, I cannot help but become upset that it is not far better than it is. Aside from simple factual errors, which we'll come back to, it just paints a picture so repellent that reviews have been calling HPL "scaribidaceous" and concluding that he was a thoroughly weird and twisted mental cripple. Worse, they are even leaping, on no further evidence but a reading of de Camp, to the conclusion that HPL was an incompetent hack, a "master of the turgid" whose stuff was not only bad in itself, but bad because the author "had never read a good book in his life."

Those of you who know that August Derleth and Donald Wandrei devoted years of their lives to publicizing HPL's work and to editing his letters, may wonder that such a repugnant specimen of the human race should have awakened such loyalty in his friends. Those of you who know he was one of (if not the) most prolific letter writers in history, will wonder at his wide circle of friends. Those of you who have read any of the letters, or his essays--indeed, even much of his poetry, will be amazed that such a scholarly, literate, and well-read man could earn such epithets as this biography has coaxed forth from otherwise intelligent reviewers like Larry McMurtrie and Michael Kurland.

The fault, dear readers, lies with the amateur scholar who painted such an unpleasant picture the reviewers, themselves unaware of the truth, had no option but to take the view they did. Here is Lovecraft skulking about at night, an apprentice ghoul. Here he is writing vile racial slanders to his closest family--at a time he was nearly crazy, suicidal, and in need of some excuse for his failure. Here he is as pedant, here again as racist, here as terrible poet, here as racist, now as incompetent businessman, again as racist....Do you begin to get the picture?

And it is all wrong, wrong, wrong. De Camp makes much to-do about explaining away the prejudiced views on Aryan supremacy that HPL held, putting them carefully in context with the times, and quoting some of the worst of it at quite unnecessary length. But it's a coverup, because it was both worse than he says, and far more minor. Instead of alibis and excuses, why not admit it is there, and get on with the other 99% of his life and character?

The reason is part of the fundamental flaw of the book--de Camp is merely a professional debunker, perfectly at home in tracing down the source of a pseudoscientific theory, but utterly incapable of deciding what it means. Thus it is left to Barton St. Armand of Brown University, to point out the role of the aliens to HPL as part of the obsession with Byzantium and the decline of the west of the decadent literary tradition of which he was a part. That is, he can usually get his facts straight, but he doesn't have the equipment to analyze them.

See, what we're talking about is a full-length biography of one of New England's most extraordinary men of letters, a talented and intelligent man of this century who was nurtured on Georgian prose and poetry until he could write naturally in a style two-hundred years out of date; an outpost of the aesthete/Decadent tradition who created the greatest horror stories since Poe, and with as much awareness of what he was doing. It is not Art which manifests itself by accident, and Lovecraft was an artist.

Since this is not the point of view of his biographer, it is perhaps worth taking a moment to enlarge on the matter. First, it does not make a difference that HPL's fiction first appeared in a pulp medium, nor that it was done for money (although, interestingly, it was not done for money). Even if HPL had ever been a member of that now-legendary crew who wrote voluminously and were paid by the word, he would merely have been in the company of Shakespeare, Scott, Trollope, and Clemens who were prolific of necessity. Nor was he, for that matter, prolific in his fiction, though profligate with his letters and careless of his verse.

Writing in the Times Book Review for June 15 of this year, art critic John Russell says:

Serious art aims to tell us something that we urgently need to know. Unserious art does not; it may give pleasure of a momentary kind, but it does not set before us a system of values by which we ourselves may be changed and enriched. Without such a system, art is trivial, unanchored, unresonant.

By that definition, Lovecraft was a serious artist. His stories exemplify his personal worldview, a mindless cosmos of a materialist, indifferent to man, but by its immensity able to bring us out of ourselves into a truer realization of our role in the vast, empty, and magnificent universe. They are the result of a neo-classical viewpoint in which the true horror is that of Ayn Rand's slobbering idiot--irrational, chaotic, unpredictable. His villains are Heisenbergs, unleashing disorder, or Eliots, destroying meaning and the rules of discourse.

In short, his fiction (itself only a small part of his writing) is the product of an aesthetic theory--significant, anchored, and as many commentators have pointed out, in spite of all its flaws, resonant. It speaks to us, "We can say of any work of art of consequence that it is there because people needed it at a specific time and for specific

reasons," says Russell. Would you care to claim that the hundreds of thousands of volumes of Lovecraft's stories now in print, almost forty years after his death, meet no needs, and are popular for no reason?

Of course not. It makes no difference that it took a small band of militants clamouring in an unseemly way to win popular acceptance for his work. It took similar bands of the convinced to turn the tide of opinion about the war in Vietnam and the proper status of Moby Dick in the annals of literature. Anyone who is willing to look should be able to see that Cook was quite right when he said that those who came after him (as fiction writers in the genre of the "weird" story) owe more to him than he owed to all those who had gone before.

But this is not the view our biographer takes. Instead, he treats HPL as a mere minor pulp hack who couldn't make it and who died a failure. Part of the reason for that view is that de Camp is incapable of recognizing real literature when it bites him:

....nearly all of contemporary American poetry (so-called) is in free verse. The advantage of this formless 'verse' is that it is easy. It is lazy man's poetry, or poetry in rough draft. Anybody, even a child or a computer can do it.... (p. 174).

so that every time he embarks on criticism and gets away from the basic plot summary he normally provides, trouble is afoot. As when he dismisses HPL's landmark essay on "Supernatural Horror in Literature" as "a compilation of the sort that any professor of English could do." (p.247). As when he takes the poem "Nemesis" for straight pastiche, when it is clearly at least part parody:

Despite a good, swinging rhythm, Nemesis (probably inspired by Poe's Ulalume) is not only painfully derivative but also uses a galloping anapestic metre. This is fine for Browning's "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!" but unsuited to Lovecraft's sombre subject. (p 124)

It wins approval for jingling nicely, is bonged for being derivative (as any parody--or pastiche--must necessarily be), and Lovecraft himself said the metre was hybrid, "a cross between that of Poe's Ulalume and Swinburne's Hertha." (Selected Letters, Vol I, p 52)

Which brings us to the matter of factual accuracy. It is one thing to say the kindly, generous man known to his wide circle of friends and correspondents was all manner of unattractive and unlovable. It is another, in the course of detailing his life's story, to garble the simple facts of it. It is one thing to constantly intrude your own opinions--so that permissive education is confused with overprotection, and one can always tell the true motivation for Lovecraft's actions, especially where the motivation was not what he said it was. It is quite another not to spell names correctly.

To take a few items almost at random (some of which have been eliminated from the book's latest printing):

The number of MA theses on HPL and foreign languages into which his stories have been translated is about double de Camp's figures, in each case.

Poe may not have been a drunkard, and Houdini did not die of cancer.

The Belgian author he cites on page four who thinks HPL one of America's leading authors is Michel de Ghelderode. I think it speaks volumes

that he can't get the name straight, and clearly has no idea why this guy's opinion might have anything other than curiosity value.

Elizabeth Toldridge is mentioned in four separate places and the "d" is left out of her name every time.

Lovecraft did not tear off the covers of Weird Tales (though Dom Wollheim did).

Lovecraft did not have a love affair from afar or otherwise with anyone who was the subject of his poem "To Phyllis". The verse in question is a takeoff on one of his friend Kleiner's productions, "To Miriam".

Although Mrs. Dunsany did enclose a note in her husband's letter (141) the "Dame Gossip" de Camp takes to be her is, in fact, a regular columnist for the magazine in which the letter was printed.

The basic flaw of the book is that the picture painted of its subject simply does not square with the recollections of his friends, or with the evidence of his writings. The fundamental assumption is that Lovecraft is not important enough to be worthy of real criticism, or the subject of study by a trained, professional scholar, and further, that he was merely an incompetent sort of hack. If those are not the underlying assumptions of the book, then they seem to be, and more famous and highly-paid reviewers than I have made the same mistake.

Beyond the inaccurate view of the writer, is a loathesomely distorted view of the man, and on top of all are numerous silly, careless, or just plain incompetent errors of fact. Everyone will say he has his facts straight, but the picture turned out wrong. In fact, even the facts cannot always be relied upon, as I hope has been demonstrated.

So far I have said nothing about the material that has been left out, except to note the lack of reliable and informed criticism. (Not only is HPL's most famous essay dismissed out of hand, but his poetry is constantly belittled with no justification but the sneers of the author's predecessors.) What might have been provided is a fuller picture of the amateur journalism circles in which HPL moved (circles much like those of fandom today) and lived and had his being, his friends, his wife, and much of his professional career. There might have been a fuller discussion of the remarkable power of Lovecraft's dreams, from which many of his stories derived. Or, more simply, the footnotes might have made data accessible, have pinpointed sources, have been organized on the basis of one footnote per item of data and not on the basis of using a maximum of one per cluster of assertions.

And so far I have said nothing of the virtues of the book. They are indeed many, but by putting them last they are in their proper perspective. In spite of all I have said before, this is the most complete, factual, and important biography of HPL to appear so far. It is the only one of any size at all, and thus necessarily provides vast quantities of data in a comprehensive form. Like George Wetzel's bibliography, it is the basis on which all further work must be based and evaluated. It is not the ultimate by any means, but it is a good start. Despite its lapses, and certain really improbable grotesqueries of syntax and style, it is full of curious and forgotten lore. Endless hours of research went into combing one of the outstanding amateur journalism collections in New York, and numerous thousands of pages of correspondence for information. He uncovered much new information, such as the letters of the poet Guiney, whom the young Lovecraft knew.

These are all considerable accomplishments, and there are none among us who cannot learn from, enjoy, and profit by the reading of this large and interesting volume. It is indispensable for the collector and researcher, and points up brilliantly the size of the task that lies ahead.

Part of that task will surely be to counter the repellent view he has given us of Lovecraft the man, and fortunately we have at hand a book excellently calculated to do just that. In company with Frank Belknap Long's forthcoming (August?) Arkham House memoir, we have Willis Conover's Lovecraft at Last.

Let me begin by saying that most of the discussion prior to publication was over its price. At \$12.50 prepublication, from a new publishing company, people were suspicious. Now, at \$30 after publication, the limited collector's edition will soon be out of print, and worth every cent even of the higher prices it will surely bring by fall.

It was a book that was actually designed, rather than pasted up even by someone with an eye for "graphics". By designed, I mean that someone, Robert L. Dothard in this case, went over the book with the author, page by page, to get the text to appear the way he wanted it to.

The end result is a truly beautiful book, one that will surely be nominated for graphic awards as one of the best-designed books of the year, and so on. It is not a "trick" book where you have to unfold the cover to find the table of contents, and there are not cut-outs and pop ups and fold-ins to play with. But it is attractive, and arranged so that without calling attention to itself, each aspect of the book serves to illuminate and transmit the text. In short, it is quietly spectacular, and would seem more quiet and less spectacular if it were not the only SF-related book to have aimed so high or achieved so much in the way of sheer physical beauty.

Much discussion has been made of the \$40,000 it took to produce this volume, and the obvious care that went into every aspect of its production. The money was well spent, and is visible in every line, and on every page, not conspicuously, as the gaudy manner of the nouveau riche, but elegantly, as those to the manor born. It is a work of more loving care than one would have thought possible, and the result is a volume it is a pleasure to own, to handle, to share.

All of which, as I said, is beside the point. First, none of the beauty and simplicity of the unbound signatures gave a hint of the attractiveness of the whole, the sheer heft of it, the bulk of the boxed book in your hand. What the poet Hopkins called "The achieve of, the mastery of the thing" is here made solid pleasure, but looks are not all, and a gilded package is still but a package; the real value is within.

And that is why, second, all the talk about the beauty of the book isn't as important here as it might be: the contents are stunning. It is not the story of H.P. Lovecraft, master of the weird, interesting and important New England writer. It is the story of the old man and the boy who loved him; of a kindly and wise man who corresponded with a pesky teenager, introduced him to the world of ideas, and treated him as an equal; of a youth and his idol who turned out, for a change, not to have clay feet.

When young Willis started writing to professional writers, at the age of fifteen, he had no idea his success would be so great, or that he

would bring forth voluntary contributions of fiction and verse from such authors as Robert Bloch and Henry Kuttner, or artwork from Virgil Finlay. Nor did he expect when he sent the usual ingenuous letter, that H.P. Lovecraft would not only reply kindly, but at great length, answering all of his questions in great detail.

The ice broken, they exchanged letters for most of two years, conversing by post on a wide range of topics including weird fiction, but not limited to that. And then one day a postcard was returned with a pencilled note, "I am very ill, and likely to remain so for a long time." It marked the beginning of the end. You know when you see it what is going to happen, and the author wisely lets the letters speak for themselves, the two last holograph letters from Howard's aunt Annie Gamwell telling of his illness and death.

It is a terrific shock. So far I have read those final, crushing pages aloud to various people three times now, and each time I am nearly overwhelmed with sadness, perhaps for Lovecraft, perhaps for some lost love of the world or the infinite sadness of the passing of time and universal loss. It's just that coming after the funny, touching story of these two friends, it is a moving and fitting conclusion to see the story unravel itself again as it did in life, each new revelation another twist of the knife.

Unlike the cold and unfriendly biography the scholars will have to make do with, we have here the personal, touching, and even heart warming story of two real people who loved one another. And it is more than that. One of them is the wise and learned old man, the other the brash young kid, but without, I think, falsifying anything, the elegant and literate man that child became has revealed him to us across the years, more than he can quite believe I'm sure, since 1937. It is, then, also a kind of elegy or memoir of the "remembrance of things past" genre, in which we are taken to another, not necessarily better, time, and given tantalizing first-hand glimpses of first fandom.

