

Mythologies 7



#7

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

--- Leonard Cohen

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

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"Time is a bridge that
always burns behind
us." -- Poul
Anderson



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MYTH

While watching the reactions of disappointed Boston Red Sox fans a while ago, it occurred to me how steeped we all are in the spirit of competition. We are each of us raised in an atmosphere of competition practically from birth. We compete with our siblings and parents for the attention of other siblings or parents, in school we attempt to get better grades than our classmates - remember the bell shaped curve, and later for a job, for promotions, for a spouse, for the time of our friends, and so forth and so on. All around us we see competition functioning to affect our lives: politicians compete for our votes, private industry vies for our consumer dollars, professional sporting events are shown on TV every weekend. In this country we have made a fetish of the free enterprise system, in fact, and the virtues of competition in the consumer market. Indeed, the basis of our view (or at least the view of modern Western man) of the place of Man in Nature is Darwin's theory of evolution, the survival of the fittest, natural selection of those lifeforms which can best compete for food, mates, space.

There are obviously good reasons for the preponderance of competition in our lives. It provides in general for the weeding out of non-survival types, and would seem to be in effect a natural law. This has been ameliorated to a certain extent in recent years by advances in medical science, but the basic progression continues, albeit at a somewhat slower pace, and possibly in a somewhat altered direction. The presence of competition provides us with a gauge to measure our own performance, and a stimulus to perform better. Our relative standing in a class allows us to judge whether or not we are in trouble academically. Lower quality commodities are - theoretically at least - driven off the market in favor of cheaper, higher quality goods. This procedure encourages industries to operate as efficiently as possible. Politicians are more subject to the will of the people because of the necessity to compete at the ballot box. This in itself has some obvious drawbacks at times, but in general we have to admit that without the stimulus of competition, we would be a flat, uninteresting, inefficiency ridden race.

Opposed to the spirit of competition we find cooperation, though this is not an absolute opposition. Obviously, some people cooperate in order to compete with other individuals or groups. But to a great extent, man has progressed because he was able to overcome the unadulterated competitive urge and cooperate. Primitive man competed with carnivores and herbivores for food, but he hunted in packs, harvested as a clan or tribe. Man was able to temporarily suppress his competitive instinct in order to function as part of a society. Our modern nation states are extensions of this basic cooperative structure.

A balance of sorts has been reached, a somewhat shaky one. Wars, civil unrest, economic manipulations, and such are cases of the triumph of competition over cooperation. If precise measurements were possible, I suspect that an analysis of the relative degree to which man has been able to channel his competitiveness into cooperative efforts might well be a fair measure of human progress, certainly a better measure than the degree of destructiveness or technical sophistication achieved.

Consider the educational process for example. Students are trained from the onset to value their grades. The amount of knowledge or understanding which they acquire cannot be measured absolutely, so it is compared to that of their classmates, by means of measuring devices (tests) not nearly adequate to the job. The common wisdom is that it is good marks, not knowledge, which is important for your future in the job market. And when they reach the world of business, individuals generally find that the same type of thinking holds true even there, that it is not how well you perform your job that counts in many cases, so much as how well you can outsmart your fellow executive.

Now, I have to admit that I have known the intimate inner workings of but a single company (my present employer). On the other hand, books like THE PETER PRINCIPLE, UP THE ORGANIZATION, THE ORGANIZATION MAN, EXECUTIVE SUITE, and others lead me to believe that the pattern I see is pervasive, if not universal. We are all familiar with some of the better known aspects of modern corporate life - the "Yes" man who progresses rapidly because of his social grace and grasp of office politics, but who sooner or later finds himself in a job that he is either intellectually or emotionally incapable of handling -- he has reached his own personal level of incompetence.

That particular stereotype just scratches the surface. There is a constant necessity in big firms to cover your own tracks. The largest division in my filing system is labelled simply "CYA" (an old Army term - Cover Your Ass). This file contains records of conversations both verbal and telephonic, notes of meetings, copies of all memoes both incoming and outgoing, even on trivial matters, suspicions, rumors, and plans. It all seems quite childish when you are first exposed to it; grownups playing at inter-office political maneuverings. But when your own personal job is at stake, you find yourself participating with a grim determination never to allow a chink in your armor. And with that much time (I estimate 25% of the working day) wasted on documenting your own innocence and capacity, the important things are often left undone, while inefficiency and waste spring up like mold.

Executives frequently find themselves attempting to save face, stubbornly defending a mistaken decision they know to be wrong rather than acknowledge their error and correct it. Frequently this results in attempts to cover things up, shuffle accounts so that the loss shows up only as a hidden cost. Nixon showed us what ridiculous lengths men will go to simply to justify their own actions. A prominent executive of an oil filter company once invested several hundred thousand dollars in a research project. When he discovered that another division of his firm had already completed the same research, and proved the line of thought unproductive, he then diverted hundreds of thousands more in order to hide the fact.

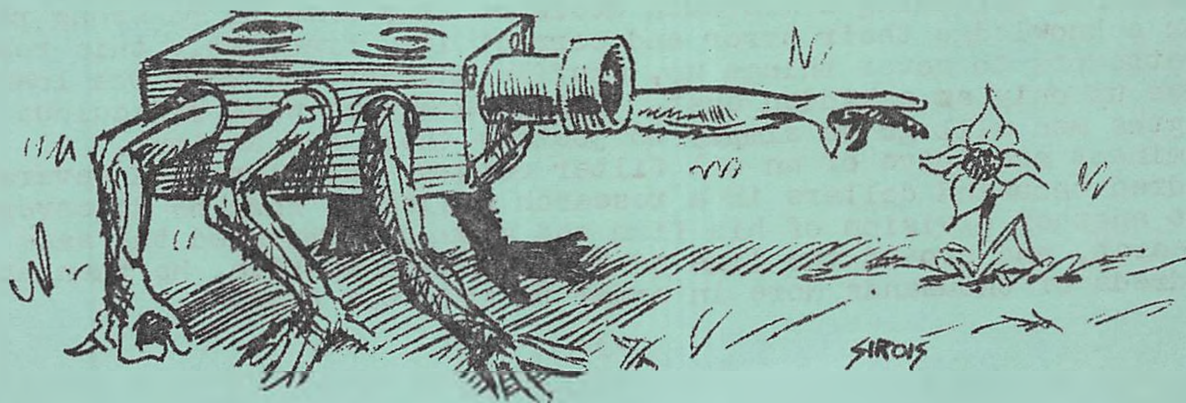
And all of this interferes with the normal processes of selection in the market place. Inefficiencies are passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Sometimes the competitors cooperate illegally and we have trusts, monopolies, and the like. All of these things interfere with the winnowing out of poor quality, high cost, less desirable merchandise.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that the competitive instinct of man works against us. My own middle class nature gets the better of me every fall - despite the consistently bad showing of the New England Patriots - when football season opens. I am inordinately fond of board games, a ruthless, cut-throat Diplomacy fan, a war game enthusiast driven to concocting new and deadlier versions. My masterpiece covered the entire surface of a ping pong table, had over 2000 pieces on each side, each of which was moved with virtually every turn. The single game I managed to complete consumed eleven months.

But while I recognize and channel my competitive urges into useful (fanzine articles) or at least neutral (Diplomacy games) means of expression, I suspect that most people are being torn in two directions by the conflicting aspects of their own nature. On the one hand, they are competing for all the things that they feel make life worthwhile -- money, status, a sexually attractive spouse, job security -- while on the other hand, they want to be liked, to fit in with the crowd, not stand out. The dichotomy is fascinating and depressing to watch as it plays itself out on the personal landscapes of the people we know.

Personally, I think we have to change the mixture; we need more cooperation and less competition in some aspects of our world. Our space program, for example, might well have taken a different, more productive turn had we and the Russians not been duplicating each other's work, had we been planning and proceeding along rigorously determined lines rather than indulging in a face-saving space race. Our educational system needs to stress the value of learning for itself rather than to continue playing student off against student, often at the urging of their respective parents.

With the world becoming as overcrowded and interdependent as it has been in recent years, it is more important than ever that the different factions of humanity - whether they be Russians or Chinese, bankers or businessmen, Blacks or Whites, men or women, yin or yang - learn that competition should be a tool used in a cooperative effort, not an undeniable force beyond our comprehension.



EMBELLISHMENTS

A review of 2000 A.D.: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF PULPS, by Jacques Sadoul, Henry Regnery Co., 1975 (originally published in France in 1973), 176 pages, \$7.95.

This large paperbound (also available hardbound for \$17.95) art book is in some ways a visual equivalent of Alva Rogers' A Requiem for Astounding. Sadoul has taken a massive selection of art from the pulp era, including Frank R. Paul, Finlay, Wesso, Schneeman, Bok, and others, and divided these illustrations into eight categories, in order to present the range of viewpoints prevalent among artists of that period. Indeed, Sadoul contends that the imagination of the artists far exceeded even that of the authors whose stories they were illustrating. The eight categories are:: The Great Galactics, The Age of Robots, Space Ships, The Women of the Cosmos, Dream Weapons, The Bestiary of Outer Space, Machines of the Future, and Cities of the Future.

Although there is accompanying text, the reproductions are what the book is about. And fortunately so, because the text is full of errors which are the fault of the uncredited translator, who is perhaps Sadoul himself. If Sadoul did in fact translate his own book, he did an abominably bad job; if the publisher arranged for a translation, then Henry Regnery failed to secure a translator who had at least rudimentary familiarity with the subject matter.

This shortcoming is perhaps most obvious in the retranslation of the titles of many novels. Compare the following:

<u>ACTUAL ENGLISH TITLE</u>	<u>TITLE AS PRINTED</u>
THE WEAPON MAKERS	THE ARMS MANUFACTURERS
THE WEAPON MAKERS	THE WEAPONS MANUFACTURERS (2nd location)
THE WORLD OF NULL A FOUNDATION CITY	THE WORLD OF THE A FOUNDATIONS
THE MIGHTIEST MACHINE	TOMORROW THE DOGS
THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER	THE SUPREME MACHINE
THE MAN WHO MASTERED TIME	THE ISHER ARMS FACTORY
DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE	THE MASTER OF TIME
WHAT MAD UNIVERSE	INHABITANTS OF THE MIRAGE
THE SHADOW GIRL	THE MAD UNIVERSE
	THE SHADOW GOLD

For one reason or another, many authors have had their names altered as well:

<u>ACTUAL NAME</u>	<u>NAME AS PRINTED</u>
Ray Cummings	Ray Cummins
Frank Frazetta	Frank Franzetta
J. Harvey Haggard	J. Harvey Haggar
Poul Anderson	Paul Anderson

This might seem a small thing to carp about in what is, really, an art book after all. But for \$7.95 in paperback, even for an artbook - particularly an art book that is predominantly black and white - one expects that elementary mistakes would be eliminated. Would Henry Regnery have published a work that referred to such classics of literature as THE SUN COMES UP AS WELL by Ernestine Hemmingway, A GOODBYE TO WEAPONS by F. Scott Fitzgerald, or A TALE OF TWO METROPOLISES by Charles Dickens? Of course not, and they should have taken the same care with this book.

There are other, relatively minor errors in the book's layout. One picture on page 115 has no caption. On page 24 one of the captions is referred to the wrong illustration. There is an apparent typographical error on page 66, in which "Captain Brink" is referred to as "Caption Brink", in what appears to have been a Freudian slip.

There are some shortcomings that probably should be laid at Sadoul's door. An index by artist is lacking, but there is an index by publisher; the former would have been useful, the latter is virtually useless. On page 62, Sadoul compares the work of Brown to that of Paul, pointing out that Brown was more realistic and hence, in Sadoul's opinion, less successful than Paul. But while the ensuing pages are full of Paul's work, the first illustration by Brown appears on page 112.

There is a rather silly preface by A. E. van Vogt, wherein we are told that: "Invariably, and perhaps even involuntarily, we predict that the future will be better..." An appendix with a description of the physical attributes of the planets would not have been particularly relevant, even had it been factually correct. It isn't. Mercury is still represented as having a permanent Dark Side and Bright Side, a theory disproved long before 1973.