The whole is told with the same impeccable attention to detail and nuance which characterizes the book's design, and is integral to Conover the man. The prose is limpid, pellucid, even charming. From the beautifully phrased and warm introduction by Harold Taylor (yes, that one) you know you are in safe hands, and that it will be a warm and humane book. In fact, as Christopher Morley said in another context, it is a better book than one deserves or expects.

Accompanying the story of this interesting friendship and the account of the conversations these two distinguished people enjoyed, are such incidental treasures as photographs of Lovecraft (several quite good, and at least one very funny), a biographical sketch by F. Lee Baldwin, and a short story by Robert Bloch. All told it is a book to touch, to treasure, and to talk about. People will be doing all three for a long time to come.

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"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form."

--- H.P. Lovecraft, Supernatural Horror in Literature

# THE GREAT SIDE- WALK WAR OF 1975

One of the most bizarre incidents to occur in the CIA's secret war against Mainland China began in February of 1974 when a bored CIA official chanced to thumb through a bulletin from the National Safety Administration and read an article about home accidents. In an attempt to dramatize his case, the author pointed out that in 1973, more people were killed by falls on slippery sidewalks in New York City alone than were killed by nuclear weapons everywhere in the world. Although there is evidence that the article made no immediate impression, it appears that the official was unable to put the comparison completely out of his mind. By late March, Project Pavement was initiated, one of the most sinister and (initially) successful ploys in the CIA's covert operations arsenal.

During April of that same year, a secret experimental station was established in remote acreage outside of Kotzebue, Alaska. Local inhabitants reported that a ten-foot wall had been erected around an area several acres in extent. Cement trucks and loads of lumber arrived daily, with busloads of workmen sworn to tightmouthed secrecy. The efficacy of the CIA's employment security program is demonstrated by the fact that it is only recently that the true nature of the project has been made public. Most of the acreage at Kotzebue was virtually covered by hastily constructed sidewalks, each of which was carefully monitored as to precise cement mixture, width and depth, spacing of seams, style of surface finish, angle of inclination, degree of banking etc. Each completed sidewalk was then sprayed with water, which rapidly froze into a fairly uniform slickness.

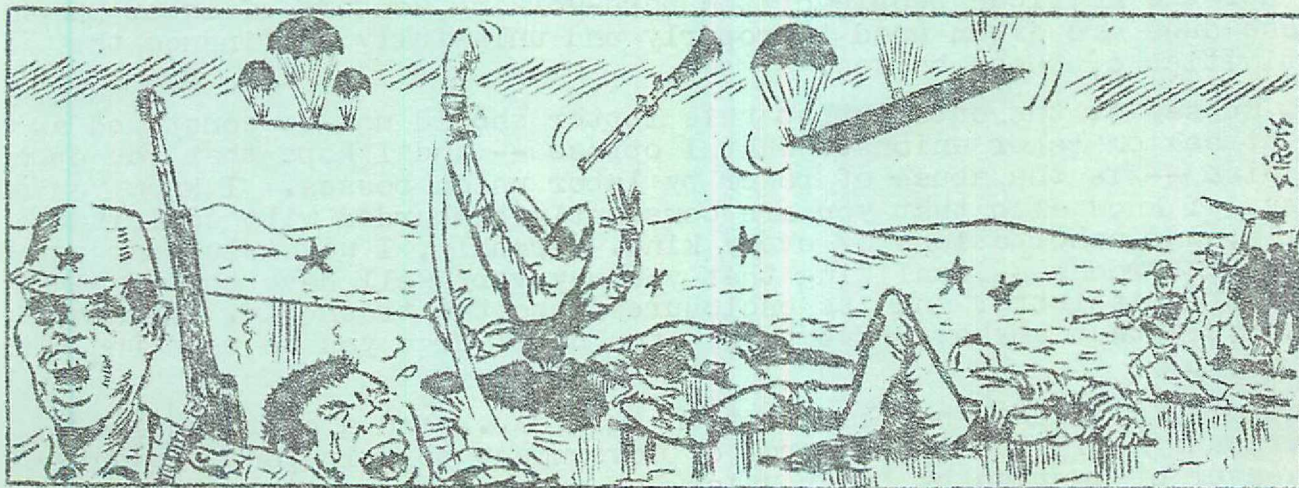
The rest of the CIA compound consisted of administrative buildings, and a rather large stockade. This latter was occupied by several score convicts, volunteers, whose sentences were remitted at the rate of one year per mile of sidewalk traversed. The casualty rate is still classified, but since the entire operation was designed to develop a more dangerous sidewalk, it seems logical to conclude that the rate must have increased as the experiment progressed. It was also apparently successful enough that the CIA soon decided to field test their new weapon.

Taiwanese volunteers were dropped into northern China, their target the city of Nunkiang on the Nonni river. The volunteers proceeded clandestinely to the home of Jou Po Liang, Mayor of Nunkiang, a loyal communist official of no particular significance. He was destined to be the first casualty of the Great Sidewalk War. The team spent forty five minutes spraying water on the sidewalk in front of his home, then disappeared, en route to a secret CIA center in the mountains near Sanchan. The result of this foray was not entirely satisfactory (Jou broke his back, but was not killed), but the limited success was promising enough that the CIA decided to proceed with an escalated application of Project Pavement. The War had begun.

The October 1974 operation was a near total disaster. Alarmed by recent Chinese success in developing advanced nuclear weapons delivery systems, the CIA planned to drop a total of ten teams in the area of Lop Nor, their targets several dozen top ranking Chinese nuclear and missile scientists. There appears to have been a great deal of dissension within the organization with regard to such a provocative use of a relatively untested weapon, but the CIA was under a great deal of fire for its domestic operations, and it was felt that some sort of international coup was necessary to boost intra-agency morale. The plan was put into effect.

Chinese security precautions and air cover were unsuccessful in detecting the three low-flying CIA transports, but they necessitated so much evasive action that the pilots became disoriented and panicky and discharged their passengers near Charkhlik, a garrison city south of the target area. It is not known how many Nationalist infiltrators were subsequently captured in the confusion, but it soon became evident that at least one had been forced to talk: Chinese laborers were quietly but efficiently tearing up every sidewalk in all of China.

The CIA was undaunted. The data collected at Kotzebue had included a variety of experimental freezing agents, methods of application, and adaptability. Instead of the original three man teams, Project Pavement Attack Units were formed, consisting of ten men each. Teams were drilled ruthlessly at secret camps in Hsinchu, Taiwan, and Yangyang, South Korea. By the first of the year, the best teams could assemble, pour, and spray a sidewalk in about twenty minutes. Quick-hardening agents were developed and utilized to speed the process even further. By the middle of January, 1975, dozens of teams were operating throughout much of China, dropped in by aircraft, sneaking in past Red Chinese naval patrols in fishing junks, or moving stealthily overland through the Burmese jungles. Among the most notable successes of this phase of the war was the death of the Chief of Police of Peking, despite the capture and execution of the team of agents responsible. Another agent was shot while spraying a freezing agent over the back staircase of Mao's mountain retreat, a touch of originality for which the agent was subsequently awarded the secret CIA Medal of Valor. Posthumously, of course. The agency was relatively satisfied with the campaign during the next two full months. But then the War took a strange new turn.



The next crisis came in the spring. Although Project Pavement continued to be successful in the mountainous north, the onset of warmer weather had substantially reduced its effectiveness in the more populous south. A new CIA installation was erected in southwestern Texas, at which various methods for increasing the slickness of sidewalks in warm climates were investigated. Although not as simple as the original approach, the subsequent development of a warm weather, spray-on pseudo-ice opened entire new areas to exploitation. Slick Ice, as it was initially called, later shortened to Slice, could be used to assassinate unfriendly Latin American or African political figures. If the existence of Slice had not been recently leaked to the press, widescale use might have been made during the recent confrontation with Venezuela.

As consciousness of this new terror weapon gradually penetrates the very fabric of our society, we can only hope that a panic will not sweep the country, with worried citizens ripping up sidewalks with a fervor to match the bomb-shelter building mania of a few years ago. Certainly one cannot seriously expect the Chinese to be able to slip any significant number of sabotage teams into this country, although one must admit the possibility that extremist groups in the US may develop home-made versions of Slice, with which to strike against politicians with whom they differ.

Above all, I urge each of you to write your Representatives in Congress and urge them to vote yes on ratification of the 1975 Geneva Accord on Sidewalk, Road Surface, and Other Manufactured Terrain Weapons. A new arms race of this nature would severely strain our already overloaded defense budget.

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QUOTED WITHOUT COMMENT

(Received this mass mailing letter from the office of Senator Jesse Helms)

Unless enough Americans somehow unite, I must candidly say to you that freedom's days are numbered. Allow me to explain. I have been asked to write to you because of your deep concern for your country. I am gravely disturbed, and I think you are too, about the very real possibility of a relative handful of union bosses grabbing control of America's government. Their thirst for power is not representative of either the American people or the hard-working members of labor unions, whose dues are often used improperly and unlawfully to finance the activities of these bosses.

Let me say at the outset that this letter should not be construed as an attack on labor unions. What I oppose -- and I hope that you oppose it also -- is the abuse of power by labor union bosses. I know you are busy. I know also that you are constantly bombarded with solicitations, polls, and exhortations of every kind. Frankly, I was reluctant to add to your burdens -- realizing that you may very well have the inclination to toss this letter and its enclosures into the trash can. You may do precisely that anyhow. But before you do, I urge you to read the enclosures.

Carefully consider what is afoot in America...send a contribution to Americans Against Union Control of Government to help them prevent takeover of America by labor union bosses.

# FABLE: PRANKS

When I was sixteen and seventeen, I fell among a group of pranksters, and discovered that I was in my element at last. There were four of us in all, Dave Driscoll was my age, a chemistry whiz, John Warren was a couple of years older, though emotionally immature, and Matthew Bard, two years younger than me. The four of us were inordinately fond of practical jokes; Driscoll organized Orange Day, which coincided with St Patrick's day in our high school, the staff of which was largely Irish. John Warren had forged himself a set of Press ID cards, and was known to ask some startling questions at news conferences. Matt Bard studiously took notes, vowed some day to outdo us all.

I'm not certain exactly how it came about that we started sniping at each other (in a goodnatured way) instead of the mundane world. Possibly it was because only our fellow pranksters appreciated our finer efforts. One of our mutual friends, for example, was a friendly, politically conservative fellow classmate named Dick Dowdell. Dick's family was even more conservative than was he, so they didn't take it kindly when they awoke one morning to find that the four of us had put over one hundred political posters for liberal candidates in their yard, on trees, on the house, with bumper stickers on all three of their vehicles. Unappreciated, we turned in on ourselves.

I think the first overt act was following our trip to see the new Hitchcock movie, THE BIRDS. John Warren's father was a harbor pilot, his mother was dead, and he spent much of his time living alone. After we dropped him off that night, Dave and I conceived of a brilliant idea. We began driving up and down the nearby highway, picking up the bodies of dead birds that lay by the roadway. The next morning, we parked my VW in a field out of sight of Warren's house and staked it out. After a few hours, Warren drove off. We took a tarp full of dead birds from the trunk of the VW and approached the house. Although John always locked the door, the window to his second story bedroom was unlocked. We used a ladder to get up to it, carried the dead birds inside, mussed up the room fairly well, and used epoxy and a rubber tipped dart to affix one avian corpse dead center in the middle of a mirror. Then we were off.

It didn't take long for John to discover who was responsible. That afternoon, Dave and I were driving toward his house when we spotted his car coming toward us. We slowed down as he drew alongside, but he simply pitched something out the window and kept driving by. The something turned out to be a balloon filled with water and blue dye, which burst over the roof of my VW. I stopped and was about to get out when Dave yelled that John was coming back. He passed me a few minutes later on the highway (can't get much speed out of a VW) and we just got the window up in time. On his third pass, I swerved and the balloon missed altogether. John was out of ammo, and so ended the first battle of the pranksters' war.

Matt Bard joined the battle a few days later by chaining my car by one axle to a bike rack in the school parking lot, which I had had to have

cut off by one of the teachers from the crafts department. I then challenged Matt to a weekend duel with water pistols, after dark, with ink and dye disallowed. He foolishly accepted and came equipped with water. I allowed him to get the best of me, was squirted unmercifully, but managed to get several good shots in at his shirt and pants, being careful not to hit any of his exposed skin. My pistol was full of Clorox, you see, which Matt didn't realize until he got home that evening.

One night weeks later, Matt showed up at my house shortly after my parents left. He was only there for a minute, he said, was on his way home and needed to use the bathroom. Gullible, I never noticed him plant a smoke bomb with timing device behind the toilet. Luckily for me, it sputtered harmlessly half an hour later, and I was able to dispose of all but a lingering smell, which I explained to my parents as the result of a cigar smoking visitor. The next night my parents were out, Matt came by again. Dave Driscoll was already there, and the two of us watched him like a hawk. During the visit, Dave and I developed a hasty plot. While Dave talked to him upstairs, I ran the garden hose in through a window to the downstairs hall. It had one of those trigger nozzles, so I turned on the water and placed it ready to hand. When Matt finally decided to leave, I saw him to the door. As he was starting down the driveway, I yelled that he'd forgotten something. He walked back and ran into a heavy spray from the hose. At the same time, Driscoll leaned out the upstairs window and poured a five pound bag of flour down on top of him. Matt surrendered, the first capitulation of the pranksters' war.