So disregard the text and enjoy the art work. There's a lot of it, perhaps even enough to justify the \$7.95 price tag. In the future, I hope that publishers who venture into this area will either dispense with text altogether, or take rudimentary steps to avoid such embarrassingly amateurish mistakes.

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ARRANT NONSENSE 3

by Paul Di Filippo

After several decades of research, the Institute for the Dissemination of Common Sense Maxims Cloaked in Impenetrable Language had announced the findings of its most recent project.

The Institute's discovery was contained in one key sentence: "In a gain-loss situation involving one or more individuals, or one or more teams acting as single units, where the goal is a tangible or intangible value-objective the desire for which is either inherent or has been cultivated by positive-negative reinforcement, the unit or units that realize their goal-achieving propensities will always exhibit a greater display of non-negative symptoms than the unit or units that fail to realize their potential."

In shorter terms, winning is more enjoyable than losing.

Naturally this scientific confirmation of a long-held theory shocked the nation and set in motion tremendous forces. Experts on the human condition everywhere called for the immediate implementation of this new knowledge. Finally, unable to withstand public pressure, the Legislature passed a series of laws to insure that everyone's non-negative symptoms would be maximized -- a right the Framers of the Constitution would surely have included had they been aware of it.

Senator Mason D. Adams of Oklahoma explained the nature of the new laws in the following manner:

"Basically, the Anti-Loss Laws prohibit the establishment or Continuation of any situation in which the possibility of someone losing something exists. As you might expect, this involves some major restructuring of our society.

"As of January 1, no business which makes a profit will be allowed to operate. No sporting or gambling events involving losing will be permitted. In love affairs no partner will be allowed to desert the other; or, if more than two people are involved, either an amiable accord will have to be worked out or the group will have to function as a single unit. All institutions which currently use a selective system of membership will have to accept anyone who wishes to join. I have in mind private schools and the armed forces.

"And of course there are other provisions.

"My faith in the American people is such that I believe that we can accomplish this in the three months before the deadline."

Some opposition was, of course, encountered. The Society Advocating the Necessary Existence of Contraries, whose slogan was "How can we win if nobody loses?", mounted a stiff opposition. This opposition, after several quick thrusts, came to a sudden end. All their firmness suddenly softened, and a disengagement was effected. No more was ever heard from them.

When all the dissenters had been dealt with in the shortest manner, the new society that emerged was now one in which perfect harmony reigned. All goods were distributed freely; all work was donated in the same spirit. This reversed the gain-loss situation which had

previously existed in favor of the employers. No one occasioned the diminution of anyone else's pride, self-esteem or other frangible emotion. The armed forces were now handicraft camps. Theft was unknown, likewise competitive sports. The birds sang, the bunnies hopped, and the frequency with which discouraging words were uttered and apprehended was almost nil.

And the tiger still ate the lamb, as was evidenced by the total obliteration of the country amid a large number of fungal clouds.



PARABLE

SARBAN'S STRANGE CARAVANS

"Sarban", the Persian word for a caravan driver, was the pseudonym used by a secretive English writer who interrupted his varied career as a translator, government functionary, and mercantile representative in the Near and Far East to write three macabre books: RINGSTONES AND OTHER CURIOUS TALES, THE DOLL MAKER, and THE SOUND OF HIS HORN. All three were subsequently reprinted in paperback by Ballantine, although the short stories were left out of the foremost. In the case of two of the stories, this is understandable.

"A Christmas Story", for example, has almost the ring of a cliché. While celebrating a hot Christmas in Persia, a young Briton falls into company with a Russian expatriate. The Russian relates an adventure he had as a young man, while lost in the Arctic. He survived only because the frozen meat of a long dead mammoth is still edible. "The Khan", also set in Asia, portrays an unusual lovers' triangle, which includes a bear. Sarban here drifts into the occult, and his metaphysical musings are not always clearly discernible.

While neither of these two stories is particularly memorable, the remaining two definitely are. In "Calmahain" two unhappy children become so involved in developing their fantasy play world that it becomes totally real to them, its magic spills over into their mundane affairs and is apprehended dimly by others, and ultimately leads them to escape into an environment better suited to their personalities. Sarban's gift for the intricacy of fantasy is apparent in this story, in which an entire civilization is brought to life within only a few pages.

My favorite of the shorter pieces is "Capra", a tale of mounting tension and inevitability, culminating in a predictable but no less frightening horror. Tommy Lobeck is a confirmed hunter, despite his constant lack of success: "He'd have walked from Travancore to Tibet on his own flat feet for the sake of a shot at some horned beast and walked back just as cheerfully after missing the damn thing." Lobeck and his beautiful wife fall into the company of Falzon, a hunter with a cruel streak of genius. Falzon takes great pains to humiliate Lobeck at every opportunity, confident that Lobeck's cowardice will prevent him from interfering with his own cuckoldry. At the climactic costume ball, Falzon appears as a capering satyr, and Lobeck finally decides to seek revenge. He lies in wait, surprises the satyr in the act of assaulting his wife. But it is not Falzon that he surprises, but Pan himself.

RINGSTONES, a short novel, might well be reprinted as a modern gothic. A young man receives a bulky manuscript in the mail from Daphne Hazel, a friend from his school days. The manuscript tells of Daphne's employment by Dr. Ravelin, an archaeologist, as a companion and language instructor for three foreign children in his care. Daphne travels to remote Ringstones Estate, where she meets Nuaman, a young boy, and his younger female cousins, Marvan and Ianthe. The estate

is named after an ancient Stonehenge-like monument that stands on a nearby moor.

Sarban provides us with a great deal of foreshadowing in the early chapters. Dr. Ravelin tells Daphne "And yet, you know, children bear the stamp of temporariness, the impress of a brief, particular period: We, with our clothes of a particular fashion, our manners dictated by the conventions of our generation, our heads packed full of the prejudices, called information, peculiar to the particular time at which we were educated...Children are nearer to the essence of life." Having warned the reader thus subliminally of the ancient nature of children, Sarban draws the knot tighter: "Perhaps these ancient stones hold down something far more ancient, something far stranger than the men who placed them understood." The children are thereby linked to Ringstones.

Shortly after her arrival, Daphne begins to realize that there is something strange about the three children. They are secretive about their background. Nuaman engages in mysterious, private activities, and exerts a disproportionate degree of influence not only over his cousins but over the adults in the household as well. When Daphne tries to visit a nearby village, she becomes inexplicably lost on the moor, a landscape which "was like a living body that secreted its own fluids." She eventually learns that the children are not of this world, but from the land of Faery, and that Nuaman has desires not typical of children.

At this point, the significance of some of the names becomes evident. Nuaman is Syrian for Adonis, lover of Aphrodite. Daphne is the name of the mythological character who fled from an amorous god. Ianthe is the maiden to whom the fairy queen appears in Shelley's QUEEN MAB.

The manuscript cuts off in mid-menace, so the young man and a companion set off to investigate. They find Daphne unharmed, but hear of an incredibly detailed dream, the basis for the manuscript, which she experienced while sheltering in a ruined mansion near Ringstones. Subsequent actions reveal that it was not really a dream at all, but in some fashion horribly real, even though it happened in only a few hours of our time. An ambiguous ending such as this is frequently unsatisfying in a suspense novel, but Sarban makes it work completely and seem perfectly natural.

Ballantine also published Sarban's 1953 novel, THE DOLL MAKER, an even better novel. Sixteen year old Clare Lydgate is put up at a boarding school when her parents are forced to travel extensively abroad for business purposes. Clare's need for outside tutoring results in her frequent visits to the Sterne household at nearby Brackenbine Hall. Mrs. Sterne volunteers to replace Anne Otterel, Clare's original tutor, when the latter dies unexpectedly of infantile paralysis.

Clare is soon deeply in love with Niall Sterne, a mysterious young man who roams the forests with his cat Grimalkin, and whose hobby is the construction of peculiarly lifelike miniature dolls. After a ceremony of bondage - which Clare believes to be make-believe - she learns that Niall is responsible for the deaths of several young girls through magical means: he somehow infuses human souls into his dolls, making them immortal but forever subject to his own personal will. And even at that moment, Clare is not the only girl held by his fascination.



By reading between the lines, we learn that Mrs. Sterne was initially an ally of her son in his magical machinations. But at some point in time she has become revolted by what they have done: "If beauty were the only law and the passion to create were not in some sense a sin of pride, it might be so...If beauty were right as well as truth it might be all we need to know. The pity of it is, we understand our errors, or our sins, only when it's too late to rectify them...But at least we can cease.. We can go our ways and sin no more. I don't think I shall make anything ever again." Clare, on the other hand, considers surrendering to Niall's wishes, for he is in effect offering her eternal youth. But Miss Geary, an instructor at the school, warns her that immutability "is wrong, you see; life is life because it is chance ...But can a thing be permanent or beautiful if it disregards the laws of life?" Clare, fully cognizant now of the threat to her person, breaks into Brackenbine Hall, destroys Niall's equipment, and causes an accidental fire in which Niall perishes and the dolls are all destroyed.

THE SOUND OF HIS HORN (1960), Sarban's only true SF novel, is almost impossible to describe in its evocation of mood. In his introduction, Kingsley Amis points out that it is one of the few SF novels to deal with a rural rather than urban future dystopia. Alan Querdilion wanders into an electrified fence while escaping from a German POW camp during World War II, and finds himself in a parallel universe where the Germans have won the war.

Querdilion finds himself on the estate of Count Hans von Hackelnburg, a tyrant who lives only for the hunt, preferably with humans as game. Querdilion eventually ends up as human prey, and escapes only because of the self-sacrifice of a slave girl.

THE SOUND OF HIS HORN is largely pessimistic in its portrayal of a Nazi dominated world. But, as Amis points out, "an occasional dose of pessimism...is good for you." The novel is superb throughout. With his other two books, THE SOUND OF HIS HORN makes up a body of work no less significant for its brevity. Sarban should have written more.

FABLE

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR MOTOR POOL COMBAT

One of the more annoying and less useful tasks in the Army is guard duty. It is necessary to guard some areas by one means or another, and since the army has such a large store of cheap manpower, it is perfectly reasonable to use armed guards where practical. But much guard duty is admittedly make work, and guarding the various unit motor pools around the country is very definitely that.

Shortly after my return from Vietnam, I was tapped for this honor. I was notified of the proper uniform and was told that my weapon would be provided at guard mount. Guard mount is an assembly of the guards during which the officer in charge ensures that they are properly dressed, reasonably sober, and issued full and accurate instructions about their duties.

In due course I appeared at the proper place at the proper time in the proper uniform and learned that I had been selected to help guard the battalion's motor pool. A motor pool, for those not familiar with the jargon, is a cluster of garages surrounded by, in this case, jeeps, howitzers, trucks, and other vehicles. The entire complex is surrounded by a ten foot tall hurricane fence set on a concrete base. Three strands of barbed wire run along the top of the fence. The entire complex is brilliantly lighted and there are electronic alarms set on all of the garages. There is a single gate, with a gatehouse that is manned 24 hours per day, independent of the security guard who patrols throughout the hours of darkness. In short, the stateside motor pool was a good deal more secure than the helicopter base I was stationed at in Vietnam.

After being briefed on all of the above, I was frankly puzzled. What was I supposed to be guarding against? A helicopter assault? Teams of spies and saboteurs tunneling through from China? An army of radicals storming the fences? Radicals in Lawton, Oklahoma? The mind boggled. I ventured a question.

"Sir, what exactly are we supposed to be guarding against?"

His look spoke contempt. "Anything unusual."

"What do we do if something unusual happens?"

"Report it to me on the field phone immediately. I'll be on duty all night. But it had better be important because I'm planning to be asleep."

Chastened, I sat silently. Not so the man next to me.

"Sir, aren't we supposed to be armed?"

"Er, yes," he admitted, looking a bit distressed. He opened a foot locker about then and began handing us our weapons. I was issued one manually operated, non-loading, four foot extensive length of pipe, painted canary yellow. The man next to me received a non-automatic manually loaded baseball bat. A chorus of titters destroyed the discipline of the moment.

"Sir," piped up a wit from among us. "I'm unfamiliar with this weapon." He held up a broomstick. "How do I load it?"

"Knock it off," he demanded. He glared at us until our hysteria subsided somewhat. "Now listen carefully. Your mission is to prevent anyone from stealing anything out of the battalion motor pool. However,, in the event that you apprehend someone during your rounds, you are to use force only as a last resort."

"That's for sure," offered one man. He held up a three foot length of frayed bamboo.. "If I attacked anyone with this, I could probably hit him over the head two or three times before he tied it in a knot around my throat."

"That's another thing," the officer cut in. "Don't hit anyone on the head. In fact, don't hit him anywhere above the waist. You can be court martialed for hurting someone while you are on guard duty."

In other words, we were to guard the motor pool with our lives, but if we confronted a thief,, we were not to hit him unless absolutely necessary, and then only with care not to hurt him in anyway. I assume the army intended that we use our natural wit to convince any potential malefactor of the error of his ways.

Personally,, had anyone tried to steal anything while I was on duty, I probably would have held his flashlight for him.

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SF EXPO FLYER

The more perceptive among you will have noticed that contained in this issue is a flyer for the proposed SF Expo, a one-shot convention to be held next summer in New York City. Many of the details about this convention have been published in KARASS, DILEMMA, and elsewhere, so I'm not going to rehash the entire background here. Suffice it to say that I don't agree with the fears of some that more professional administration of a convention is a threat to the basic nature of fandom, and that I hope the individuals responsible for SF EXPO are able to provide what they advertise. We will almost certainly be attending the convention.

When I agreed to include this flyer,, I mentioned that my mailing date was November 15. Charles Ellis, of the SF Expo committee, suggested that I mention that the December 1 deadline would be extended by a few days if any of you mentioned where you received the flyer.



AN ARTIST'S LIFE

William Easel was born to one of the oldest, wealthiest families on the eastern seaboard. He grew up in an expensive home and never wanted for anything. When he was old enough for schooling, he went to a private institution. He graduated with good, though not outstanding, marks. Scorning the university, he applied and was accepted at a posh art school, primarily because of a large grant made by his parents. He specialized in watercolors.

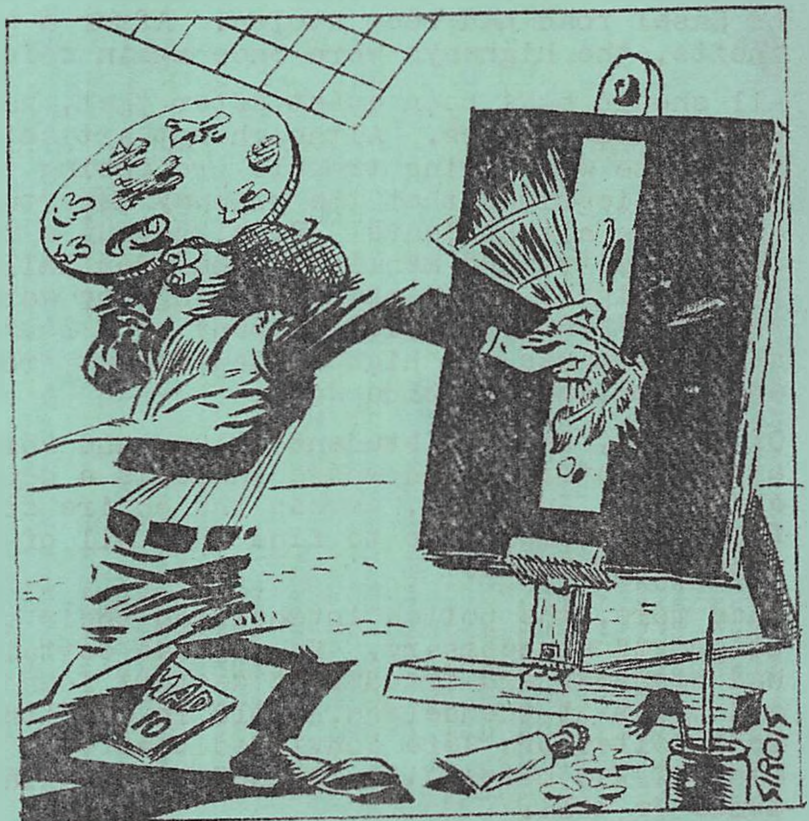
Shortly after his graduation,, again following a mediocre performance, his parents' fortune was wiped out and his father committed suicide. His mother's death followed within the month and William was left alone in the world. He was reduced to seeking a job and eventually found his niche: painting the white line down the center of highways.

He grew old, failed to prosper, and grew older; the prospect of a government pension kept him at his menial job. At the age of 46 he was run down by a sleepy businessman in a blue cadillac. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the nearest hospital and was shortly thereafter interred.

When his estate, such as it was, went through probate, a cache of 39 paintings was discovered. A perceptive appraiser pronounced them noteworthy and within the year they had all been snatched up by private collectors despite five digit price tags.

So might have ended the story of William Easel had it not been for art critic Walter Brush, author of the ever popular critical column, "Brush With Fate". Brush had been commissioned to write a series of short biographies of minor American painters, to be published in book form by Abrams. Brush fell in love with Easel's work and the manuscript ended up novel length. Gambling, Abrams released it as a separate book, with reproductions of all known Easel paintings. Which is when all the trouble began.

Brush did an incredible amount of research. Not only did he describe Easel's vocation in detail, he



actually searched through state records and listed every single road which Easel had ever painted.

On February 5, only two months after Brush's book had been released, Mark Wright, a department store clerk, left for work. His wife issued him his usual morning's good-by peck as he stepped out the door to the garage. She heard the overhead door roll up and the roar of the engine as their car backed down the driveway. Five minutes later, Wright stepped back inside, bewilderment apparent in his expression.

"Someone's torn up the road."

And so it started. Within the first week, twenty miles of road had been snatched up by enthusiastic art collectors. By the end of the month, 200 miles of asphalt had disappeared. The governor declared a state of emergency. The state police ordered extra patrol cars and assigned them to all Easel roads not yet removed. For a while, all was quiet.

Then came organized art thieves. Out of nowhere they struck, tearing up sections of roadway throughout the state. Since no one could tell an Easel road from those of lesser men, the art thieves could dispose of any piece of asphalt they could acquire. The newspapers christened the thieves "road-runners" and called upon the governor to take action.

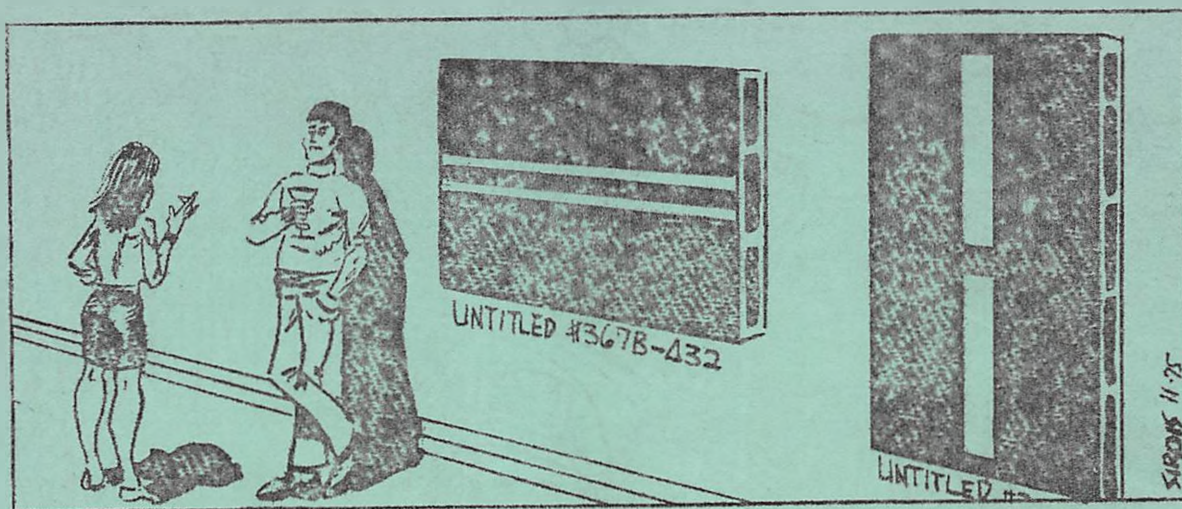
By the end of March, almost five hundred miles of road surface had been torn up, disappearing into thin air. No one would admit publicly that they owned an original Easel road, but several wealthy families added long, thin wings to their homes.

On August 12, the governor announced officially that every last mile of Easel road had been stolen. After a short flurry of additional thefts, the highways were once again safe throughout the state.

All should have been quiet after that, had it not been for one of Easel's co-workers. Although not artistically inclined, he knew that the state was having trouble processing the ever mounting number of job applications that the highway department was receiving from ambitious art students. He struck up a conversation with one, out of curiosity, and mentioned confidentially that Easel had been known to moonlight. On weekends during the warm weather, he worked part time for a construction company as a house painter. He had kept it secret because the highway department frowned on having any of its employees take outside work.

Of course, the art student talked and word began to circulate among art collectors. And where there is a demand, there is very shortly a supply. Suddenly, across the entire state, people began returning from their vacations to find that all of the siding had been removed from their homes.

Once more, the police intensified their surveillance, but this time it proved unnecessary. No one was certain just which houses Easel had painted, and fraudulent dealers found it easier to purchase siding and paint it themselves. Sold in a suitably clandestine atmosphere, most collectors were convinced that they had purchased genuine Easels. Many of the homes with the new long, thin wings, added kiva-like domes as well.



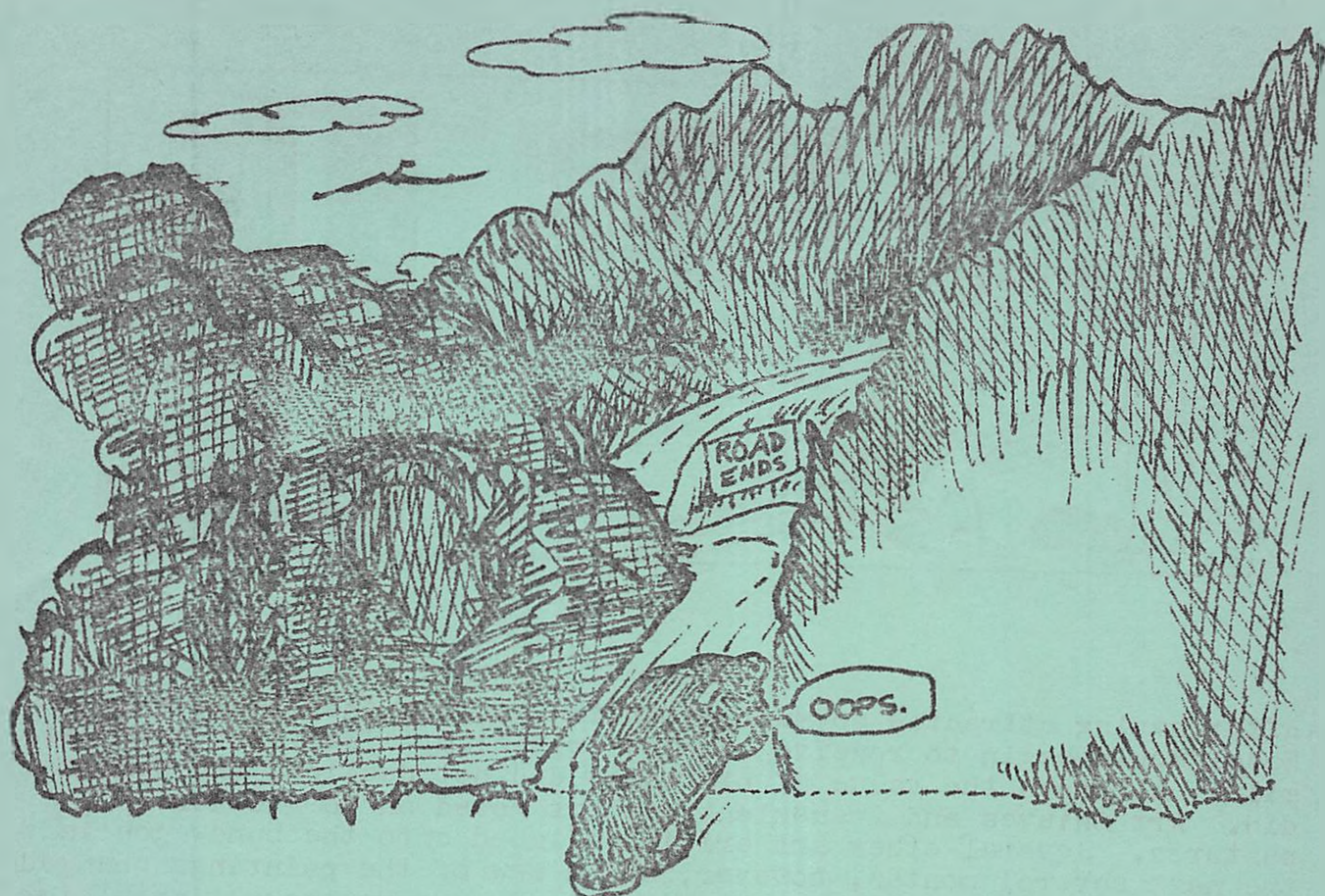
After having attracted so much attention, it was inevitable that Easel would begin to receive adverse criticism. The first wave was mild. Although the value of his works did not decline, the demand did. Art thieves and fraudulent dealers moved on to greener pastures. Several other art critics climbed onto the bandwagon in the next several months, however, and a few of the paintings changed hands at a much lower price than usual. Then came the ultimate blow. In a copyrighted article in "The Art Collector" magazine, Walter Brush stated that he had overestimated Easel's talent. The bottom immediately fell out of the Easel market.