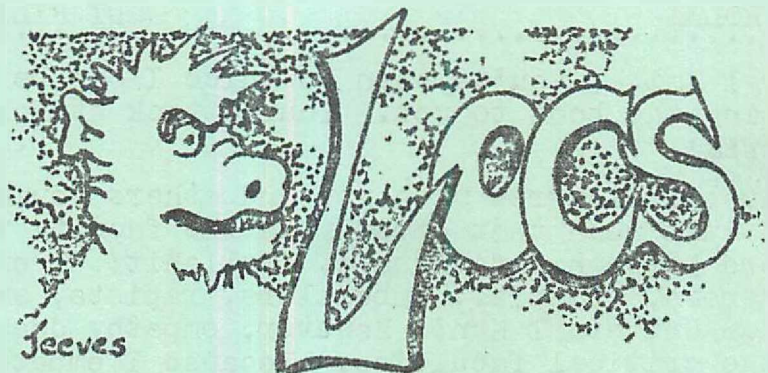
John Warren was off to college, which left Dave and I without a target. It was only natural, therefore, that we start on each other, although our close friendship kept things relatively minor. We had a standing game where whichever of us was driving on one of our outings would attempt to strand the other by locking him out of the car. One rather rainy night, I managed to lock Dave out of my car (I happened to have my father's Pontiac that night). Dave had no intention of walking two miles home in the rain, so he hopped up onto the hood, determined that I would go no place without him. So I took him home. On the hood.

But I knew that he'd be particularly keen to get back at me. Sure enough, only a week or so later, I found myself locked out of his car. I promptly hopped up onto his hood. Dave grinned maniacally, sure that he was about to get back his own. But I was prepared. From my jacket pocket, I pulled out a can of brown shoe polish and began to systematically cover the entire windshield. I didn't have to go very far before he let me in.

The war ended shortly thereafter. Personal problems and conflicts with some of his teachers caused Dave to transfer to a military academy (of all things) and the pranksters' war came to an abrupt end. Or did it.

For the first three years of my college career, I kept getting letters on official bank stationery from various New York state banks (where Dave was now living) informing me that I was either overdrawn or had enormous sums unclaimed deposited in my name or what have you. My name is unique enough that I don't think it was simply administrative error. Somewhere even now Dave may be slinking through banks, cadging bits of official stationery with which to bedevil me. It may not be over yet.

ELABORATE  
LIES



### SEX

/PAUL DI FILIPPO/

First, I want to make known the fact that my loc in the last issue was not a response to the contents of that issue, even if it might have looked like that. It took off strictly from the base established in Issue #4. The reason for that is because the editor refused to let me see the contents of Issue #5 before it was published. Now, on to the battle!

Lesleigh, I accept your criticisms humbly because they were delivered in such a pleasant, sane style. I am not familiar with the English cases you cite, but will take them at face value and admit that the sex of the malefactor is often a consideration in determining what punishment will be delivered. However, I still say that gender is not AS LARGE a factor as ethnicity in such cases. The amount of harassment and killing over the years that was perpetrated in the name of racial superiority still outweighs the amount done either covertly or explicitly under the banner of sexism.

A much more plausible explanation of why some people are oppressed while others aren't lies in the matter of power. The powerful are the oppressors and the powerless are the oppressed. Both groups cut across all racial-sexual-ethnic lines and are heterogeneous, being composed of Blacks, Women, Men, Orientals, etc. They are the true tyrants, not Joe-Wife-Under-Thumb or Jane-Feminist-Castrator (if such stereotypes really exist).

As for the magnitude of masculine oppression, perhaps I underestimate it, never having had to deal with it to the extent that a woman does. But I believe that most anything lies within an individual's grasp if he/she is willing to work and sacrifice for it. If women have to work harder than men in order to achieve the same things, then I agree that there is definitely something wrong somewhere. But Feminism cannot hope to eliminate all the difficulties involved in holding jobs and living certain lifestyles because the difficulties do not arise out of the fact that people are sexist but that they are competitive. Men cut each other's throats as well as women's, and vice versa.

George, you have such a discriminating eye/ear for the inappropriate phrase. Well, you caught me again. "Stupid dullards" was definitely inapplicable to sugar refiners and other monopolists. It simply does not convey their evil maliciousness. I am not saying that we should overlook the small problems in favor of the glamorous ones. What I am saying is that we should not expend the same amount of time and energy on both. Sorry if I wrote muddily. They should make that a cardinal sin.

Sheryl Smith, you've seen how nice I can be to my critics. However, I'm putting the boot to you. Your attack struck me as ill-founded and non-sensical.

Because I disagree with you and others you accuse me of lacking empathy. This must mean that empathy is the faculty that brings about complete accord between individuals. Bullshit! I empathize with blind men, murderers, cripples, embezzlers, rapists, saints, and misfits. I am a goddam Universal Man! However, empathy does not preclude the exercise of the critical faculties. Because I empathize with most people does not mean that I accept the basic premises of everyone. To do so would be to invite insanity in amid a welter of conflicting beliefs. The complete empathist who did not make critical distinctions would be like the alien in the Bradbury story who reads minds and tried to fulfill everyone's mutually incompatible wishes. He died mad.

I do not like your stooping to attacking my fiction, which you have never even seen. If I wished to do the same, I could say that your fannish articles and locs lead me to believe that your "verse tragedies" are bathetic and pedantic, sterile and so self-concerned as to verge on compulsive masturbation. However, I will not do so.

((In retrospect, I probably should have edited out Sheryl's comments last time, but it seemed to me at the time that there was a relevant point therein, and I'm so used to her caustic style that I really didn't realize how nasty it might have sounded. So now, both sides having vent their spleens, I proscribe further personal attack in the MYTHOLOGIES lettercolumn.)))

[SAM LONG]

Mark Keller's article was also thought-provoking-- and well-informed-- and I broadly agree with him. His paragraph on matriarchy caught my attention more than the rest of the article, however. What is certain is that in former times, especially before the relationship between sexual intercourse and pregnancy was understood (and it is claimed that certain primitive tribes of Australian aborigines did not understand the connection even up to modern times), women had a much stronger magical/religious/political position in their societies than they had later. Whether it was all sweetness and light then is doubtful, but the "force" of society was more likely to have been psychological and religious than metallic or muscular. Traces of female dominance in certain spheres remain to this day, and were well recorded in the past; but the ur-matriarchal society would seem to have slipped away before written records began. In a word, we can infer, but not prove, the existence of such a society--or a society with considerable matriarchal characteristics, at least--in certain times and places--with reservations. Consider: when Woman went from Active--bringing forth offspring (mysteriously)--to Passive--a "fertile field" where Man sowed his seed (the words semen, barren, and the sense of sow hark back to this idea) being merely the vessel wherein the infant, placed there by the father, grew--there must have been great changes in her status. Only comparatively recently has it become clear that father and mother have equal roles in bringing a child into being.

[MICHAEL CARLSON]

Gary Grady is wrong - the US is not as liberal in treatment of the sexes, and there are more than isolated examples. In Sweden, for one, maternity leave (with pay) is extended for a period of three months (by law) and

## SEX ROLES

CARLSON, GRADY, MARTIN.....

may be taken by either parent, or both in combination (i.e. 2 months for one and one for the other). Day care centers proliferate, freeing women to work. Couples living together can qualify for married benefits. And there is really no stigma attached to an unmarried woman doing anything - including having children. Perhaps we can consider ourselves as progressing when our emotions catch up to our technology.

## [D. GARY GRADY]

Rick Brooks is right. If I had proclaimed the universality of sex roles I would be wrong, and would not have gone as far afield as the Tchambuli to prove it. After all, Scots wear kilts. But I did not say that, as he will see if he rereads my remarks in MYTHOLOGIES 4. What I did say was that certain underlying traits are apparent in all societies. And I expect Dr Mead would agree with me. In case Rick doubts it, I suggest he look up the AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, Volume 39, pp 558-561, where Dr Mead specifically addresses the issue. She says, in reference to her research: "Nowhere do I suggest that I have found any material which disproves the existence of sex differences." In her book, MALE AND FEMALE, Dr Mead says, "In every known human society, the male's need for achievement can be recognized. Men may cook, or weave or dress dolls or hunt hummingbirds, but if such activities are appropriate occupations of men, then the whole society, men and women alike, votes them as important. When the same occupations are performed by women, they are regarded as less important."

((Which seems to me, Gary, to prove only that societal designations of sex roles are well established in antiquity, not that they are valid.)

## [MARY MARTIN]

No man has to pay for a woman's dinner. This business of the man paying often does not end right there either. Later on, he often tries to get his "money's worth" back in terms of sex.

My opinion on sexism, as on racism, etc., is simply this: I think people should have the right to choose what they would like to do. If they fail, then bounce them out. The idea that someone else can tell you, ahead of time, that you can't do a certain job, is repugnant to me. I am also an ardent advocate of the right to fail. If I blow it in some fashion, that is my privilege and should not reflect upon any other member of my sex, religion, etc. I do not like the situation where a female is pushed into representing her entire sex, or where she must be twice as good as all the men to be considered equal. When I was a child I was not allowed (by the boys) to play baseball because I was a girl. Since I was taller, stronger and could run faster than most of them, this grated upon me...however, I had been taught not to assert myself, and a fat lot of good it did me. And so it goes.

((The most obvious example of an individual being forced to represent her sex was Billie Jean King. Now no one is saying that the best female tennis player can equal the best male tennis players. After all, there is a real element of physical strength involved. But on the other hand, it should not be a reflection on women's athletic abilities as such. Or as a more recent example, the recent (unfortunate) race between Ruffian and Foolish Pleasure was billed throughout as a battle of the sexes. This cute, patronizing attitude is what causes militancy. There's just no other way to convince people that you are serious about your complaints.)))

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[LEE CARSON]

At common law, rights of married women "in coverture" were somewhat limited (consent of husband to sue, etc.) but correspondingly such women often escaped criminal prosecution (i.e. the gallows) due to the presumption of the husband's coercion of misbehavior. Neither "discrimination" survives in US law today. Indeed the courts are being urged to "tip the scales" the "other way": Joann Little's case is one of justifiable self-defense, amply within legal defense requirements - her problem is one of proof, for even a sympathetic jury tends to put rubberstamp approval on the stories of gendarmes and their lackeys. You know that that Collinsville couple whose home was terrorized and wrecked by mistake in a raid couldn't even win a civil suit against those cops. However there was quite a stir when a woman was convicted of murder for killing a man several hours after he raped her. There is nothing sexist in this; if you shot both my legs off and I shot you as you were strolling by an hour later, the indictment would read murder.

[KATHY ANDERSON]

To Gary Grady I wish to say that I am more than willing to pay my own way into a movie, or for meals, or at a bar or tavern. However, I frequently find it difficult to do so, since it seems to be a threat by some men. Or maybe it's that when they pay your (my) way they feel a right to sexual favors in return and don't want a woman to take that privilege away from them.

To Jim Goldfrank I have to say I agree. Feminism should mean and lead to an equal chance for men and women to develop as they choose. And for women to do it without sacrificing their femaleness.

[GEORGE FLYNN]

Correction to Sheryl Smith: No, as a matter of fact Cotton Mather didn't burn witches but hanged them (both male and female). Burning was quite widespread in Europe though.

[LAURINE WHITE]

Good for you, refusing to open a door for a woman. I've seen some poor men who'll open a door for one girl and then be forced to stand there while a whole string of women will use him as a doorman and never even say thanks. Bully for D. Gary Grady. I'm paid well for my job for the federal government and make lots more than most of my fan friends, mostly students. And I do take them out to dinner and movies.

((Unless someone writes me a letter I just must print, I am winding up the sex roles debate here for the time being. Maybe a year, for purposes of comparison, I'll raise the issue again.)))

### SUPERSTITION

[PETER ROBERTS]

I must disagree with your analysis of modern superstitions and pseudo-religious beliefs. I concede that you're right about the universal desire to shift responsibility onto some supernatural or extra-terrestrial scapegoat; after all, it makes everything much easier if we can shrug our shoulders and say "It's nothing to do with us - it's all in the hands of the stars or the demons, the ancient astronauts or the Tralfamadorians. I note that Bierce defines "responsibility" as "a detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck, or one's neighbour." That seems to fit in well with your concept of the function

of modern religions. However, I believe there's a lot more to it than that. The essence of these modern cults and superstitions is that they, like the old ones, give people who live dull and tedious lives a hint of mystery and excitement and, above all, a sense of importance. It would be satisfying to know that the gods were interested in us, or even that the stars (rather than the local corporation) controlled our individual destinies. The Christian church, after all, promises "a real nice afterlife" and the "personal judgement of God Almighty" - and that's important to an oppressed and starving peasant (we're less likely to grasp at such a straw; but if we thought the Christian promise was genuine...?). Anyway, the point is that religion makes people feel "special" - something more than temporary constructions of blood and bone. I'm only on the outside because I lack faith (but don't knock Charles Fort, sirrah, or I'll whip up a mysterious shower of crabs over Rhode Island. Sixteen ton crabs...)

Incidentally, can you think of a good reason why Americans are so prone to these nut cults and to religion in general? It even affects politics I notice, and quite thoroughly too. Maybe you're used to your politicians spouting religious platitudes, but that wouldn't be tolerated in Britain (despite our established church - I'm not sure why, but perhaps we leave it all to the Archbishop of Canterbury who is paid to talk like that. I'm not being facetious either. Well, not much, at any rate.