One gloomy night in December, a resident on the east side of the state capital reported strange noises to the police. When a patrol car reached the scene, it found that twenty feet of superfluous blacktop had been abandoned in an empty lot.

Over the course of the next few weeks, this incident was repeated hundreds of times. Sections of asphalt with a white line painted down the center were abandoned in parks, along highways, in parking lots, and even on the grounds of city hall. Additionally, piles of painted siding began to appear in trash cans, at dumps, in playgrounds, and abandoned on downtown sidewalks. A favorite dumping place for both commodities was the public beach.

The following spring saw the frequency of abandoned Easel work taper off. Easel paintings were moved from libraries to closets. Several prominent families let it be known that, contrary to public opinion, they had not been duped into purchasing Easel esoterica. The strangely shaped additions to their homes had actually been designed to house indoor bowling alleys or theatres in the round. When one of its employees retired, the highway department could no longer refer to its waiting list of art students anxious to follow in the footsteps of a master. Rumor has it that Abrams was finally forced to pulp the 33rd edition of Brush's book on Easel.

But the whims of the art world seem to be cyclic, and the governor has had all of the gathered Easel road surface stockpiled in an unused state warehouse. When Easel comes back into vogue, I expect the government to make a real killing.



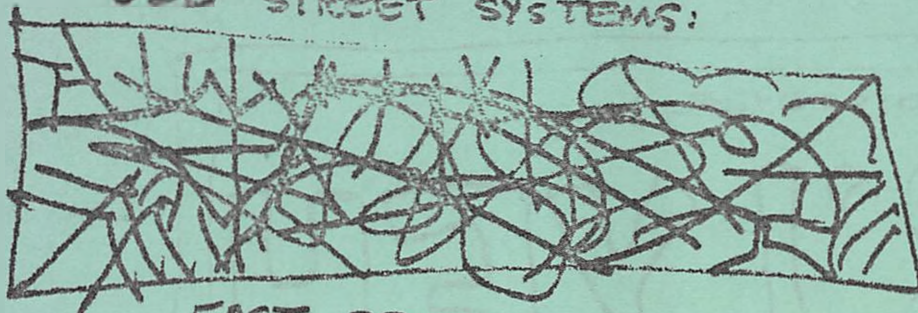
★ IMPRESSIONS OF THE EAST

BY JIM YOUNG

AS SOME OF YOU MAY KNOW - AND AS SOME OF YOU
MAY EVEN CARE - I HAVE BEEN WORKING IN A
THINK TANK IN HARTFORD, CT. THE FOLLOWING IS
A TRUE ACCOUNT OF MY WANDERINGS
HEREABOUTS.

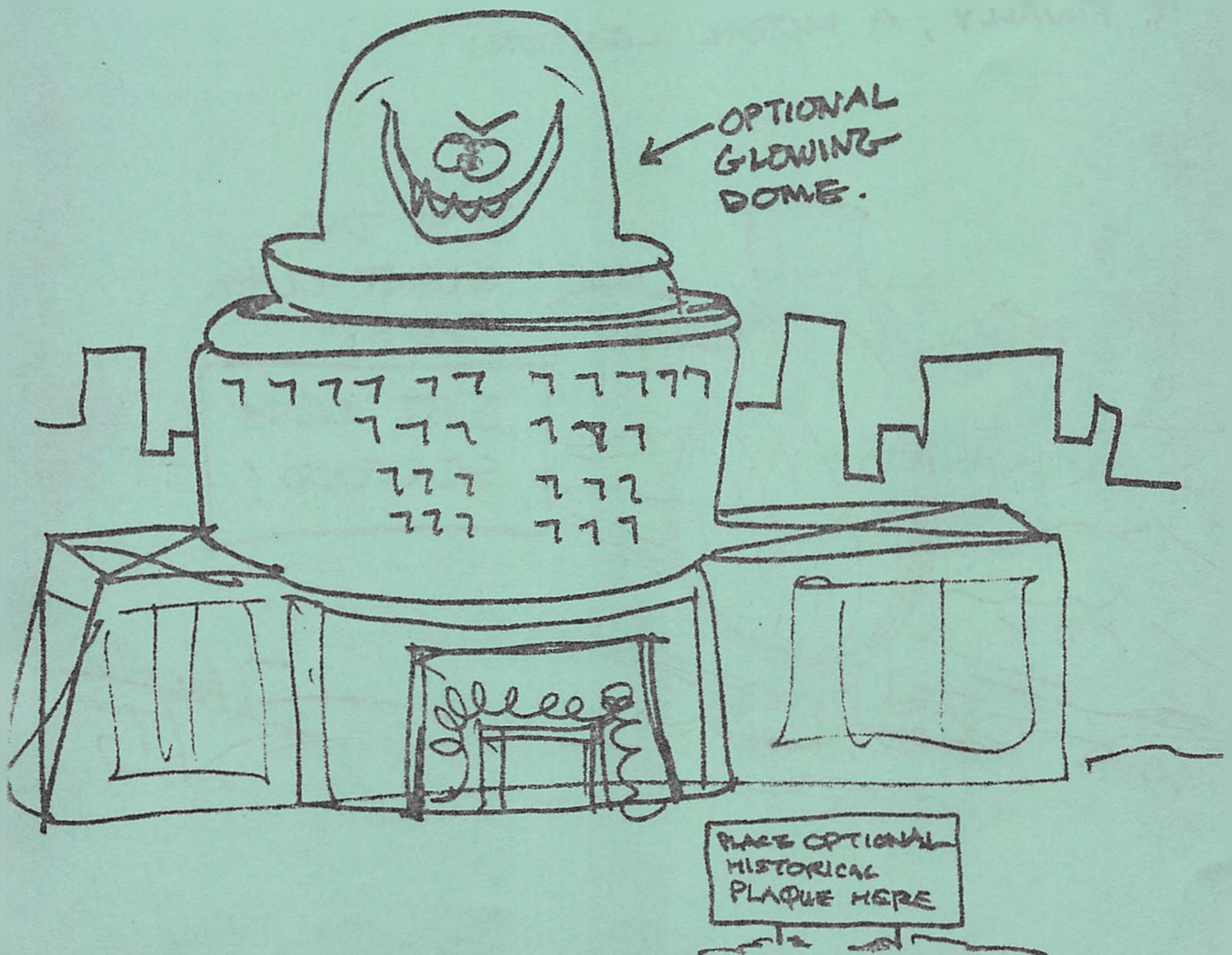
1. EASTERN CITIES:

EASTERN CITIES HAVE EXCEEDINGLY
ODD STREET SYSTEMS:

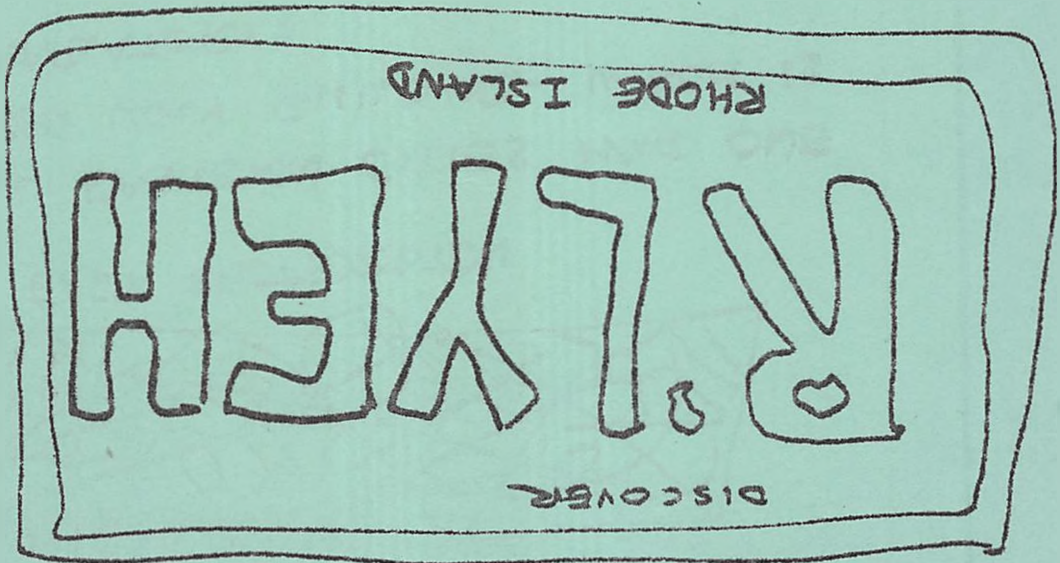


EAST BRATFORDTON

2. ALL EASTERN CITIES HAVE ONE
LARGE UGLY BUILDING WHICH IS
MANDATORY:



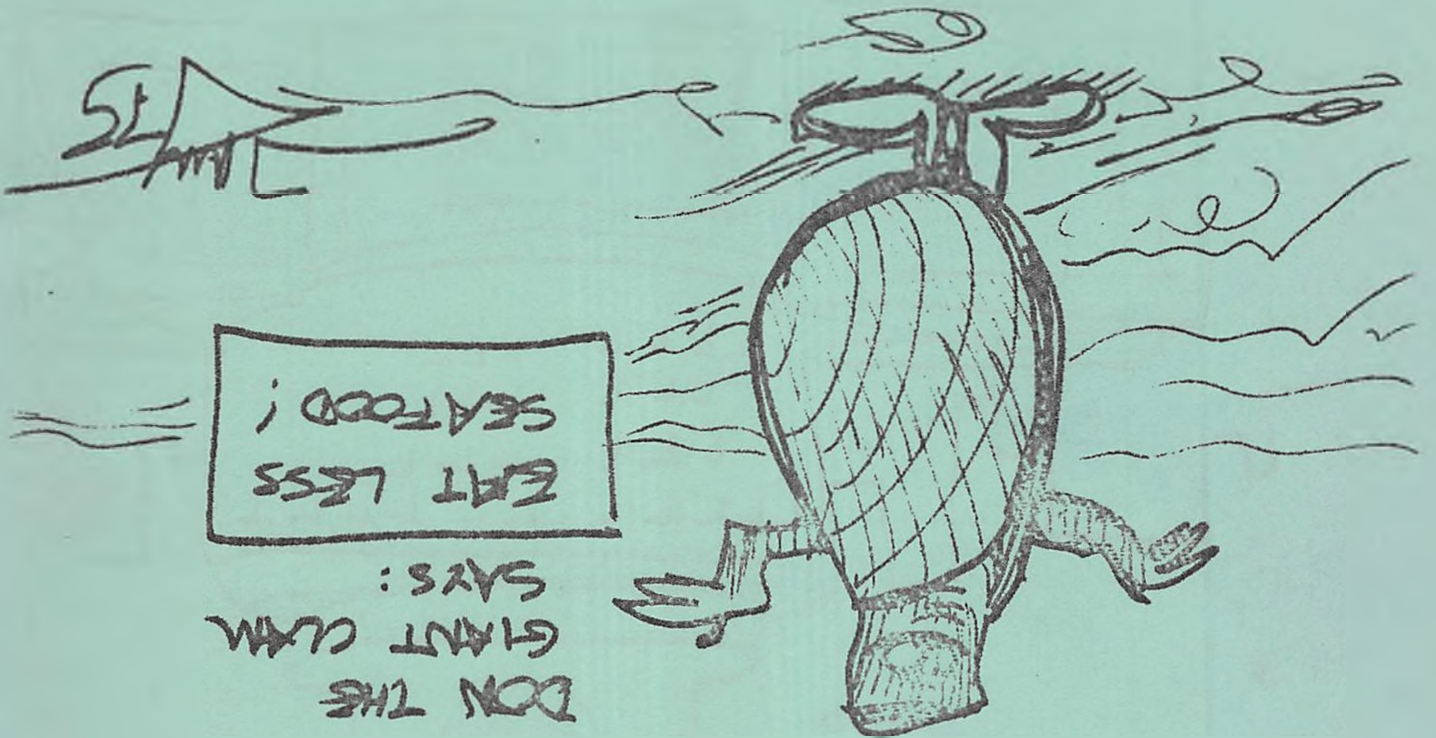
3. THE EAST IS FULL OF OTHER ODDITIES. VIZ:
THE FAMOUS RHODE ISLAND LICENSE PLATE:



4. FINALLY, A MORAL LESSON:

DON THE
GIANT CLAM
SAYS:

EAT LESS
SEAFOOD!





Elaborate Lies

CENSORSHIP

MARK M. KEJLER

I am not surprised at the State Legislators in New Hampshire who tried to censor Shakespeare and Chaucer. When you consider how state legislatures are elected and paid, the low calibre of representatives becomes something only to be expected. Single issue reactionaries can find refuge in the state house much more easily than elsewhere. Remember the "Monkey Bill" in Tennessee that led to the Scopes Trial fifty years ago? Remember the Indiana bill to fix pi at exactly three point zero zero zero? Look at all the anti-evolution and anti-metric bills in state hoppers today. Of course, if you like hide-bound reactionaries running our states, then this is just great. Have you heard the radio broadcasts of Rev. Ennio Cugini, who is Rhode Island's own candidate for the role of Nehemiah Scudder? He is in favor of abolishing public schools, bringing back the death penalty for abortionists and pornographers, and repealing the 16th and 17th amendments to the Constitution. (For those who missed it, the Sixteenth allows a Federal Income Tax, and the Seventeenth says that US Senators shall be elected by popular vote, and not by the state legislatures as they were between 1789 and 1913).

Take a look at your US Senators. No matter how bad you may think they are, would two men chosen by your state legislature be better? I say men, because Rev. Cugini also seems to favor repealing the Nineteenth Amendment, which allowed women to vote. He certainly spends enough time explaining that "unemployment could be solved tomorrow if those career women all went home and let men with families to support have their jobs."

Censorship of famous literary works, of "classics", puts the conservative mind in a fascinating double-bind. Certain works have become not just examples of great art, but the standards by which art is judged. If you have any reason at all for respecting the past, it is that the past has produced such "eternally relevant" masterpieces.

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Homer for the Classic Greeks, Dante and Petrarch for Italy, Goethe for Germany, Shakespeare for England: these are the Grand Tradition. To be educated is to know these works as great. In each generation, there will be liberals and innovators who want to discard the classics, and substitute their own feeble ravings, but the Grand Tradition stands firm. Ah, but what happens when too many people become literate? What happens when children in school are asked not just to revere the Classics but to read them as well? This was the case in 19th century England and North America. The masses were exposed to the strong meat of the Great Works of Western Man, and some educators became worried. Written in a freer age, a non-Victorian age, the Classics said things that were, well, not suited for children. Facts of sex and death should be hidden, not explored. Suppress the Classics. But then how to justify our heritage? Aha - the solution. Present "cleaned-up" versions, fitted for the sensibilities of children and young ladies.

Here cometh Doctor Bowlder, of "bowlderize" fame, who shall resuce the purity of English youth in the 1840's. First, "The Family Shakespeare" with all indelicacies removed. ("Shakespeare's Ba^wdy", indeed)..

Then, crowning work, "The Family Bible" - King James without Leviticus or lecherous princes. No Amnon and Tamar, no Susannah, no Jael and Sisera. For details, see Noel Perrin, DR BOWLDER'S LEGACY (Anchor)

These versions are still used in many schools, you know. During the era of Prohibition, there was a Bible which left out references to alcohol. (Jesus turned the water to fruit juice at Cana.) The Sacred Text, not one word to be changed - and its defenders go through so many twists and turns as they change it and yet persuade themselves it is unchanged.

I remember watching the censors at work while I was in high school. They seemed such fools, and the students had such contempt for them. It was an education in itself. (The School Board had to forbid students from attending public Board meetings; we laughed too much.) First, the Americanism Committee of the local American Legion wanted the American History book removed. "It mentions Washington 178 times, and Jefferson 214 times. Why is the Father of His Country slighted in this way? Jefferson was a radical, we all know. He favored democracy, and we must remember: This Is A Republic, Not A Democracy. Let's keep it that way." Easy method of criticism - all you have to do is count names.

Then, the Assistant Principal found a reference to "bundling" in a collection of essays on Colonial America, written by that smut merchant Washington Irving.

Pressured by an angry Ladies' Sodality, he recalled the books (supplementary, in any case) and cut off the offending page from each book with a razor blade before the students got the books back. Unmarried boys and girls in bed together, even fully dressed...eeek!

Things got worse. Teachers were given an official list of dirty books to "confiscate on sight": LOLITA, BLACKBOARD JUNGLE, and PEYTON PLACE. One student was detained for bringing in a college paperback of Shakespeare's OTHELLO. There was an authorized "Globe Student Edition"

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of OTHELLO for use in English classes; it didn't have all those goats and monkeys, or black rams tugging white ewes. Miss Murphy the teacher knew filth when she saw it. William Shakespeare (Laurel edition) joined Evan Hunter and Grace Metalious on next week's list of banned authors..

Final straw: a sixty page Scholastic Books geography pamphlet on India. Innocuous, you say. But one idiot on the School Board discovered that the author had been a Communist in Hungary in 1936. "Maybe he's defected,, but I don't want to risk our school taxes being sent to Moscow." ABC news sent a team to cover the hearings. The book was rejected, 4 - 3. Our school board became famous nationwide..

/PAUL DI FILIPPO/

The urge to censor is an extension of the urge to bash in the head of some guy whom you think is spouting nonsense or heresy. Nobody (except maybe a few of us Enlightened Ones) will tolerate anything that is personally threatening to his beliefs. Whenever someone treads heavily on our sacred mental grounds,, we react violently to get him out, shut him up, squelch him quick. Before our foundations crumble.

/SUE ANDERSON/

Well,, now that the Mousekartoon is over, here I am again. Gad, there's a lot of casual violence in those things. Today had a kitten, one of many, chasing poor old Pluto with a Christmas present toy machine gun. Would I censor that? Not I -- but I think the world could do without the "Walking Baby Loves You" doll commercials, which are everywhere.. And just think. The Powers have decided that violence must be kept away from children - therefore not on TV before, what? 8 P.M.? 9? Seriously, it looks like the network censors are going to use this new policy as an excuse to expand their insistence on Cleanth (which is, of course, next to Godth) beyond all limits. A couple of years of that and maybe the reaction will be...the mind boggles. But as for books, at this point, I think the danger is not so much that They will force censorship on us as that the editors, people who decide what to buy and publish, will become...nervous. (Or will become Roger Elwood.) Paper shoratge? Which book will we drop this month? Not that Jacqueline Susann; we know that'll sell, and if there's a flap about it, it's good for publicity.

/BEN INDICK/

Insofar as censorship goes, there was recently a brouhaha in a neighboring town involving a store which specialized in needlepoint supplies. These places usually put completed specimens in the window, and they displayed a lush nude about the same as Goya's "Maya",, undressed variety. Well, this harmless piece made more of a fuss! The storekeeper never would surrender, the piece remained, and the fuss died away.

As to your arguments about a rationale for or against censorship, you have pretty well summarized them. However, your comparison of milk to heroin is highly specious, and YOU know it. We also all breathe, and even the most abstemious urinate and defecate; they have no relationship to learned habits of later life,, adopted for reasons other than sustenance and existence. To make such a foolish analogy is to destroy the serious consideration which is a necessary corollary to determination of the role censorship should or should not have in our

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lives. Personally, I do entertain fears that children may be traumatically damaged by exposure to materials they are as yet emotionally incapable of comprehending. Indeed, for numerous folk, this is a lifelong state. I would still stand against censorship, but hope that a parent might help a child so exposed. Otherwise, I would go the limit and hope the child could make it alone (if necessary); he will, as an adult, also face tough problems, and he might as well start early.

If free access to porn, alcohol, etc. characterizes our civilization as a tacitly approving libertarian one, well, let us face it. It is NOT the best-adjusted of all possible worlds, but perhaps it is necessary to experience many things to find a better answer. However, I personally will admit I'd just as soon learn by the experience of others, in some of these respects, craven as it may be.

((OK, Ben, I'll change my analogy to "most heroin addicts played baseball as a kid." The point that I was trying to make was that while the kinds of people who smoke pot might also go on to use heroin, that that does not mean that the use of pot encourages the use of hard drugs.///As far as I'm personally concerned, a parent's responsibility is to guide his child through various learning experiences. I would not recommend porn to my son until I felt he was old enough to handle it, but I would not forbid it to him at any time. I would, however, be as cognizant as possible of its effect on him.)))

[CY CHAUVIN]

There was one argument for censorship which I thought had some sense: if "good" books have the power to uplift us, to make us better men and women, doesn't pornography tend to degrade us? In other words, if one says that pornography has no effect on a person, one denies that literature has any effect on a person. And I think that we all agree that it does. Of course, your essay is much broader than this, and I still don't think pornography incites men to rape (for instance) anymore than crime novels incite people to crime. But I don't think I'd find someone who read pornography exclusively very interesting to talk to.

I also tend to think that censorship is justified when it comes to printing instructions for atomic bombs, blue boxes for making long distance calls without paying for them, etc. Of course, I suppose you could argue that we should have more trust in people's honesty: if people weren't motivated to revolution or to steal, if we could solve the basic problems underneath these, and/or if law enforcement and prosecution neared 100%, it wouldn't matter. We wouldn't need this sort of censorship then, perhaps. (Paul Walker had some interesting thoughts re this; he once complained to me about a Zelazny novel that had detailed instructions for committing suicide (via slashing the wrists, I believe), and was tempted to write an unfavorable review of the novel for that reason.)

((Assuming for the sake of argument that we could tell what results were uplifting and which were degrading, there remains the fact that literature allows us to realize a potential that already exists within us. It doesn't create something that wasn't there. If you are degraded by reading porn, then there was the potential for this

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 degradation all along. Just as a good man can read great literature without being uplifted, so he can also read porn without being degraded.///I'm not about to say that we should trust people; I'm as untrusting as they come. But I'm very wary about concealing any information from the general public, because it is too easy to find excuses to conceal something that would benefit the populace.)))

[HANK JEWELL]

I wonder if that Michigan law is still valid. If so, it would seem that those eight copies of MYTHOLOGIES #6 that were mailed to Michigan residents are vulnerable to confiscation.

((I was never able to personally ascertain the exact provisions of that law, and have no idea whether it is still valid.)))

[STEPHEN DORNEMAN]

I'm surprised you didn't mention Dr Wertham at all in your article, especially now since according to Donn Brazier in TITLE 41, Wertham's book A SIGN FOR CAIN has been banned from the Marion County, West Virginia high school libraries.

When shows like "All in the Family", "MASH", "Hot L Baltimore", etc., first came out I had hopes that the tight fist of TV censorship was finally beginning to loosen, but now with the establishment of "family hours" where certain shows cannot be shown due to subject matter, I know the network censors have gotten their second wind. Personally, I find the most offensive things on TV to be the commercials for such products as toilet paper, laxatives, foot sprays, douches, and dandruff products. At least the Trojans commercial the networks are fighting in California is purportedly in good taste.

((My primary hate is the commercials that say, "Go on, use drugs to make you sleep, tranquil, etc. Everyone needs some librium now and then." e.g. Nyquil, Compoz, Nytol, etc.)))

[JOHN CURLOVICH]

I think you've missed a lot of the point about censorship -- attempting to force people to be "moral" is a part of our national character. One of the most remarkable parts of the American myth is the common belief that the Puritans came here to escape religious persecution. In fact, they left Europe because they wanted to be free to persecute. Having been kicked first out of England and then Holland, they came here and established what was literally meant to be God's country, and they had a wild, happy field day repressing and suppressing all sorts of sins, both real and imagined. Somehow, that bad beginning has left its mark, and to a frightening degree the history of American law has been one of people attempting to secularize a religiously derived view of the world. Hawthorne sensed this, and he found the realization agonizing, since this sort of "legal moralism" is the very antithesis of the kind of civilization he hoped to see grow here. I think this is at once inescapably true and immediately recognizable in the attitudes of the people who shape the laws. Listen to a politician talk about drugs, for instance. You will receive the impression - sometimes implicitly, sometimes less subtly -- that those who are addicted to heroin, say, are not simply sick or unfortunate; they are evil. Listen to the anti-abortion groups, and you will gain the undeniable impression that abortionists are quite sinful people.

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There is an old law on the books in Pennsylvania making masturbation a misdemeanour, a safeguard lest our fine young boys grow up into nasty, evil sex fiends.

In short, I think you've got it backwards. It isn't that the politicians are exploiting religious sentiment, but that the religious moralists among us have bent the political machineries to their wills. A few years ago, a stripper named Candy Barr was arrested in a small Texas town for possession of marijuana. The jury that heard her case sentenced her to fifty years (!) in prison, and in an interview after the trial, the jury foreman said the severe sentence was imposed because they wanted to show the world that "that kind of woman isn't welcome in these parts". You see what I mean? (Miss Barr, I believe, appealed the sentence and won.) I would contend that all laws concerning drug use and sexual activity among adults are results of this legal moralism. You overlook a vital part of the character of the American people if you fail to recognize that most of them think the proper business of the law is to punish sin.

This carries the interesting, scary implication that the majority of people, being religious to some degree at least, know what is "right" and what is "wrong", and therefore are justified in converting their opinions to legislation. (Nazi Germany punished any act that was contrary to "sound popular feeling".) But is public opinion sound? I think not. Popular pressure was brought to bear on the emperor Justinian to include homosexuality in his celebrated penal code, for instance, on the grounds that sodomy causes earthquakes. As recently as 1961 the Birch Society endorsed a pamphlet that claimed masturbation leads to insanity. And the things that are commonly believed about a substance as unrare as marijuana are downright appalling. But the Puritans, spiritual fathers of us all, managed to build a society in which the majority of opinion becomes confused with the will of God. And sad as it is to say, I don't think this will ever change.

As for Roger Elwood, a good deal of nonsense has been written about him, both pro and con. He claims he's within his rights to reject a story that conflicts with his "philosophy". (Is there a word more sadly misused than philosophy? In the last few months I have heard people talk about "the philosophy of teaching freshman English", "the philosophy of home gardening", and a guest on the Carson show recently started explaining "the philosophy of my philosophy..." Elwood has confused the word with "religion". Religion is not philosophy; if anything, it is philosophy's antithesis.) All right, suppose you write a story and send it off to an editor. It comes back with a note saying, "Sorry, but I'm an existentialist, and your ideas run counter to existential thought." Can you imagine more absurd grounds for an objection? Elwood, Puritan that he is, is trying to impose his will and, one presumes, God's, on a readership temperamentally undisciplined to accept them. Quite simply, I don't think the man has a very keen understanding of his audience. This is one of the most important things an editor needs, and I think its lack here accounts for the inferiority of most of Elwood's anthologies. The unease people you and I feel when we contemplate Elwood is no different than what subscribers to Reader's Digest would experience if Abbie Hoffman suddenly

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became that magazine's editor. I don't see how Elwood can, in the long run, succeed in the SF field. He's already dropped out of the anthology market. The Laser books series might succeed, since it's aimed at a less thoughtful breed of reader. But I won't be surprised if five years from now Elwood is back on his home ground, editing "inspirational" books.

I trust this sets your thinking straight. If there's anything else you'd like me to explain to you, just let me know.

((I see I didn't make my position very clear to you, partly because you hadn't seen the previous issues of MYTHOLOGIES. Of course the vast majority of Americans (or any other nationality for that matter) are overly moralistic and perfectly willing to inflict their own particular breed of thought on the rest of us. As I see it, an organized minority of people who favor free expression has enabled us to loosen the bonds on expression in recent years, primarily because of the apathy of the masses. The danger appears to be that the masses are going to be stirred up by an equally organized group of reactionaries, like Rev Cugini, mentioned in Mark Keller's letter. I agree entirely with your statements about society wanting to punish sin. That's why the idea of rehabilitation in prisons is such an unpopular issue. Punish them, why train them for a job that could be held by an honest man. And, of course, the truth is that very few of us are "honest" men.)))

/DAVE JENRETTE/

I don't see (censorship), as all that clearcut, though that might be easier. What I see is that the United States is essentially many nations, communities, regions, what have you and, if you want to live the way you want (your own kind of "freedom") you relocate in the city, town, neighborhood, apartment house, or whatever that suits you.

In my opinion, openly challenging the state of Michigan's education system with regard to birth control information is equivalent to Quixote challenging a windmill or maybe more like challenging a mountain. This has to do with not grasping the function of the educational system in that town at that time. In general, educational systems exist to pass on the culture of a particular educational region; the schools are not designed to encourage open minds, clear thinking, or anything else for which claims have been made -- they pass on the ideas and opinions of those in power.

To challenge such a system is foolhardy; by this, I don't mean it shouldn't be done, but recognize it as an act destined to bring on problems for the doer. That doesn't mean that there aren't ways to undermine the system, if that's your goal, and to do it safely, but. ..let me ask you this: when you wanted to discuss the laws regarding birth control information were you doing it for the benefit of the students or were you doing it for yourself? I have seen any number of educators do foolhardy challenging confronting acts based on their own needs rather than those of the students.

At this time in the USA there is more freedom to print things than at any previous time...this then brings the counter reaction to give more resistance. Years ago in Sacramento there was a comic book

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banning group that wanted to expand to banning men's mags; I attended their meetings and discovered that while they were united in banning the mags they were also opposed and antagonistic to each other in other ways, i.e. one woman was a WCTU official and bitterly complained against the committee's lady chairman who was smoking.

At that meeting in Sacramento I got involved and said what was needed to be banned were children's TV cartoon shows for a large number of reasons that I specified -- this was not my real belief, but an attempt for reductio ad absurdum. There was a newspaper reporter who wrote up my statements straight - they took up most of the article -- and as far as I know the committee never met again. My theory was that every mother who used TV as a Saturday morning babysitter would be strongly opposed to that committee's program.

To me, the concepts of liberty, censorship, democracy, etc. have strayed far from their original meanings (whatever they were) and have become relative. And this is why I say that if you have different ideas from your neighbors you need to move. And I do not think it's any coincidence that so many science fiction fans live in California or that so many have moved there..

((The birth control discussion was designed to benefit the students. When I scheduled it, you'll recall, I had no knowledge of the law forbidding it. When I found out about the law, I tried to schedule a discussion of freedom of expression, still for the benefit of the students, although it also satisfied my own needs. I don't see anything wrong with that. If teaching hadn't served my own needs, I never would have entered the field in the first place.

There are two problems with moving away from an area of censorship. First, there's no place to go. As John Curlovich says above, the moralistic busybody is a vast majority. When the Supreme Court said that pornography had to be judged on local standards, that might have helped, except that most state governments decided that that meant the states could decide, not the individual cities and towns. Even worse is the economic difficulty. If 49 states announce that they will no longer permit the sale of SF, it will do no good to move to the 50th, because no publisher would be willing to publish anything with such a limited market. Because the casual readers aren't going to move, and they're the ones who support the habit of us addicts. More realistically, high school history textbooks are designed to be as inoffensive as possible to all geographical and political areas, so they are universally dull, incomplete, and inaccurate.)))

/LYNNE BRODSKY/

The only blanket censorship I can think of is that of "treasonous" statements from all printed or broadcasted material. The problem we have seen with this (e.g. The Smothers Brothers) is that treason can mean whatever politicians or company bosses want it to.

((The unfortunate by-product of freedom is that we have to be able to ignore discomfoting things said publicly. This is why the ACLU intervened in Georgia (I think) to force TV stations to broadcast overtly racist political broadcasts by a legitimate candidate for public office. Like it or not, that's what freedom means.)))

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[AL SIROIS]

I am most unalterably opposed to censorship in most forms. I will not tolerate someone who decides that he or she has the right to determine what I shall or shall not see, read or hear. This to me smacks of the attitude of that incredible cretin who slashed the Rembrandt painting not long ago, claiming that he was an agent of the Lord. However, I believe that I should have the right to censor what my kids read. Admittedly, this is a pretty damn tricky point. But... well, I used to work in a porno shop. You know, magazines, books, movies, devices...now, you can't let a kid in there, right? Oh, sure, I know damn well that someone in the audience will say "Sure you can!" So call it a value judgment. If that's what I choose to base my censorship of my kids' reading and viewing material on, well, that's my business. Hell, most kids will censor their stuff themselves. In fact, to this day I won't go to movies or read books which I know will upset me. I've got enough problems just trying to make my way through this world without me giving myself additional causes to stay up nights worrying or whatever.

[GIL GAIER]

Your fear of legislation banning books with a sexual orientation from being taught is not unfounded. In fact most local school boards police their own schools rather carefully. But your panic reaction may be unwarranted. There is a classic pattern in public education called "the swing". Teachers and students are allowed great leeway, then it's retracted. Later it's gained back again. Remember also that all sections of the country (even side by side cities) set different standards. Interestingly enough none of the books or plays you mentioned are proscribed in my school. In fact, when I taught Popular Readings most of those were read. I tend to see the more positive aspects of the problem. In 1775 and 1875 the kinds of reading permitted in our schools (or my classroom) today would NOT have been permitted. The films available to the general public, the art, and the books and pictures would be considered...degenerate. In the long run, we historically have greater freedom. "We have already begun to see the erosion of this liberty" seems a poorly conceived conclusion to this complex problem.

((In the long run you're right, I suspect, but we all live in the short run, and within the past few years, the swing has reversed. The fact that it will eventually wend its way back in the direction of free expression does not reassure me, as I may not be around to see it. And to accept the inevitability of the amelioration of our freedom strikes me as too depressing to contemplate. I'd rather be an alarmist than apathetic.)))

[JILL EASTLAKE]

You build a very good - an excellent case against censorship of books, magazines, movies, etc., these materials containing information which censors would keep from others. Let me stress that all your arguments were about the censorship of information, and sometimes of opinions. I cannot and would not argue with your defense of anyone's right to publish/exhibit information, or to voice opinions supported with information.

My qualms enter, as do the legal ones, when opinions, especially insults, are issued without supportive information. I would object as much (in

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principle) to a statement, "Jill did a wonderful job as _____.", as I would to a statement, "Jill blew it as _____." The positive statement would probably go unnoticed, or accepted by me. Someone else might object to it and issue a counterstatement. But if I saw the negative statement I would be upset. If it were bad enough, I might complain. In the real world, I would sue if it were important enough. If the statement said, "Jill blew it as _____ by twiddling her toes instead of her thumbs.", I could reply to it or accept it as truth. I might still object to the negative wording, but I would be more likely to reply to the facts and to disregard the insult. In any case, some response is called for. Hopefully, I made a clear distinction between information and unsubstantiated opinion. Information should not be censored. Unsubstantiated opinion should be stopped. In principle, both good and bad opinion are out.