I've got doubly sidetracked now. I was going to say something about the majority of modern religions being American and about their representatives over here who turn out to be American too (the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses who knock on your door like gypsies and clapperdudgeons, selling tracts and the true faith in outlandish prairie accents).

((I think your first point is entirely correct, and something I should have brought out in the original essay. As to why so much modern superstition originates in the US, I have theories. First, I think that the US is still a young country in search of its own culture. Europeans perhaps don't recognize that, because your own history and traditions go back so far. The US not only is only two centuries old, but it was made up of a hodgepodge of different cultural groups. Although the nordic type at last appears to dominate our mythos, the traditions of the English/German immigrants have not been universally accepted by the populace. So unconsciously, I suspect, we are groping for some new belief system (of culture that is) which will incorporate all of the constituents of our society. It won't work for centuries more. There are other contributing factors. I suspect one is the near universality of TV, which allowed such a colorless jerk as the Guru Maharaj Ji, for example, to acquire a vast following.

"Clapperdudgeon" sent me scurrying after my Oxford English Dictionary. A marvelous word.)))

/PATRICK HAYDEN/

I've seen this happen before -- people constantly debunking the myths of the common man, somehow believing that by doing so you advance humanity in some way, or at least prove your own intellectual prowess in avoiding those silly superstitions. To you or I, the Chariot fan may appear a self-deluded, irrational person, incapable of scientific analysis and depending on those magic astronauts to come and solve

everything. Not always...I think that the Chariot fans, the Atlantis people, the occultism freaks, the Scientologists, etc. are all average human beings, generally rational, with a great yen to comprehend. Each of their respective methods helps them, in some way, to grasp the Mystery Of It All. It's a form of that good ol' Sensa Wonder; brought down and made graspable by the messiahs of each of the doctrines. Don't kill it! What has scientific materialism to offer? A chance world, a fluke, we as insignificant ants crawling across a minor mud-ball circling a dwarf sun in an obscure portion of an unimportant galaxy...no, that's not acceptable to most people. They need a philosophy that they can relate to as human beings, and in many cases these can help.

I'm not making my point very well. Point is, these people are carving themselves a niche of comprehensible belief. And some sort of belief, some sort of awareness of Something Out There, some type of consciousness of the wonder of the Universe is infinitely preferable to none at all; i.e. a dead, jaded, scientific materialism that states we are merely a random collection of our parents' genes.

What do I believe? "It isn't necessary to have something to believe in. It's only necessary to believe that somewhere there's something worthy of belief." -- Alfred Bester, THE STARS MY DESTINATION.

((First of all, I'm human, I relate to certain personal philosophical beliefs, but I don't need to believe in Something Out There to have a sense of wonder about the universe. I mentioned in the editorial that there are certain elements in many of these superstitions that I share a belief in. What I objected to was the fact that there seems to be an underlying common factor that man not only is not alone, but that he is not master of his fate, and therefore is not responsible for what he does: I was only following orders. One of my personally held beliefs is that humanity is on the brink of the worst catastrophe in its experience, that you and I might actually live long enough to see the literal death of our civilization. Abdication of our individual personal responsibilities seems to me to be not only a greater factor in human development, it seems also to have spread to an unprecedented degree in the race today. Whether or not this upsurge is indeed there, the presence of this tendency cannot be allowed to continue to dominate our society if we are to survive.)))

[JOHN CARL]

I lost any credibility that I might have found in Von Daniken's works when I read an article by him that stated that he was able to enter a Higher Dimension at will and thereby observe all the past and the future. However, he does not want to reveal the future at this time "because it might prove unsettling". He stated this as categorical fact in the article, which appeared last year in several of the gossip tabloids.

((I have also heard part of a radio interview with him in which he mentioned that he was only in the field for the money. There have also been rumors that a strongly anti-semitic slant was edited out of the German text for the US market. Obviously the ancient astronauts were nordic and came to Earth to finish off the last fleeing remnants of the verminous race which had attempted to undermine the entire galaxy. The TV networks haven't helped by playing Von Daniken up, giving him a TV special, and a made-for-TV movie. All of them in it for the money.))

[GRAHAM ENGLAND]

You wrote about Jesus Freaks - they call themselves the "Charismatic Movement" or "Evangelicals" here. One sub-unit of this recently staged an exorcism on a man in Osset, Yorkshire - and unfortunately he went home and murdered his wife. He is now in Broadmoor - a mental hospital for the dangerously insane - and Archbishops here gave orders about exorcism and its use.

Using your flexibility of viewpoints - the model representing the world as peopled also with good and evil spirits is but another way of presenting stress in life and the emotional effect of life. Thus the demon expeller could be a good psychologist if his model of spirits accorded well with the facts. Unfortunately such models do not normally fit our world well, and so exorcism gets out of its depth quickly. Using its own terminology - the power of evil is very great.

The only other area where I've noticed religiosity is in superstition, particularly in Fortune Telling. Tarot Cards can look fine - or frightening. Some of the I Ching philosophies are terrifying in their brutality. The prophecy of the used woman/prostitute looks from black to blacker - anyone getting that prophecy would have need to be scared.

[JESSICA SALMONSON]

I've what I personally consider an interesting theory on astrology, one I've never seen suggested elsewhere...I base it on two presumably proven facts: that cosmic rays or "naked atoms" are all around us, bombarding us from outer space, and that naked atoms pass through objects and can "strike" DNA molecules and alter genetic codes causing "sports" or mutations in stable colonies of any species of animal.

Presuming cosmic rays are sun and star born objects, one can see how the suns of the universe could effect our nature. DNA decides if we are blond, brown eyed, freckle prone, and even if we prefer chocolate over vanilla or SF over mysteries. We might speculate that there are patterns of cosmic radiations established by the placement of stars. It is not so much important under what sign we are born as under what sign we are conceived, since the genetic code could not be influenced once development was under way, but this is unimportant in most cases unless a child is premature and assigned the wrong zodiac sign (I was premature, and everyone who seems to know anything about astrology insists I am almost a classic Aquarius, whereas my sign of birth is Capricorn just before Aquarius).

This does not override heredity, but is something to ponder as a valid possibility of how our lives could be influenced by the stars, and how astrology might have a percentage of validity in establishing or pinpointing common factors. There is the additional possibility, strictly speculative, that the presumed patterns of cosmic radiation would have a continuing effect, as yet unknown, on our state of mind, temperament, susceptibilities. The stars could have a direct influence on us daily due to the nearly immeasurable radiation bombarding our very brains. Again, not an overriding influence, but a small effect. It is probably vanity that makes men think he is not a linked part of the whole universe and makes him think the likes of astrology is hokey because "those flecks of light way out there couldn't affect my free will and independent action." If the Taoist way, and even some Christian sects, have a minimum of validity, we are somehow linked with everything, and

through meditation, nirvana, karma, our Tao, or whatever you call it, we can discover this link and know that we are One with the Universe.

One might also ponder the possibility of cosmic bombardments changing from latitude to latitude on the face of the Earth, and would differences in an Alaska eskimo sagitarian be markedly different than an Equatorial Indian, insofar as accurate forecasts are possible. Or would influences change when a Mongolian relocated in Thailand, and the patterns influencing his life altered?

((I once roughed out a similar idea as background for a story. Right after the TV weather report, the announcer would read off the astrological predictions, e.g.: "Moderate to deep depression today, turning to mild ennui about evening. Taurus is warned particularly to beware of business deals. Etc.")))

[JACKIE FRANKE]

As far as I'm concerned, I've yet to hear of a good refutation for my main criticism of astrology; that the zodiac signs which are assigned to the various dates are not in that order any longer -- and haven't been for quite some time. Some well-known writer in the field wrote in one of the mass circulation zines a couple of years ago pointing out that deficiency, and suggested a new layout for the zodiac, containing not only new dates assigned to the various "houses" but also an entirely new sign. That was the first indication I had that anyone who worked with astrology ever considered astronomy, but apparently those who truly Believe in it, and are intellectually aware (a not-mutually-exclusive pairing), do fret about it. In a way they remind me of the Fundamentalist who pores through all the old histories and texts from ancient times that he can find, in hopes of tying in historical fact with the Bible. The rationalizing Believer, who cannot live by Faith alone, and must find something concrete to back up his beliefs, does not exist only in the area of Theology.

Being the dabbling sort of Seeker, who would dearly love to believe in something, I read the various arguments given by adherents to their pet Faith, but I haven't been convinced yet. Yet the mere fact that I do listen to what is said by the proponents is symptomatic of the times. Somewhere, deep down, despite my reasoning that Man is but a clever animal, with the virtues and liabilities of any living thing, I would like to find out that we are a special being, and have special forces working for and/or against us. Yes, that we are not fully responsible for our actions would be a good way of putting it. But the belief that we are, with all the nihilistic connotations that apply to that philosophy when you consider what awesome and horrible things have been done by Man to Man, hasn't been refuted yet. I think I search because I find that concept distasteful. How much nicer it would be to find that the Evil that exists in this world is due to Beelzebub, or the influence of Jupiter, or Little Green Men. It would not only excuse me of my own peccadilloes, but my species of its crimes.

I don't agree though that we're on the verge of any Dark Age, since such searchings have gone on throughout recorded history, and undoubtedly before then as well. We have our Believers among us, and because of modern communication techniques, their beliefs receive wider coverage than in by-gone times, but their numbers and depth of belief don't seem to be any greater, relative to the entire population, than before. They

are the majority, I think, and they always have been. But since people have always given greater lip-service to their beliefs than actual life-service, faith in any particular belief isn't going to affect them all that much.

((Ah, but you don't share my apocalyptic view of the next two decades. In much of Brian Aldiss' recent fiction, he postulates that the US, Europe, and the Soviet Union will soon be united in an undeclared war against the Third World, primarily over resources. Even though the war is undeclared, civil liberties are abridged at home permanently, and the industrialized nations fall into a more or less beneficent police state. Gradually, the Third World is raided and reverts to primitive forms of culture, but only after their resources have been seized by the enemy, which squanders them in fighting the war. Hence, humanity decays into moribundity. This is the most optimistic future I see if mankind does not learn to shoulder his own responsibilities. I note that Taiwan and five other nations are considered potential members of the nuclear club. With ten or twelve nuclear powers (including South Africa, Israel, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Taiwan, etc.), how long do you think we'll have to wait to see our first nuclear war? I expect to live to see it, or at least some of it. I should have added South Korea to that list, incidentally. Obviously all those countries in the most dire fear of war will be those most anxious to acquire nuclear weapons, and there's no way to permanently deny them the technology any more.)))

[MIKE GLICKSOHN]

From personal experience and observation, I'd be inclined to say that I know far more people who've acquired self-knowledge and are simply incapable of utilizing it to achieve the changes they perceive as necessary than people who avoid self-knowledge in an effort to preserve the facade of security they have obtained. Perhaps fans are more introspective than the general populace but I see many of them who see the need for change within themselves, admit that it can only come from within, but have not yet discovered how to make the adjustments they would like to make. I'm certainly still working on it myself and I know I'm not alone by a long shot. Not recognizing the existence of a problem is bad; not being able to find the solution to a problem is worse; but not knowing how to implement a solution you know exists may well be the prevalent tragedy of our culture. The increased popularity of cults such as the Maharaj Ji and others of his grasping ilk seems to me to be evidence of this desperate seeking for external realization instead of an internal resolution to the problem of self-awareness.

((I agree. I tend to suspect that all people who do a great deal of writing are more introspective, and since fans (at least fanzine fans) tend to write, they tend to be introspective. Michael Carlson called last night and pointed out you probably wouldn't be at Fan Fair, so I guess we're going to miss you again. Why don't you come visit RI?)))

[SHERYL SMITH]

In reading the general comments inspired by (if not precisely the subject of) your essay on superstition last issue, a realization gradually crept up on me, to wit: That many of the comments are blundering blithely into metaphysical territory and making pathetic swipes at same with science-denied principles of reason. Now reason, if that quality need be supported in this company, is essentially a Good Thing; and I have myself endeavored to employ it on numerous occasions. But when

one wishes to discuss metaphysical matters (by which I do not mean the consequence of superstition, but such things as a "higher reality", the "eternal" relations between man and the universe, etc.) I maintain that reason (of the logical, empirical variety) is the wrong tool for the task. For the assumptions upon which this science based reasoning rests stem from perceptions no less culturally limited than those of any Ubangi. If not more so. I cannot "defend" metaphysical truths - for these are experiential, not verbal and linear. Besides, I do not care to commit the error I am condemning. But I can and will call into question the assumptions and try to show the cultural limitations of same.

First, Paul Walker. That gentleman has managed to assume more questionable things per paragraph than I recall seeing anywhere else, and I only hope I can catch them all. That the concept of "our separateness from nature...has always been essential to our thinking" seems not to be so, although if Mr Walker had said "logical way of thinking" he might have been able to make a case. But the enormous amount of thinking, particularly of a religious/philosophical nature, that has been done in the East, where this dogma of separateness has not held sway should suffice to refute the necessity of this dogma in such matters. Similarly Mr Walker's assertion that this separateness is "phenomenological fact" is called into question not only by the numbers of sophisticated folk who hold otherwise, but by the scientific studies of ecosystems: it seems that the mutual influence of a given living thing and its environment is such that they cannot be separated without profound alterations in both entities. And though I tend to be more cautious than some in projecting behavioral patterns of lower lifeforms onto man, I think there is some applicability of these studies to the human condition. Even a creature with the power to consciously shape its environment is not totally separable from same. As for his explanation of metaphysical phenomena which he seems to think are functions of the commonly hypothesized "soul" (something more), which in turn is a function of "alienation" (that is, between mind and body, between conscious and subconscious - and this is the first time I've seen that unqualified noun used to mean anything but the individual's sense of dissociation from society, a step which Mr Walker's argument never reaches), as for that dizzying progression, it seemingly boils down to a 20th century empirico-centric attempt to glorify man's objectivity as that which raises him above the animals. Per Walker this "objectivity" is the source of metaphysics as well as the abstract mental activities. (Beg pardon, Mr Walker, if I misinterpret you, but you must admit your argument was tough plodding.) I myself think this is rather a tall order for the Western sense of the divided individual to fulfill, and is contradicted again by the fact that metaphysics has flourished most fully in the East, where the compartmentalized view of man does not hold sway.