((That's where we part company, Jill. Unsubstantiated opinion should not be stopped. One man's substantiation is another man's circumstantial evidence. Unsubstantiated opinion should be replied to, if necessary, but never never stopped. In the event that obvious harm is caused the person discussed, there is, as you imply, recourse to the courts. But unless there is clear evidence of harm, no action is necessary. For example, if Joe Phan were to write an editorial in his next fanzine claiming that one or more of my articles was plagiarized, I would write him a nasty letter. If he refused to print a retraction, I would write letters to a variety of fanzines to maximize publicity. But I wouldn't sue him for libel unless I were a newspaperman, and he sent a copy to my editor which resulted in the loss of my job. The unpleasantness for some of us which results from the exercise of freedom by others - even the unwise, malicious, or incompetent exercise of freedom - is something we just have to live with. Let me illustrate very briefly from the current controversy in NESFA.

For those of you not familiar with the recent crisis in NESFA, a brief recap. As a result of remarks made in the club's apa, which were interpreted by some as maliciously insulting to individuals and detrimental to the reputation and effectiveness of the club, three members of NESFA were disciplined. Later, two members of the opposite side were similarly disciplined for much the same reasons. Now, leaving aside the merits of the individual cases, my contention was and is that none of these people should have been disciplined, that they should have been corrected or ignored. Further, in at least one case the offending statement was ambiguous and need not have been interpreted as an insult. I contend that freedom of expression, particularly in such an ambiguous situation, is far more important than preventing the ruffling of feathers. Rarely do I see a fanzine that does not contain at least one case of unsubstantiated or poorly substantiated opinion. To accept your interpretation would reduce the greatest part of fandom's worth to nothing. Some of us thrive on adversity, the clash of opinions -- that's the purpose behind MYTHOLOGIES. Those who feel that they cannot stand emotionally delivered criticism, even unfair criticism, should remove themselves from forums where they might be exposed to it. It sounds awfully dull to me, but I suppose there are people who enjoy experiencing only the familiar, the friendly, the calm and restrained. The very fact of existence is a struggle though. To avoid struggle is to avoid life.)))

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[ROY TACKETT]

The heart of your editorial for MYTHOLOGIES 6 is in your penultimate paragraph. I have reported elsewhere the "great controversy" of the anti-obscenity ordinance that was proposed for Albuquerque and the referendum which resulted in a two-to-one victory for the pro-anti-obscenity people. The final result was (roughly) that 10,000 people voted against the ordinance and 20,000 voted in favor of it. There were at that time, however, about 135,000 registered voters in the city so it is at once apparent that the great majority didn't even bother to go to the polls. Trying to interpret those results is trying indeed. The anti-obscenity people say that the fact that the majority of those who voted were in favor of the ordinance indicates that the contemporary community standards (as the Supreme Court put it) favors strict censorship of books and movies but that is being questioned in view of the massive non-vote which would seem to indicate that the majority really don't care one way or another.

You mentioned Poul Anderson and in a recent column he said that writers should, if they must, give up naked women and sex scenes in order to preserve the right to write about more important issues. I'm not sure that I go along with that at all. I think that once you start to retreat you have lost the battle. In reference to freedom of the press the Constitution says "no law" shall be made abridging it and that is just about as plain as it can be. There are no exceptions on any grounds.

((I haven't encountered that Anderson column. Do you recall where it appeared? Anderson might find the same argument being made against him, for many of his articles, novels, and stories reflect pretty obvious political arguments, and that's been another target of censors. A fellow I went to college with once told me that he would, if he had the power, prohibit the publication of books like THE STAR FOX and ENSIGN FLANDRY, because they were critical of the righteous struggle of the Vietnamese people to overthrow a foreign tyranny.)))

[SHERYL SMITH]

The reason, I think, why Americans are so gung-ho in general about suppressing what offends them is not so much the British-Puritan heritage, as the fact that this country remains culturally provincial. It is just in this century that America has begun to make truly innovative and substantial contributions to Western Culture; and the place is so young that the prevailing attitude toward cultural amenities ("What good is all that education if it don't teach you to make money?" "That highbrow stuff, what good is it?") is strictly frontier with a dash of pragmatism. Censorship is to be expected from a people that glories in homespun ignorance, the extremes of human thought and behavior are quite a shock to self-controlled, insular folk who've not been exposed to them. Luckily our more cosmopolitan forefathers devised a Bill of Rights that at least puts a crimp on censorious depredation and yes we must be nonetheless vigilant.

((I disagree with most of your analysis, I'm afraid. See John Curlovich above for a more plausible explanation. The Bill of Rights was designed by a bunch of provincial farmers and businessmen, to protect their private perquisites from the encroachment of a central,

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 federal government. For the most part, they failed. Fortunately for us, their own self interest worked to establish an elaborately safe guarded system that has held together remarkably well.)))

[SAM LONG]

Censors tend to ban good literature and pass the poor stuff. For example, all your great European and American writers are found in one place or another on the (now annulled) INDEX of the Catholic Church. J.L. SEAGULL should have been banned, but not because it hints at reincarnation. No. Rather because it is puerile rubbish. In a word, the publisher should not have bought it. The problem is, censorship does not require -- indeed is almost antithetical to -- good literary judgment.

Ben Lindsay is full of pious pomposity -- and bad theology. The first Censor was God himself, who refused to let Adam and Eve eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, ostensibly for their own good, "lest you die...", but really lest they then eat of the Tree of Life and so live forever. And anyway, Pilate was motivated by political concerns. The moral climate of Judaea was important only insofar as it affected politics. Pilate found no fault in Jesus, save that he claimed to be (or was claimed to be) King of the Jews, and even then he would not have crucified him except for the fact that his loyalty to the Emperor might be called into question if he did not.

As a matter of fact, plans on how to make an A-bomb are available at the AEC library, they having been declassified years ago. And if you don't want to go to Washington, you can either a) write off for them, or b) read John McPhee's book THE CURVE OF BINDING ENERGY, wherein you'll find directions.

((The way I heard it, Pilate had Jesus executed because of the strong pressure from the Judaic officials, who considered him a troublemaker, and Pilate considered it would make the Roman governor's job easier if the local moguls were kept placated.)))

[WAYNE MARTIN]

When you heard it was against the law to discuss the illegality of birth control, did it not occur to you that legally the police couldn't do anything without themselves violating the law (they would have to inform you of the charge and to do so would have been to start a discussion of the fact that it was illegal to discuss birth control. How could they put you on trial if the fact that what you did was illegal, when discussing the fact that what you did was illegal was against the law?

((Huh?)))

[DOUG BARBOUR]

In Canada we don't have all the problems you have, partly because we have never had quite the license. We haven't had any hardcore porn films in any province yet (unless Quebec, but I think even there we haven't had DEEP THROAT or others of that ilk.) I know of no place in Canada where SCREW magazine would be sold. After all, that is what we're defending, and to look for literary merit in what has none is to miss the point. We are either defending the right of adults to misuse their intelligence (as we may see it) and to read utter trash,

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even morally depraved stuff, or we're discussing something else than the right to censorship. I'm against censorship myself. But (as everyone always says after saying that): I'd love to ban Rod McKuen, as just one example of the kind of reading I think is far more damaging than porn. Why? Because people reading porn, including a good number of the "intelligentsia", usually know what it is, and why they're reading it, and it isn't for literary value. A lot of the people reading Rod McKuen think they're reading poetry. And they're wrong, and moreover, if they continue to think that way they will likely never come to recognize, understand, and be capable of responding to real poetry, especially the contemporary kind. Gnash, gnash. OK: one either says someone should control what people read, or no one should. Against my gut feelings that a lot of damage is being self-inflicted here, I say no one should have the power to tell me what I can or cannot read, though anybody is welcome to some form of soapbox to try to convince me to read the "right stuff". And, of course, you're right, it all comes down to politics anyway, to a desire to control other people, something much more dangerous than any amount of dirty thoughts. I bet Nixon was "pure of mind" sexually, but whoo boy, politically! I am intrigued by the fact that the activities of a few to clean up smut seems to be more effective in the States than in Canada. Or is it just that it gets more publicity? When the stuff censored is so completely unoffensive (except for its banality), one is forced to wonder about the minds of those doing the censoring.

((I suspect the difference between the two countries is, as you suggest, largely a case of the differing levels of publicity involved. Your remarks about McKuen reminded me of a college experience. I enrolled in a course on modern poets. On the opening day of class, the professor mentioned the poets he was planning to cover - Eliot, Frost, Stevens, Cummings, Rilke, Ferlinghetti, etc. When he asked for questions, the woman sitting behind me raised her hand and asked how much of the course would be devoted to Rod McKuen. The professor scratched his head, and appeared quite honestly to not even recognize the name. He told her that he had never heard of the man, did he write poetry. On the way out of class, she informed everyone about her that she was going down to withdraw from the course, since the professor obviously didn't know a thing about modern poetry.)))

COLLINS ON DECAMP

[/PAUL DI FILIPPO/

I am surprised that Tom Collins did not mention the startling anti-fan sentiments in De Camp's book. Memory supplies several places where De Camp said, in regard to Lovecraft's amateur press work, that such silly fripperies did nothing but waste a professional's time, which he should spend zealously perfecting his art. One could almost detect derisive snarls aimed at current fandom issuing from the pages.

[/BEN INDICK/

I have previously discussed with my good friend Tom Collins the HPL titles he reviews, and can assure you that what he says is but a sampling of an arsenal of De Camp rebuttals. However, he puts forth the cons and pros well. It will not affect the 15,000 copy sale and

consequent influence, but such chippings-away are necessary. De Camp did, I think, have not entirely ignoble goals, but his own limitations affected his mental horizons. Many of his biographical writings have tended to debunking more than to sober appraisal, and this speaks more about him than his subjects. I would like to see him do an appraisal of a LIVING author, say Asimov, Silverberg, or Ellison -- an articulate individual who can respond. Tom does lose his cool at times, but his is nevertheless a cogent reply. If De Camp ever revises the book, I would hope he considers the rebuttals (I have seen Olympian remarks of his in fanzines shuffling them off however. It is hard to be a God; one's purview is limited only to fellow Gods.)

((At the World Fantasy Convention, which allowed me to actually meet Ben for the first time, we shared a table with De Camp for a couple of hours. He mentioned that the forthcoming Ballantine paperback will have several corrections of errors from the hardcover, and will have a rewritten version of sections which he believes have been misinterpreted as an attack on Lovecraft's personality.)))

[/CY CHAUVIN/]

Tom Collins' review was interesting, but I didn't get the impression that Lovecraft was "repellant" from De Camp's biography at all. I rather enjoyed it (though I thought it went on for too long about too little); I'm one of those freaks who enjoy reading about Lovecraft, and find him a fascinating man, but I've never read any of his stories. (Maybe, someday.) It does seem odd for De Camp to write such a lengthy biography for someone he seems to regard as a poor pulp writer, whose writings are worth little; but that's De Camp's problem.

((You really ought to read some Lovecraft. I prefer his less popular stories myself, the Dunsanian fantasies for example in the Ballantine collection, THE DOOM THAT CAME TO SARNATH, or THE DREAM QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH.)))

[/AL SIROIS/]

Enjoyed Collins' reviews very much, and, being more than a passing fan of HPL's, I shall read both books. I heard Conover speak at Lunacon, and was impressed. Heard De Camp too, of course...they were on the same panel, along with Ron Goulart, Gahan Wilson, and Frank Belknap Long. I think that De Camp was rather too defensive about his book...Conover seemed to be quite calm about the whole thing, as if he knew he was in the right.