As for Frank Balazs's rundown of what might be called the primitive as factory worker - as a mindless traditionalist with a mechanical and meaningless repetition of an original creative act - I thought that went out with the late 19th century tendency to see a solar deity in every hero. While it is true that "individual responsibility" seems not to have been a relevant concept in primitive cultures, it is also true that ritual re-enactments in those societies were no more "superstitious" repetitions of an historically original act than is Sir So-and-So's ten week stint of portraying 60 times the part of Hamlet.

The comparison is apt: myth, like drama, is happening now, and to view either as historical diorama is to miss the point of them utterly.

George Flynn's discussion of faith makes sense in its context insofar as it concerns the usual Christian meaning of the term. But this too is a culturally limited factual/historical view of religious phenomena, as it presumes religion to be a set of irrational beliefs, just a cut above superstition in sophistication and dignity. This does not account for the universality of religious experience (never mind the various doctrines and deities that attach to it); whereas if one considered humans to be endowed with the capacity for spontaneous metaphysical experience which has nothing to do with belief in its essential qualities, this problem vanishes. But so does the necessary connection between belief (faith) and religion.

The main point of contention I have with Roy Tackett is that he thinks scientific progress is, or should be, indicative of human progress - but I've had that out with him before.

((While I accept the probability that man is unique in nature (at least on Earth), I agree with you that he is not separate therefrom. I've always thought that primitive rituals were an expression of the belief in the power of sympathetic magic, whereas I'm not sure modern drama is cast in quite the same mold. A case could be made that human progress should be measureable in terms of scientific progress (at least among other considerations), and in some limited sense can be thus measured. On the other hand, as you imply, it can hardly be considered progress if we develop and employ a means to destroy ourselves utterly. Science is just one aspect of humanity.)))

/ELST WEINSTEIN/

To bring up an entirely new subject when there are plenty of very good ones lying about in your zine is probably a sacrilege. However, just recently I have come across some very scary (to me) beliefs. The scariest thing about them is that there is enough evidence to back up these beliefs that a prone to pessimism person like me will tend not to dismiss them. These beliefs concern the coming of another Dark Age within the next 30 or so years. I would not have accepted that as valid two years ago, but now I can see some of the writing on the wall. The people in question are not uneducated, in fact just the opposite. These people are researchers in physics, biology, chemistry, and other sciences and they are complaining that the recent close down of research grants and subsequent ending of most "non-essential" research is resulting in a stoppage of civilization. This alone is not the main point, however. They also point out that for many years many colleges have been turning out worthless diplomas -- as typified by New York City College's policy of accepting any HS grad, regardless of his GPA. Inflation of degreed people has led to the case where degrees actually hurt people trying to gain employment - hence another blow against learning. Add to this the increasing illiteracy or poor literacy rate in our own country and you have the makings for a period of ignorance that will hit when the current educated generation is being replaced. If you think I am wrong on this, please say so. I would love to hear contradicting facts that would make me feel a whole lot better.

((Obviously I agree, though I'm skeptical about the objectivity of a group who just lost their jobs/pet projects/fine facilities by a cutback.

SUPERSTITION.....WEINSTEIN, DI. FILIPPO...

In the great space travel controversy in AWRY last year, I was unable to convince people that the crunch is a great deal more imminent than they thought, that we cannot afford to pin all of our hopes on the space program simply because we might slip economically/technologically/politically to a point where we could no longer take advantage of the space frontier. I've been criticizing the public education system for literally a decade in fanzines, and barring a few hopeful signs, the trend has been pretty much what I've said all along. People who are neither intellectually or emotionally suited for college diplomas get them now simply by remaining in the system long enough.)))

### MASLOW

[PAUL DI FILIPPO]

Why do you assume that the B-beings will automatically form a culture, which implies a high degree of formalized interaction? From your description of them, I would be inclined to think that they would be the most confirmed loners this world has ever seen. If the B-beings ever do emerge as a culture, it will not be until our technology is more advanced. At its present stage, our technology requires a large population to support it. There can only be a small number of B-beings alive, and if they wish to separate themselves from our present society it would probably mean foregoing the technological benefits our society offers. When technology reaches the point where it is self-perpetuating then the B-beings will split off, knowing that they do not have to leave behind the material advantages which make life more "human". In fact, once that theoretical black box that supplies heat, food and light becomes reality, this whole world will fragment. All that holds us together is the fact that we need each other to survive at the level to which we are accustomed. Once everyone can make it on their own, groups of like-minded people will spring up everywhere. Something like Knight's A FOR ANYTHING.

Of course, the B-beings might always decide to become the "good-choosers" and take over our present setup for the good of everyone, but I doubt if their mental makeup would permit them to be slavemasters, which is what they would end up being. They might step in if asked, but that's all.

Alright, as everyone assumes that mental evolution is the only step left, I mostly agree. However, the human body is far from perfect, and I can think of some improvements that would definitely be pro-survival, and which would offer even B-beings some stiff competition. What if a mutant who doesn't need to sleep arises? Can you imagine how he and his fellows would bowl over us normals? And as much as the utility of strength is currently played down, a race of Gladiators-Supermen would be awfully hard to contend with. In other words, let's not rule out the physically superior as the possible wave of the future, no matter how unpalatable the idea might be.

((I think you miscalculate a bit. The tendency to be self-actualized (B-being) instead of depending on others for gratification (d-being) is a tendency, not an absolute. People who are predominantly B tend not to transmit these qualities to their offspring. So a B civilization would be incredibly unstable. I suspect that B beings would be unwilling to dominate society's functions even if asked, because they'd be

MASLOW

LONG, ARTHURS

too fully occupied with their own interests. The totally B individual would probably resemble the mutants in CITY, and a less recognizable "society" I have difficulty imagining. Your non-sleeping mutant would probably suffer from horrible psychological problems because of his inability to dream.)))

/SAM LONG/

Your leading article, the review of Maslow's book, was exceedingly interesting, and full of potential comment hooks. For instance, what is a psychologically healthy individual? Do we really want or need/ought we to have uninhibited psychological growth? Which is better, growth or safety, as regards the survival of the species? B or D? I can ask more questions than I can answer.

The B-D bit was exceedingly interesting, but I wish you - or Maslow - had, in enumerating the characteristics of those types, had noted that those characteristics are tendencies, and, of course, that no one's completely one or the other. Or had done so earlier on than you did. Also that people can switch from one to another at times.

The paragraph about chickenfeed was also interesting. No need for an experiment in animal husbandry to tell us that leaders can lead. It takes a "leap of faith" to call the chicken experiment "a challenge to Western ideas of government": a leap which I, for one, won't take. I see no significant connection between the one and the other. After all, the experiment is at bottom one of natural selection, whereas our ways of choosing our rulers is, so to speak, unnatural selection.

((There are two aspects of the chickenfeed experiment that disturb me. First, it implies that popular choice can be disastrously wrong. You can imagine what would happen if a farmer had a majority of bad choosers, and decided which chickenfeed to buy on the basis of which one was chosen by a majority of chickens. Second, the fact that the lower animals can make incorrect choices about something basic and something as simply presented to them implies that the tendency to be a bad chooser can be systemic, not just a product of miseducation.)))

/BRUCE ARTHURS/

An especially fascinating section of "Myth" this time. Why so fascinating? Because the characteristics of the B-beings that you list sound an awful lot like my characteristics. And for that matter, yours, from what I know of you. And I'm willing to bet that a lot of fans see themselves in that list of characteristics. Why, this could be the biggest thing since "Fans are slans!" And if the word gets around, I'll bet you're right that it'll be a basis for a lot of SF stories. In fact, I started writing a story a few days ago, and your article has given me a clearer idea of how to characterize some of the people in it.

A quibble: In one paragraph on page 6, you say that a B has difficulty making decisions or acting on them. Yet two paragraphs further, describing the chicken experiment, we find that the B chickens did make decisions and did act on those decisions.

((B-beings have difficulty making decisions, but do not find it impossible. I have no idea how long it took the chickens to make up their minds. Besides, the concepts of B and D people is not broadly applicable to non-sentient beings, since they don't generate stimuli from within.)))

[PAUL WALKER]

You say: "Knowledge tends to alter our situation which endangers that security that most of us are disproportionately concerned with maintaining." If you accept the fact that the first principle of an organism is its own self-preservation then that makes your statement irrational. "We tend to be afraid of any knowledge that would cause us to despise ourselves or to make us feel inferior, weak, worthless, evil, shameful." But doesn't it make sense to avoid such knowledge? Again, you make value judgments and confuse them with rationality. Feelings of inferiority, shame, evil, etc. will impair our ability to function. The very cause of Oedipus' downfall was his determination to learn the whole truth.

((I don't normally interrupt letters, but I'm going to make an exception here, because I suspect I'm going to have a lot to say in answer to Paul's letter. Firstly, then, self-preservation is the wrong term to use here. By safety I am referring to social safety. Even if it were actual physical safety, there still remains validity to asking whether the concessions we make because of fear for our own safety are not in the long run contributing to a greater danger. I disagree entirely that it makes sense to avoid knowledge of our own shortcomings. Oedipus was not destroyed by knowledge; he was destroyed by his inability to come to terms with that knowledge. The difference might seem subtle, but that makes it no less real. Not being aware of our personal shortcomings is far more likely to "impair our ability to function" than not. I, for example, fully recognize that my temper tends to fly at times out of all proportion to the stimulus, and I take steps to see that I rarely act in the heat of that temper. I believe this improves rather than impairs my functioning. Of course, these things are value judgments; that's why each editorial is titled "Myth".)))

Now, I am all for self-analysis - to a point - beyond that it becomes self-destructive. Von Helsing was right, there are some things in nature we should not tamper with. At least not until we know how to handle them. Take the case of your two concentration camp guards, one of whom is guilt ridden, the other of whom is cheerful. Granted, the former's reaction is more "desireable" than the latter's from a moral standpoint, but also, in fact, more "irrational" from a purely objective standpoint. The former is truly maladjusted in that he knows what he is doing is wrong but doesn't know how to correct it. He goes on having nightmares and being miserable. Perhaps all of us have shared his situation in some other capacity. For his sake, he would be better off self-deceived and cheerful. The point is that what impairs our ability to function is irrational, and if the objective truth does, then it is also irrational.

((I don't see how you can ascribe that meaning to the word, Paul. "Irrational" is defined variously as absurd, meaningless, without reason. Does that mean you consider unpleasant truths to be absurd or lacking in reason? I'm afraid I don't follow your point even remotely. If you are saying that it is better to be happy with our ignorance of our own faults than unhappy with self-awareness, then I submit that you have made a value judgment just as well as I, because there is no objective answer to the question.)))

You say, "It is obvious that our society has lost its model for behaviour; our statesmen have become politicians, our astronaut-heroes

are military public relations men, our religious leaders are opportunistic and the military appears narrowminded, incompetent, and occasionally inhuman." My God, Don, talk about generalizations!

((I think from context you will see that this is my view of the position of these groups in the general public eye, not my own evaluation of same. By definition, that can only be a generalization.)))

Maslow you paraphrase as saying "the self-actualized person develops inner drives which he then derives pleasure from satisfying." Can you truly say that our politicians, astronauts, religious leaders, and military men cannot be self-actualizing people? That they cannot serve as models for behavior in our day and age? Not for the intelligentsia perhaps, but then such people rarely ever did serve them as models. You will accuse me of misunderstanding you but I think what underlies your argument and Maslow's interpretations is liberal morality.

((As a matter of fact, I never said that these classes of people could not serve as models, only that for the majority of people they no longer do. This has been borne out by any number of studies of the professions to which people ascribe favorable tendencies. You also seem to have missed the point in my essay where I specifically said that I disagreed with much that Maslow said, particularly his tendency to define the B-being as having all those traits which Maslow wished himself to have. Maslow is, in my opinion, overly influenced by Existentialist thought.)))

No, I am not a conservative, but I am skeptical about liberals and liberalism. They sentimentalize their ideals and distort life. Last night I was reading a noted historian saying that history does not repeat itself and then going on to detail the human evils of ancient Greece, and this morning I was reading a noted contemporary social critic denouncing many of the same evils in our society in terms of: "If only they would realize (his point of view), how different things would be." And Maslow says if only people would be self-actualizing, and you say if only people would accept responsibility for their acts? I am inclined to think the reason liberals of any period have ultimately failed is that their ideology blinds them to human realities -- whatever they are.

((One of the most perplexing things to me has been the fact that the position I find myself in (advocating individual responsibility) is a conservative position, not a liberal one. I feel that people ought to be held responsible for their own actions. Neither does Maslow say that all people should be B-beings; indeed, he says most specifically that they do not need to be, that B-beings do not perpetuate themselves that man's civilization needs both, that all of us encompass both traits. We should none of us either be slavishly dependent or totally independent of our fellow men. I also am skeptical about liberals, but then, I'm skeptical about just about everyone.)))

/STEPHEN DORNEMAN/

Although I admit that I have not yet read Maslow's book, it seems to me that his partitioning of humans into B and D beings is somewhat artificial. All measureable personality traits so far studied have fallen along a normal distribution. Maslow seems to be looking only at the two extremes in his divisions and ignoring the majority of people who con-

tain mixtures of the attributes of both. This is as bad as the Freudian's "psychopathology of the average". I agree that "We tend to be afraid of any knowledge that could cause us to despise ourselves or to make us feel inferior, weak, etc." In fact, this is the basis of Dissonance theory, but the generalization of this to include all self-knowledge neglects the fact that we feel pride and pleasure in our talents and finest impulses, and are therefore positively reinforced in the exercise and knowledge of these attributes. I do feel that Maslow's questioning of the importance of outside sources of value is of some merit, but the fact that numbers of people do rely on such institutions as the church and state for solace seems to indicate that they have some effect, even if only a "psychosomatic" one.

((I'm not sure how you interpreted me as saying that favorable self-knowledge is suppressed. Obviously it isn't. The question is not one of whether or not church, for example, provides solace, but whether or not it should, ignoring for the moment the validity of the religion. Should an external source be the only way an individual can achieve gratification? I say no.)))

[/MARY MARTIN/

I have also long felt that children are neither basically good nor basically evil. Here we get into the question of what constitutes good and evil. I would say that, in any human society I can think of, evil consists of hurting or betraying another to whom you are bound by some tie of responsibility and who is considered to be your equal. In the Christian ideal, all people are your brothers, so you should hurt nobody. Women and children, slaves and animals are accepted targets in many societies by virtue of their inequality. So is assault on any people outside the unit of social responsibility - the tribe or the nation. This evil to which I refer is partly a matter of preservation of society, and part a matter of preservation of self, since the individual hopes that (s)he will not be harmed by reciprocity.

[/MARK M. KELLER/

Have you considered carefully Maslow's ideas on "peak experiences"? The highest stage of self-actualizing would appear to be, for Maslow, simple mystical communion with the All, the emotional state the Sufis call "expansion", in which your sense of self enlarges beyond the boundaries of the skin. This has been a commonplace in India since the Upanishads, for at least 3000 years. The ascetic yogi, the rishi, the sadhu - the completely self-actualized man. Was that the goal you had in mind for our society?

((Clearly I should have emphasized a bit more strongly that the B and D designations were only tendencies, since so many people thought that either Maslow or I believed we should strive to transform our society into totally self-actualized beings. It's true of neither of us.)))

[/GEORGE FLYNN/

For reasons well known to you, I haven't had time to read Maslow this month. But I did look over some of his work (he died in 1970, by the way), and I was delighted to find that he's said almost the same thing about science vs mystery that I did in my comment on "With Morning Comes Mistfall" last issue. This is from the final two pages of his THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SCIENCE:

"Many people still think that scientific study or detailed knowing is the opposite and the contradiction of the sense of mystery. But this need not be the case. Studying the mystery does not necessarily profane it. Indeed, this is the best way toward greater respect, richer understanding, and greater socialization and sanctification at a much higher level of richness. Remember that it has always been our wisest men who were most simple, least arrogant, and most "amused".

Knowing more about trees and how they work can make them more beautiful. The tree that I look at and admire is now more a miracle because I know a little botany. If I knew still more about the details of its functioning, this knowledge could make the tree still more miraculous and beautiful...

"...Science at its highest level is ultimately the organization of, the systematic pursuit of, and the enjoyment of wonder, awe, and mystery. The greatest rewards that the scientist can have are such peak-experiences and B-cognitions as these. But these experiences can equally be called religious experiences, poetic experiences, or philosophical experiences...Not only does science begin in wonder, it also ends in wonder."

I agree that encouraging curiosity in children is a fine thing. The problem, as you're well aware, is keeping them from dismantling everything they investigate. (Hell hath no fury like a curious two year old

((Surely, George, you don't think that my Davy would dismantle things. I mean, after all, he knocked the bumper off my car by accident...)))

/BEN INDICK/

I was relieved that Maslow's supermenchen, the B-people are fatalists; that is the only way I squeeze into their ineffable ranks. Personally, I cannot accept the hopeful theory that we are born whole and deteriorate through external influences. Perhaps, being hopelessly D, I am too ready to be influenced by numbers, and at this point of time, the weight or clout is with the Freudians and their followers. Indeed, they make a point that prenatal influences are also important, and how can anyone avoid that, outside of being born in a testtube? Is that then the answer? (And can we avoid the possibility of chemicals being added to our Huxleyan testtubes?) No, I do believe we are intelligences superimposed on an animal which has learned it must fend for itself - and this usually implies violence if necessary to achieve desired ends.

((I don't think Maslow really wanted to imply that good should be connected with B-beings and bad with the D-beings. After all, perhaps my self-actualization would be satisfied by killing people without being caught.)))

/NANCY HUSSAR/

Maslow is of course presenting the two extremes of behavior orientation. I have yet to meet the pure B type. I believe I have met the D type, however it may be just that I didn't know them well enough to see that there was more to them. I am between them, hopefully leaning toward the B extreme. I do some things for my own pleasure; my goals are my own. However, there are projects which upon completion cause me to breathe a sigh of relief. I believe my tolerance is high.

A verse you may not have seen before but one to which I attach much importance especially where it concerns my life and beliefs is Galatians 6: 4,5:

"Each person should examine his own conduct for himself; thus each can measure his/her achievement by comparing themselves to themselves and not with anyone else."

ROBERT WHITAKER

When I was in high school I had an argument with a classroom filled with thirty very angry students my own age about "normal". I was quite insistent that no one was normal, and no one in the classroom had gone through a normal childhood. Tempers began rising, and I was yelled at for the duration of that period. I think I realized that everyone likes to think they, themselves, are quite unexceptional at times. And to point out that they might have something within themselves which is not quite "socially acceptable" (or "unnatural") is a disturbing thought. When I told the people in my classroom that their actions towards me spoke of an abnormal form of social behavior, I was given the same pattern of anger.

WILL NORRIS

I do agree with Maslow's contention that mankind is not basically evil, immoral, etc. It seems as though he could use "amoral" rather than "neutral". Conventions, morality, emotions are learned rather than innate. The child doesn't have any of these. But I do think, differing with Maslow, that the child is an innately selfish creature/being. As he points out, between self/independence and love/security, the child will choose love/security. So too with the child in other phases of activity. Only under the love/security influence of the parents are such things as respect for life (or lack thereof) and independence (or dependence) learned. I tend to agree with -- was it Freud? -- who maintained that the child is basically an ego without an id -- a selfish organism with no controls. The controls are provided by the parents. Unfortunately, parents operate generally within the controls instilled in them by their parents (or ironically enough they operate in direct conflict to those controls) setting up something of a vicious cycle. "If it was good enough for dad and granddad, it's good enough for me and my children," is the frustrating conditioning that is almost always impossible to break.

FAYE RINGEL

Your myth on TOWARD A PSYCHOLOGY OF BEING was fascinating, particularly because I was a student at Brandeis not long after Maslow's death (which followed quickly upon his retirement to California in 1968 or thereabouts - can there be a lesson in that?). Maslow was one of Brandeis' grey eminences, but his reputation was in a strange state when I took my freshman psych course in 1969. He had originated humanistic psychology while at Brandeis, but his colleagues had never been supportive (consisting as they did of Freudians, behavior- and environmentalists -- very big on rats, bats, and Skinner boxes). So, in a great example of the Academic Big Lie, my "review of psychology theories" course began with Freud and ended with Skinner and contained no reference at all to Maslow or his theories (or to Carl Rogers or any other client-centered or sensitivity-training oriented practitioner.)

It was no wonder that Maslow was unpopular at Brandeis in the late sixties and early seventies; everyone there, faculty member and student alike, was neurotic and damned proud of it. I was involved once in working on a sort of varsity show which wasn't very good, and was never accepted for production, but it did contain a parody of CAMELOT'S "What

Do the Simple Folk Do?" The answer to the question "What do the Brandeis kids do?" -- "They're depressed!"

One good indication of all this was the new "mental health counselling center" which opened in my senior year -- it was bigger than the infirmary! Everyone's favorite topic of conversation, it seemed, was "have you been to psych counselling lately?" Every student was entitled to 36-40 hours of free therapy, usually traditional Freudian -- it wasn't transferable though, as I discovered when I tried to assign mine away. So who is sane? Or, in Maslovian terms, who is self-actualized? I was happy escaping to the Middle Ages. My roommate, her boyfriend and my very-much-ex-boyfriend were actually happy and secure in their neuroses and their therapists. But "normal" - based society or psychology would have called all of us crazy as loons. What would Maslow have thought?

((In explanation of the above, I ought to point out Faye is in the SCA. Somehow, as I probably should have mentioned earlier, I had missed the fact that Maslow was dead.)))

#### LYNNE BRODSKY

The first thought that came to me upon reading about Maslow's B-beings and D-beings was of the early Rosicrucians. The ideal Rosicrucian was an intelligent man in quest of knowledge for its own sake. He was humanitarian, to heal the sick gratuitously was in obedience to his oath to the order. As alchemists the Rosicrucians sought the Philosopher's Stone, an elixir which could endow the user with eternal life, or at the very least revive the seriously ill. Besides the elements of Zoroastrianism, Cabalism, and assorted other mysticisms that found their way into Rosicrucian philosophy, the order itself generated a body of scandal, legend, and literature. In particular Bulwer-Lytton's ZANONI features a very, very B main character. Thanks to the elixir, Zanoni has been around for millenia enabling him to acquire a lot of knowledge, and to be uncannily near when needed to bail others out of tough spots.

Colin Wilson's THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE involves psychological evolution of the species. The main character and narrator finds that a minor brain operation transfers powers usually considered extrasensory to normal functions. "Extrasensory" abilities are latent in all of us, but we just don't know how to use them. The next phase of man's evolution will be to fully utilize these powers without the help of science fictional brain surgery. There's plenty of stuff around about the psychological evolution of the race - MORE THAN HUMAN, Wilson, Maslow, Calrke. But barring mutations that are physiological as well, e.g. CHILDHOOD'S END, I am a little dubious about it in the sense that I think it was meant in the last MYTHOLOGIES.

((Bulwer-Lytton was a strange character. In his last novel, VRIL, he portrayed a culture dehumanized by too much knowledge, in this case knowledge of an unlimited source of mental power. So it would seem that he recanted somewhat in his declining years. )))

#### VICTORIA VAYNE

Maslow believes man is basically neutral, neither good nor evil. I would go along with this; as I used to express it, "There is no sin, there is only sickness." I used to do a thought-experiment: If I were God, who would I assign to hell? My answer: Nobody. There is evidence of genetic bases for predispositions to crime, such as one chromosome giving rise to a larger population of aberrant behavior among people thus afflicted than among the populace at large. And it is very possible that

the personality pattern that gives rise to a predisposition to crime is inherited. If the environment is conducive to bringing out the "bad side" of that personality pattern, you get a criminal type. I don't think it is wholly genetic or wholly environmental; both play a role, but when the two come together in the right/wrong way, you get trouble. In the light of this, I cannot say that a criminal individual is himself responsible for his actions, when he is a product of his genes and childhood, over which he has no control.

((I can't agree. On that reasoning, you can pardon everything, hold people responsible for nothing. Additionally, it denies categorically that man has free will. Where the superstitious-minded foretell outer intelligences manipulating them, you seem to have made Freud a prophet and psychology a religion, and absolved people from blame on the basis that they "can't help themselves". "You have not thought things through" (with apologies to Ursula Leguin and George Flynn.)))

### THE ARTWORK

[LAURINE WHITE] "What a lovely Dalzell cover!"

[SHERYL BIRKHEAD] "The Dalzell cover - as the last - is nice (put mildly)..."

[ERIC LARSEN] "I must also mention the cover of this issue. It was done by Bonnie Dalzell and is fantastic."

[MIKE GLICKSOHN] "That cover is easily the best thing I've seen Bonnie do. Dynamite!"

[GRAHAM ENGLAND] "The dragon on the front cover is very fine..."

[BRUCE ARTHURS] "Another beautiful Dalzell cover..."

[ROSE HOGUE] "Love the fantastic and beautiful Bonnie Dalzell cover."

[NED BROOKS] "Lovely cover by Bonnie Dalzell."

[PAUL WALKER] "The cover was a beauty."

[STEPHEN DORNEMAN] "I greatly enjoyed "Dreamslayer" by Bonnie Dalzell, but now I find myself in a position, after seeing the cover, of wanting to see both more art and more poetry from Ms Dalzell and not knowing which I'd rather see her concentrate on."

[MIKE GLICKSOHN] "...yet another fine cover from Bonnie Dalzell (not quite up to the cover on #4, but since I rated that one of the most impressive covers I'd seen in some time, that isn't too surprising.)

[JACKIE FRANKE]

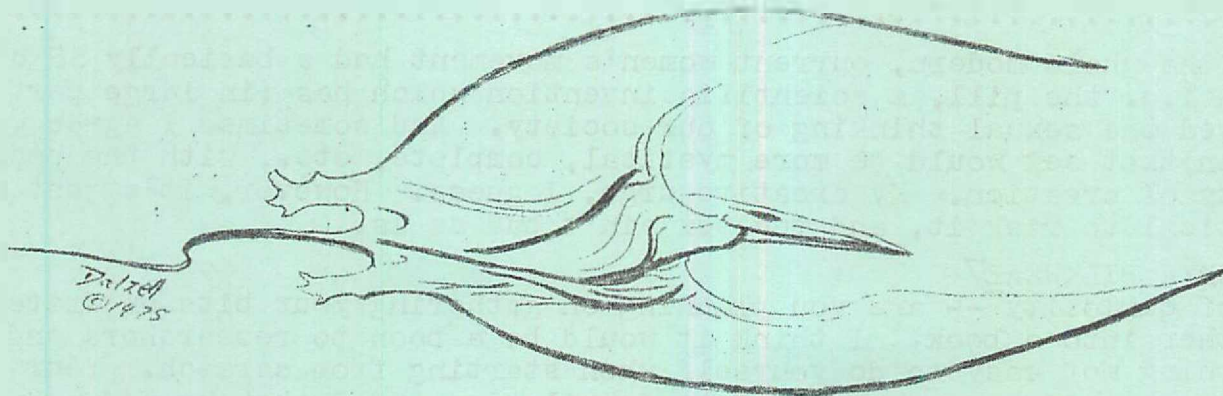
I envy you your Dalzell covers. I love Bonnie's work; her love and knowledge of animals comes through strongly in all her art -- both fanciful and pro. Viewing her conceptions of other-worldly or mythological beasts is a trip in itself. They all seem to live on the page; writhing or galloping or soaring across the paper, depending on the sort of locomotion she chooses to allow them. Marvelous stuff, and I hope that the mini-series on #s 4 and 5 portends a long run of her artwork in (on?) your zine.

((So do I.)))

[JERRY POURNELLE] "I always love Bonnie's art."

[JESSICA SALMONSON] "I am very much impressed by Bonnie Dalzell both as an artist and a poet."

[CHRIS EBLIS] "How did you ever get such snazzy artwork? Blackmailing someone?"



[BEN INDICK]

Bonnie Dalzell, who graced the cover with a characteristically lovely cover, also gives us a good poem (also, a good follow-up to your essay). However, I should say, with apologies, that her analysis was unnecessary. The poem spoke ably for itself.

MISCELLANEOUS

[PAUL DI FILIPPO]

The Boy Scout organization is the most illogical thing I know of. They gather together a group of boys who are right at that age when they like nothing better than to pull off arrant nonsense and mischief, and expect them to learn discipline and respect for the welfare of others without any real instruction in the subjects. And what happens? We end up with troublemakers like you.

((Who? Me?)))

[SAM LONG]

I agree broadly with Mike Shoemaker, in that I find MYTHOLOGIES a passionate zine, causing passionate replies from its readers, such that indeed the lettercol seems more strident and full of at-talking (as opposed to to-talking) - warmer, in a word, - than is generally found in fanzines. You yourself fall victim to the zine's tension: your comment on Mike's letter does not follow from what he said. Your comment was more defensive than it needed to be, and this detracted a bit from the zine.

((Sorry. MYTHOLOGIES, the warm, passionate fanzine. Sounds obscene. Seriously, the topics raised in MYTHOLOGIES (sexism, censorship, race prejudice, etc., are invariably going to cause some passion. I don't promise to agree with anything written to me, but I do promise to listen.)))

[MICHAEL CARLSON]

Despite Mailer's own adolescence, I think Sheryl Smith misses the critical boat on AN AMERICAN DREAM, since one of Mailer's main points is that American myth is at heart adolescent - and if you don't agree, just look at the way the US of A reacted when Ford "beat up" the Cambodians and saved our honor. One thing Mailer has always assumed is that his myth and American myth are very often identical - only he is aware of it. Too often, and perhaps unfortunately, he is right. Calling that adolescence "pathetic" is irrelevant - it is the core of the American Dream. PRISONER OF SEX also contains a little sf jumping off material, plastic wombs and the rest. It's funny no one has mentioned

## MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

that the whole modern, current women's movement had a basically SF origin - i.e. the pill, a scientific invention which has (in large part) altered the sexual thinking of our society. And sometimes I agree with Norman that sex would be more mystical, complete, etc., with the possibility of creation. My creative urge, I guess. However, it's just not practical to risk it, and the sex ain't bad as is.

[SHERYL BIRKHEAD]

Out of curiosity -- are you planning on gathering your bits on writers together into a book? I think it would be a boon to researchers and something not easy to do yourself when starting from scratch. Your pieces seem to lend themselves to compilation and I thought I'd ask.

((Thanks, that's the best suggestion I've had in years. Well, one of the best anyway. Now if only we could get some publisher interested... Since I'm considered picky, maybe I should title it: IN SEARCH OF BLUNDER.)))

[D. GARY GRADY]

Your remarks about experiments with children showing no greater aggressiveness in males are true, although I could probably locate a good many that went in the opposite direction. However, such experiments are totally immaterial to the issue. The subject at hand is not boys and girls but men and women. Every article I have ever seen supporting male aggressiveness has linked it to testosterone, which, of course, is not produced in great quantity until puberty. Testosterone injected into animals causes them to behave aggressively, you know.

((With the reservation that I want to look into this a bit more thoroughly, I grant you the point.)))

[ROSE HOGUE]

My but Mark Keller meets some interesting and heavily philosophical characters at cons. Even so I would like to think of humanity as getting dumber daily rather than smarter since I don't care to believe in evolution. It is already apparent that people 50 years ago had a heck of a lot more common sense and inherent knowledge for survival than modern day man.

So you may turn genzine on us yet. Oh well, I wouldn't mind, but in fairness to yourself you should put a price on things.

((I refuse to sell MYTHOLOGIES because if people paid for it, they wouldn't feel obligated to write letters. And the only reason I go to all this trouble is to get them to write letters. This is hard work, you know. I've typed forty stencils in forty days, drafted a lot of other stuff, and kept up on my other correspondence, and there's no amount of money that I could possibly charge that would repay that labor. Letters, as did yours, succeed far better.)))

[D. GARY GRADY]

You mention Vietnam twice. In the first place, I cannot see how you can doubt the US's "legal" right to involve itself in Vietnam. Where is there a law against it? The SEATO treaty and the Gulf of Tonkin resolution both support it.

((If there's one thing we don't need in MYTHOLOGIES, it's another re-hash of our Vietnam involvement. Briefly, though, I referred to the US decision to disregard the Geneva Accord which called for free elections. "Illegal" is, perhaps, technically the wrong word to use.)))

/STEPHEN DORNEMAN/

I disagree somewhat with your statement that SF has little noticeable effect on society, but I do agree in that I feel neither the effect of SF on society or society's effect on SF is what it could or should be. Also I feel that religious SF such as A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, "Behold the Man", etc., has not really been given the notice it deserves.

((I quote from Leslie Fiedler's introduction to IN DREAMS AWAKE: "Similarly, s-f is a religious literature; but its implicit religion is that of men with a profound faith that they are no longer in need of faith.")))

/MARK KELLER/

Some of the readers may feel that the horror stories of child-abuse in Victorian England are overstated and, in any case, long ago and far away. Check out the news stories that surfaced in June 1975 about "special care" facilities in Texas. It seems that the state mental-hygiene and education departments set up special facilities for troublesome children, referred by schools or welfare departments. Each day the children were given, after breakfast, a glass of "medicine". The medicine was the same for all the hundreds of children at the facility: a massive dose of Thorazine. Then the kids were led into the dayroom and told to watch TV. The amount of tranquilizer swallowed was enough to keep the children groggy and stupefied for 8 - 10 hours. So they sat and watched TV: game shows, soap operas, cartoons, evening news. After dinner, they got a sedative to make them sleep with no fuss. The kids, six to thirteen years old, stayed in the center for weeks or months or years, not making any trouble, quietly. Health inspectors and welfare supervisors were pleased at how calm and respectful the children seemed.

Most of the inmates were not delinquents or retardates. They were temporary referrals from families in divorce, or broken up by illness. The state was simply storing the children until they could be sent back home.

Word of the program spread beyond Texas. Welfare departments in Louisiana and Arkansas sent their overflow kids by bus to the Texas centers, paying a small per-diem charge for boarding. (Thorazine and oatmeal are cheap.)

So, baby-farms in Dickens' England used opium; modern farms use Librium. (Can't use opium any more, you know. It's a DANGEROUS NARCOTIC.) The idea of keeping a large population under drugged control is not fantasy. It is not something that "may happen" in a totalitarian future. It is here, now. It is called "therapy", it is called "re-education", it is called "preparedness for behavior mod". Did you think the Ludovico Technique in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE was something that Anthony Burgess invented for the occasion?

((No, I've read Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD REVISITED too. I've also noticed that the TV has spent much time telling us lately that it is sometimes justified to take dangerous drugs to fall asleep/lose wait/calm nervous tension. Bah, humbug.)))

/GEORGE FLYNN/

I don't quite see why you have such difficulty in accepting the idea that there are special standards for judging SF as SF. It's not a question of literary quality at all, but simply a judgment as to whether (or how well) a given work falls under the definition of this field. SF can be defined in terms of certain classes of subject matter, apparatus, or

attitudes. If a given work doesn't have these, it's not SF. If it has them but its virtues are independent of its having them, then it can be a good book but not a particularly good SF book (I would cite GRAVITY'S RAINBOW). But if it's good because of its SF content, that's what we're really looking for. (And need I add that DYING INSIDE is such a book?)

I was going to engage in this month's demolition of Paul Di Filippo, since he was unwise enough to use that old chestnut, "You can't legislate morality." Time doesn't permit an adequate response, though. In brief: of course morality can be - and is - legislated, effectively, so if enough people agree with the morality in question. We have laws against murder and theft because virtually everyone agrees these things are immoral (or unethical, or just plain wrong - same thing). What you can't legislate effectively is a "morality" (i.e. ethical code) that a sizable portion of the population rejects; such principles are then attacked by the opponents as "morality" in a pejorative sense. It's all semantics again.

((Since I don't accept your definition of SF (what is an SF attitude?), and don't believe that a book can be broken down into its "SFtional qualities", "mundane qualities", and presumably "gothic", "western", "humorous", and "mystery" qualities, I obviously totally disagree with you. DYING INSIDE strikes me as very definitely SF, far more so than a Keith Laumer adventure story, which is just a transplanted western or mystery in most cases. I think I see the point that you're trying to make, but I doubt its validity. In fact, I reject its validity. Since it is a subjective valuation, it is my definition only valid if I accept it, and I don't. I'm beginning to think this is a non-argument, because none of us are talking about the same things.)))

ERIC LARSEN

I have decided to make space my life's occupation and am proceeding by majoring in Aerospace engineering at N.C. State University. The trouble is that by the time I get out, there will probably be no jobs in the space field this side of the iron curtain. Thanks to the Russians, there is someone in the world that is actively working on conquering the "last frontier".

We hear about the overspending of the government. House speaker Albert is asked what we can do. He suggests cutting back some programs. "We can always cut NASA's budget," he says. Out of every tax dollar only one cent goes to space.

((I'm not going to re-start the space program controversy in MYTHOLOGIES - at least not for the moment - but I will mention that I oppose the manned space program as it has been conducted up to now - although I was in favor of the Soyuz mission with some reservations. I am strongly opposed to the idea that space is the last or only frontier. And, in my usual pessimistic vein, I should point out that if my interpretation of current trends is correct, we'd better do something in a hurry before our society sinks back below the level of civilization in which a space program is possible. The energy problems and the proliferation of nuclear arms have created a problem that must be solved first, or if not solved, at least defused. If not, a few satellites and a colony or two on Mars and the moon won't provide us with anything other than interplanetary mausoleums. You say, in part of your letter I didn't print, that "Money spent on space is the best investment we have ever made." Only if we're around long enough to collect on it.

[MIKE GLICKSOHN]

Mark Keller's article on the role of children was most enlightening. I don't ever recall any of my high school history teachers making a point of describing this; maybe they thought it was self-evident, and perhaps it should have been. Certainly I know that in olden days children worked as soon as they were able, but somehow the concept of the "invention" of childhood as we think of it today a mere two hundred years ago is something I'd never realized before. You see, I'm a better person for reading your fanzine, Don...did you ever consider going into teaching, you have a flair for it...?

((((Them that can does, them that can't, teach. (For all of those of you who don't realize this is a joke, this is a joke. I used to be a teacher.))))

[D. GARY GRADY]

I am surprised, somewhat, at your simplistic rendition of the Joann Little case. Actually, I can't blame you. If one listens to NBC's version of the story, which omits a few details, it is easy to picture the Southern Sheriff of the Dodge commercials attacking this poor, innocent, oppressed Black girl who just happened to have a knife handy. NBC has determinedly avoided mentioning that the jailer was also black and in his sixties. His pants were indeed pulled down, but this is not conclusive proof of anything.

((((Since Mike Glicksohn also mis-read my reference to the Little case, I'll respond at mild length. The sentence I wrote was: "A more immediate example of the dangers of sexism is Joann Little, who may yet be sentenced to death for killing a guard who attempted to rape her." Although this may be a bit ambiguous, the key word is "may" which refers to both clauses of the sentence. I had, at the time I wrote that sentence, no opinion either way on the Little case. I do have one now, though only a mild one. I am not a Feminist.

As to your letter's particulars, you're wrong. First, the prosecution says the guard was white, the defense says he was white, and the judge didn't question their statements. I don't know what your news source was, but I'll stick with NBC. Second, the knife was an ice pick that the guard kept in his desk. Third, while his pants being down may not indicate much, the semen spilled all over the place might. The prosecution contends that she lured him in and killed him. If so, I hope they convict her. But a subsidiary argument the prosecution has advanced is that defense in the case of rape does not justify killing the assailant, which point I totally, unequivocally disagree with.))

[SHERYL SMITH]

Mildred Clingerman is another 50's writer I've read and forgotten. (If you really aren't a computer, how come you not only read everything, but remember it all? And how can you keep up with your reading and ~~still put out~~ MYTHOLOGIES six times a year, eh? Let's see you get out of that one.)

((((I've found the secret of the 48 hour day, Sheryl. Also, I am systematized about my fanac., a fast typist, a hard worker, a thoughtful reader, and I made this deal with a funny little red guy with a barbed tail. Actually, I don't remember all this. I re-read everything at least once before writing an article. When I did Silverberg's DYING INSIDE a while back, I read it three times in one weekend.))

[WILL NORRIS]

I'm glad Keller came forward with his "When did the children..." It's rather like the rest of the "Good Ol' Days" syndrome. Things were much worse in many areas than we would like to believe -- also all depends on what part of the world you were/are in. There's a book out on the market called THE BAD OLD DAYS. Childhood--yes, and adolescence also are modern inventions. As Mark points out, the darker side of the coin is even more appalling. Yet I think Mark is a bit premature in harking back to Eden pre-patriarchal system when, theoretically, women governed everything. If that period ever existed, it is probably too remote to obtain any realistic picture of what life was really like.

((I think Mark was only interested in speculative history, although it is surprising how much a trained historian can reconstruct from a surprisingly small amount of initial data.)))

[SHERYL SMITH]

I have now read your article on Gardner Dozois (((in KHATRU 2))) but I'm unconvinced and probably unconvinced as regards Dozois' optimism. Surely it is something that his characters can better understand themselves and their fates; but if they are denied the possibility of control, of affecting the direction and flow of their lives, their stories are not "optimistic" in my book. (And talk about abdication of responsibility! Has not the whole of 20th century fiction been one long whine about people living in a world they never made?

((Ah, but the very awareness of his fate changes an individual's fate. It would be pessimistic if his characters accepted their fate without protest, surrendered their humanity to the overpowering universe. But they don't. They insist on their humanity, even in the face of the death of humanity! How much bigger can an opposing force of depression and defeat be than the absolute knowledge that mankind is extinct? Downbeat optimism, perhaps, but surely not pessimism.)))

[JODIE OFFUTT]

Paul Di Filippo's article is hilarious. I love it!

About Mark Keller's observation that children were dressed as little adults, etc. I wonder if that has anything to do with population figures. Because now that the majority of people are under 25 (I think), older people are dressing like younger. All our advertising is geared toward the young.

((As a purely instinctual answer, I'd say that in years past, the older person was the object of respect, hence imitation. Now, we have a nationwide quest to be young, which I suspect is because no matter how devoutly we attend church, most modern Americans do not believe in an afterlife. So we do everything possible to pretend to ourselves that we are as far from nothingness as possible. And the advertising is geared to the young because they have so much of the money.)))

[VICTORIA VAYNE]

Brief comment on Keller's article on children: I tend to think that the seemingly boundless and sometimes exceedingly annoying energy of young children should be put to some socially useful purpose. I would be against putting kids to work in heavy work situations, but there are certainly jobs they could do, for remuneration, that would not be so taxing. If you mention child labor today, in a society that tends to coddle children, most people recoil aghast, but really, what is so bad

about it? Provided the children are treated humanely, kept from doing things physically and mentally beyond them, and paid fairly, it might be a very good thing. Such a scheme could be combined with schooling. The only problem would be releasing a large number of workers on an already under-employed society: one could end up with make-work.

((I think you miss the point. What would be the purpose of putting them to work. If, as you say, and I agree, we don't need the workers, why bother? And when were you planning to allow the children to play? Play is a learning process, the most important activity a child engages in. It teaches him the relationships between himself and other children with his parents, his own abilities and liabilities, and allows him to explore and come to terms with his physical environment. Admittedly we have a funny attitude toward children, resenting them, fearing them, refusing to discipline them, and so forth. But putting them to work isn't going to solve any problems, and it will cause entire new ones. And what makes you think play and school aren't work?)))

[PETER ROBERTS]

The book of Model Letters (with Alternative Phrases) is a jolly good idea and one that I'm making full use of, as you can probably see. This loc is constructed around a basic letter for resigning a knighthood I've made a few changes, though.

[MIKE BLAKE]

People who have lost their illusions usually do so on their own, not because someone else set out to do it for them. And no other way but bitter experience is effective. No matter how many cynics hurt in love people hear, they will continue to fall in love (with an impossible ideal), be hurt, and join the ranks of the cynics while it starts all over again. I think all we can hope for is to discard our own dreams, or at least realize they are such and cherish dreams for what they are.

((Ah, yes, I remember in high school having an unbearable crush on this quite attractive new girl, and finally getting up the nerve to ask her out. She accepted. I rehearsed for days in advance, working out ways to drop certain clever witticisms into my conversation, to impress her with my sophistication and intellect. Then came the night of my dreams -- and she was dull, dumb, callous, affected. I don't know if that was the first time she'd ever had a date who was in a hurry to get rid of her, but it was the first time I ever wanted to have a date with an attractive, agreeable girl over with.)))

#### LATE LETTERS

[DOUG BARBOUR]

The continuing discussion of sex roles and sexism is illuminating and also a Good Thing i believe. we need to argue this thing out, and when in the midst of such arguing you find a gem like Lesleigh Luttrell's letter, then it's all worthwhile. Sharon & i were both reading this (& Sharon doesn't read fanzines much at all), & so we had some good talks too, but essentially Lesleigh expressed the position i would like to express had I the time & knowledge to do so. i read Shulamith Firestone's book a year ago, & i thought she had a lot going for her; but i would agree that perhaps she is being 1) too trusting of technology, though i think it's very important to remember that she sees technology as very dangerous until it's removed from the control of men who tend to approach mother earth with the same macho disdain for

caring for her as they do their latest rape victim; therefore she is looking to a future where free women -- or, as I would hope, free men & women -- would introduce a more humane technology to us all; & 2) a little too gung ho in that she sometimes sounds a little too much like a dictator in the making. though I don't believe she really means to be. but that's as it may be.

[NEAL WILGUS]

It seems to me Dave Locke misses an important point in not distinguishing between draft dodgers and draft resisters. The dodger may be the immature coward Locke is down on, but the active resister who opposes war and is willing to go to jail or into exile rather than support it is another case altogether. Most of the ongoing debate over amnesty is over the resisters, of course, who in my opinion were the only heroes of the whole bloody Vietnam mistake. Like you and Locke, I opposed the Vietnam War long before it became fashionable, but then I became a pacifist and conscientious objector way back in the late fifties and haven't seen any reason to abandon either position since. Unlike you and Locke I can't buy the idea that our obligation to society is the first consideration, nor is blind obedience the limit of that obligation. One of the problems in Nazi society was that too few citizens exercised the obligation to resist an authority that had gone bananas. We should be proud that when a similar situation developed in this country we did resist, eventually driving two presidents from office and gradually bringing the carnage to an end. I hope you do devote a future "myth" to your hinted at contradictory beliefs on our responsibility to society -- it's an important issue that needs continuing debate.

((Whoa. I didn't say, and I don't think Dave Locke said, that our obligation to society is the "first" consideration, only that it is a consideration. Neither do I agree that Vietnam was similar to the Nazi excesses or that the only heroes of the affair were the resisters. While I don't think the US should have been involved in the way that we were, I do think the country had some obligation to act, and I most certainly don't think of the North Vietnamese government as a band of idealistic revolutionaries or patriots. The issue is a lot more complicated than that.

[DAVID MOYER]

What many history classes seem not to mention is that Paul Revere never really began his famous ride. We teach our children of the famous Paul Revere, when in fact, it was Dr Samuel Prescott who warned the Minute Men of Concord that the British were coming. It was Prescott who cleared a stone wall to evade the British troops, and who rode on with his trusty steed; unlike Revere who was captured.

((I was taught that Revere started the ride, but that Prescott finished it. I never heard that Revere was captured by the British. I did hear somewhere that Revere later billed the Continental government for his services. We need an historian. Where's Mark Keller?)))

[ERIC BLAKE]

Just when I thought fandom had forgotten about me (and I about it as well) my mailbox becomes enburdened once again. I have - in case it escaped your attention when I announced it some years ago - given up on the field of s-f. The vulgarities of Spinrad, Pangborn, and their ilk, tolerated by publisher and fan alike, have destroyed the field.

## MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

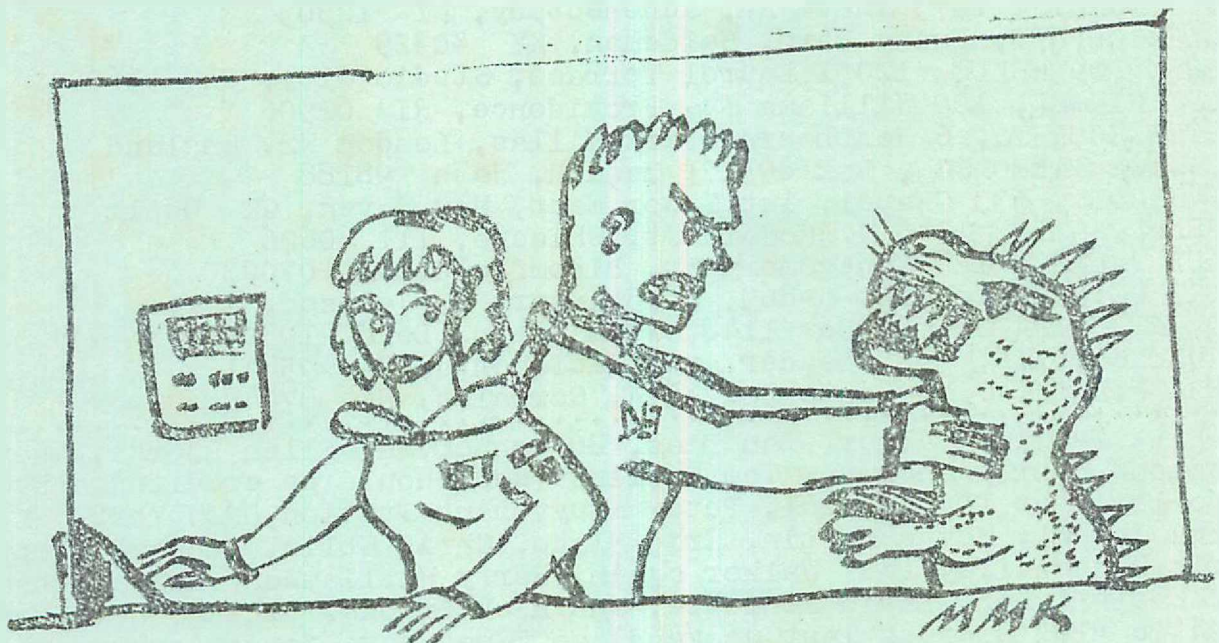
[GIL GAIER]

Understatement of the Issue Award: "I am not a very optimistic person, I admit..." Sometime, just for kicks make a list of those things you are optimistic about. It would make a grand interliner.

I read MYTHOLOGIES with tears and laughter. Why do your wonderful responding readers allow you to get away with such oblique sidestepings?

((They don't. When someone gets the best of me, I edit his letter. Chuckle. That's one of the prerogatives of having one's own fanzine. Actually, I'm a good deal less certain about many of my beliefs than may be apparent. Responding to these letters is good exercise and shows me with relative painlessness which ones leak and where. I'm optimistic about lots of things, Gil. Let's see. I'm optimistic about SF as a field, with some reservations, and...er...uh...ummmmm. Well, lots of things. (Simon says take one oblique sidestep to the left.)))

For those who like statistics, the proposed mailing list for this issue of MYTHOLOGIES breaks down as follows: California - 26, Massachusetts - 22, Rhode Island - 16, New York - 14, Pennsylvania - 10, Michigan - 8, Illinois & Maryland - 7 each, Connecticut & Washington state - 6 each, 5 each to Indiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Virginia, Florida - 4, 3 each to Kansas, Missouri, and North Carolina, 2 each to Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, New Mexico, South Carolina, Texas, and Vermont, and one each to Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, and Wisconsin. Nine copies are going to England, 5 to Australia, one to Mexico, and 9 to Canada.



"Chief, get Larry Niven over to the lab here, fast.  
We finally grew that Protector guinea pig for him."

ALL OF THE MARVELOUS PEOPLE LISTED BELOW HAD SOME PART IN CREATING  
THE SIXTH ISSUE OF MYTHOLOGIES. THANKS.

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Hammond, Chris Sherman, Tom Collins (who should be credited above and  
who lives at PO Box 1261, Peter Stuyvesant Station, NEW York, NY 10009),  
Hank Jewell, Wayne Martin, Eric Blake, Chris Eblis, Richard Delap,  
Eric Bentcliffe, Paul Walker again, Harry Williamson, Eric Lindsay,  
Michael Bishop, David Jenrette, and Rick Brooks. Things have been  
hectic (105 degrees last weekend) so I may have forgotten someone else.  
My apologies if I have.

As much as I would like to send MYTHOLOGIES to everyone interested, I  
can't afford to. So if there is a check here \_\_\_\_\_, I either think  
you're not interested or suspect this is the only way to get you to do  
something positive. Don't be bashful; write a letter. Or if you're in  
APA: NESFA, respond there. None of the rest of us know what we're talk-  
ing about, so don't let your own opinions lie hidden.