[/ROBERT WHITAKER/]

Tom Collins does not really have anything to complain about in De Camp's biography of HPL. All the information is available and is in existence. Lovecraft was as quirky as one could get. And De Camp's biography in contrast with Willis Conover's sectional biography is much better. De Camp puts together a mosaic viewpoint - Conover holds only his own. Lovecraft must be looked at in a whole manner. An individual who loved him will go over his quirks in an odd manner (either ignoring them or lightly touching upon them). And De Camp, by not knowing him at all prior to his death, makes a very good choice in the matter. De Camp is unbiased - had not De Camp come out and tumbled the worms of Lovecraft's soul in his biography, someone else with less sympathy could have made them a lot larger than they actually were.

It fail to see why writing for money is horrid. A writer must live and eat. De Camp points out time and again that Lovecraft could have made money writing if he were not so fastidious about the way he handled his work. Lovecraft would send a messy manuscript to a publisher and place a cover letter saying, "I hope you do not mind reading this, if you do not, I know it's junk." (or some such) Lovecraft was an artist? He should have had some pride.

As for Lovecraft's poetry, what I have read is pretty wretched material. If what is within the pages of SELECTED POEMS is Lovecraft's best work, then they had better not bring out another volume of it. Some of Lovecraft's poetry could stand comparison with the contents of THE STUFFED OWL.

Yes, HPL's SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE is sketchy. It has the depth of a birdbath. Novels are written off with a line; some writers get more space than they deserve; others are not mentioned in the depth they should be. It is there, it is a good staff. Lovecraft could have expanded it tenfold, but never did. (I guess he was too busy writing letters)..

Lovecraft will probably survive on the basis of about two dozen of his stories. The other half will survive as curiosity - to be read in connection with the first group. After all, some of Lovecraft's early material is awful material to go through. And I have read it all.

((I have also read all of HPL's fiction, and there is about twice as much as you imply; I list nearly 80 titles. HPL was not a great writer; he achieved a level of competence that is pretty consistent through his work. With one or two exceptions, I found none of his work - even the pre-Cthulhu horror stories "awful", and I'm pretty fussy. But neither do I consider HPL as a great artist immune from criticism either as writer or as a man.)))



[SHERYL SMITH]

Thank Tom Collins for a well written, knowledgeable, and (you may be stuck with the term) passionate review of recent Lovecraftiana. I should like to pick a nit and dispute Mr. Collins' terming Lovecraft "a serious artist" -- though perhaps this is because I consider the term to be weightier than Lovecraft warrants. That the gentleman "created the greatest horror stories since Poe" I can swallow; but still his intent and scope are much narrower than, in my opinion, those of a "serious artist" can be. Mr. Collins' projection of a Hardy-esque worldview onto Lovecraft's fictional universe -- to show its depth -- is made sincerely-meant critical flummery by the work itself, which cannot support such tome-speech.

((I think you have a much narrower definition of the word "artist" than many of the rest of us. Among other things, it seems to me that your definition eliminates the possibility of a "bad artist".)))

[L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP]

I am sorry that in my LOVECRAFT, I seem to have given Mr. Collins an impression of my attitude towards HPL quite different from what that attitude is in fact. I can only apologize for my shortcomings.

MASLOW

[SUE ANDERSON]

Picking up on Maslow, I recall (actually I cheat and am looking it up) the description of a B person feeling pleasure as the result of a completed project, and D just being relieved it's over with. What about someone who feels a sense of loss on completing a project? The oh, wow, now what am I going to do? effect.

((I suppose they are inner directed people with insufficient interests to maintain themselves. Presumably, they then engage in the project of finding a project in which to engage.)))

[DENNY BOWDEN]

Have you ever read Rollo May's concept about why genius and madness seem so similar? He says that those people who can see all that's going on in the world and really see the implications cannot cope so they must have an outlet. For artists, scientists, etc., this may be easy, but for those who can find no outlet, they appear to be "mad" and therefore madness and genius seem similar.

((Rollo May's works are slated as the subject for a future "Myth", probably in conjunction with Fromm.)))

[ERIC LINDSAY]

Maslow's ideas have reached these far shores through Penguin books, (THE FURTHER REACHES OF HUMAN NATURE), or indirectly through the reprinting of some of Victor Frankle's books on logotherapy. Interestingly enough, a half year or so ago, when I was being troubled by a religious visitor who came and wasted my time every Sunday, I gave this person a loan of Maslow's (I'm unsure of the title) RELIGION, VALUES, AND THE PEAK EXPERIENCE. Since then, they have not returned, nor returned the book, and seemed ill at ease about it when I saw them in the street a few months ago. I suspect there is a moral there somewhere.

[D. GARY GRADY]

I expect I could pick Jessica Salmonson's remarks on astrology apart in greatly boring detail, but to synopsise: Cosmic rays are only slightly anisotropic. The Earth rotates (surprise!!!), so time of day would be more important than time of year. Classical astrology assigns most influence to the planets, not the stars. There are only a few cosmic ray types and only four basic types of connection in a DNA chain (two, if you ignore reflections), so I can't see how merely a different quantity of radiation flux from a certain direction (that being dependent on the orientation of the cell) could be so deterministic.

Chickens DO generate stimuli from within. As far as I know, all living things (at the very least those with nervous systems) do so. I don't perceive man as a quantum jump ahead of other animals - merely smarter. I read recently that one of the chimps being used in the sign language experiments was given the task of categorizing photos. She was entirely accurate until she got to a picture of another chimp. Instead of calling it an animal, or starting a new, separate pile, she placed the picture (which was of herself, now that I think about it) on top of one of Eleanor Roosevelt in the people pile. If chimps say they are people - genetically underprivileged, no doubt - but people just the same, who are you or I or E Teli-Keli to say them nay?

[KEITH JUSTICE]

It is of passing interest that Jessica seems to think that patterns of cosmic radiation may have some effect on us at the moment of conception. Why she should think this is beyond me. I can't believe that DNA would be any more vulnerable during fertilization than during any other activity. The one that comes first to mind is meiosis. It would seem to me that if DNA were ever in a position to be vulnerable and subject to alteration by outside forces, that its weakest moment would be during meiosis, the reduction of chromosomes from the diploid to the haploid. This seems to be a much touchier operation than the recombining of the haploids back into a diploid. And I fail to see what effects cosmic radiation could have on any of it anyway. What we are is the result of selection over hundreds of thousands of years. There is small chance of a favorable mutation unless environmental changes become drastic. There have been so many human creatures born that I'm sure most of the possible mutations have been accidentally created by nature at one time or another. And the fact that favorable mutations are scarce only shows up one point -- that we are what we are because natural selection has made us what we are. Mutation has played a negligible part in the development of any species. Unless someone can come up with a better theory, or some nice proof, it looks like natural selection because of characteristics already exhibited in populational variation is going to have to be the big apple.

((Without being well versed in natural history, I still suspect you're wrong in your last few statements. This seems to me to make the presumption that virtually all characteristics (genetically) of all species existed always. I'd be more inclined to suspect that all species can be traced back to at least one mutation.)))

[STEPHEN DORNEMAN]

I'm usually not one to knock another's personal beliefs, but I'm afraid I can't idly stand aside and let Jessica Salmonson present unopposed her scientific "facts". Although cosmic rays are "star born objects" initially, they do not reach high enough velocities to be called cosmic rays until after they have been batted around by the magnetic fields of nebulae, etc. for some thousands of years, losing any possible spatial relationship with their parent stars. Then, when they do reach Earth, the rays collide with air component molecules in the upper atmosphere and scatter high energy debris to lower levels. It is this atomic debris that constitutes the background radiation that is "all around us" and which interacts with DNA. The actual cosmic rays never reach the ground. The background radiation that does reach us is made up of the same particles and photons that sunlight is, and is actually weaker in effect than sun light. And the only known pattern of this radiation is that it is slightly stronger at higher latitudes. As to radiation effects on DNA, the time you are conceived means as little as the time you are born. The DNA that eventually formed you is in existence, or at least the DNA that will form the DNA that will form you is in existence ever since either parent was in existence, and the same for them and their parents ad infinitum. Aside from the fact that your heredity has very, very little to do compared to your environment as to whether you like SF over mysteries.

[GEORGE FLYNN]

Yes, cosmic rays do cause mutations, no doubt about that; but that's as far as this theory has any validity. First of all, the mutations are completely random in nature; the most any "patterns" of cosmic ray variation could do would be to vary the total amount of mutation. But are there such patterns? There's variation between day and night, and, yes, with latitude; but at a given location, no significant variation from month to month. But grant it for the sake of argument. Certainly any such mechanism (or any mechanism at all that one can plausibly conceive of) would have to be governed by the time of conception, not birth.. And right there you throw out about 99% of the apparatus of traditional astrology -- all the stuff about which planets (not stars, by the way) are where at a given instant. So at best you could save a correlation of people's characters with the time of year at which they're conceived/born. Suppose there is such a correlation; need we appeal to the stars to explain it? By Occam's Razor, why not just relate it to the weather? (Temperature affects mutation rates too.)

((You gentlemen will have to work out the contradictions between the two viewpoints. This is not by area of competence.)))

CHILDHOOD

[MARK M. KELLER]

To Victoria Vayne: There are two different conditions in which children are a major part of the work force. First, "primitive" life, or savagery out in the bush, where kids play to learn the jobs they will have as adults - hunting, foraging, cooking, etc. This continues onto the farm, where kids do "chores", or maintenance

activities within their ability and attention span. The work is integrated with education, with growing up. The kids imitate their elders, and they contribute, in a small way, to keeping the community going. Is there any objection to this? It builds a sense of competence and skill.

But second, there is "industrial" work for kids, determined by cash wages, and this is something very different. Small hands are cheaper and easier to control. The medieval fine laces called "virgin-killers" were made by 8 - 10 year old girls whose tiny fingers made closer knots for twelve hours a day until they collapsed from exhaustion. The English factory owners in early Victorian days were notorious. Small boys were sent up to clean chimneys by lighting fires under them. (As an aside, the song of the chimney sweeps in Disney's MARY POPPINS struck me as one of the most outrageous and stupid whitewash jobs ever. Happy sweeps, hah! Might as well show the old darkies contentedly strumming their banjos down on the levee waiting for Masta to come home. Come to think of it, Disney did that, too, in SONG OF THE SOUTH).

That kind of work is still with us. Migrant farm workers have the kids out there in the fields from age six, picking string beans all day for 25¢ a bushel. We don't need it.. It's ugly, brutal exploitation. Let the kids participate in work, sure. But no more industrial slavery.

Hey, Sam Long was right. Some of us do get passionate in this zine. Let me moderate my style a little, and go on to answer Jodie Offutt. The reason medieval children were dressed as adults was not a matter of fashion. Simply, nobody saw any reason to have two styles of clothing distinguished by the age of the wearer. Fashion was for the court, who could afford it. Clothing was for utility, for sexual attraction, and for status.

Utility -- the laborer's smock, the soldier's leather armor. Sexuality -- the low-bodice gowns of the Provençal courts, hennins, veils, codpieces. Status -- robes trimmed with ermine, jewel encrusted sleeves to indicate lofty position in the hierarchy.. The children had to be content with the simple stuff. See Rudofsky's UNFASHIONABLE HUMAN BODY or James Lavell.

Fortunately, we don't have half of our population under 25. That would mean a population explosion of huge proportions, like Java or Mauritius. In fact, the proportion of young in the US is declining now that the birth rate is down near replacement (2.1 per adult woman). All that farble of the sixties about "teenocracy" is dated and obsolete. Schools are less crowded, teachers are facing unemployment, diaper services are complaining about a decline in family values. Of course, we could get another "baby boom", but meanwhile, there's breathing space.

[DARROLL PARDOE]

Much of what Mark Keller says is true, but some of his argument is a bit suspect. The population expansion of Europe was well under way in the 13th century: new villages were springing up all over, and waste lands were gradually coming under cultivation. But at the end

of the 13th century and the start of the 14th, the climate changed and there was a succession of bad harvests which increased death and disease and produced a decline in the population. The place I live in, Huntingdon, for example, was one of the most important towns in the country in 1250; but by 1350 it was well into decline, and many of its sixteen churches had fallen into disuse. Then came the Black Death, which is often credited with the whole blame. The plague recurred at regular intervals right up to 1400 and beyond, and the result was a catastrophic decline in the population, which wasn't made up until the end of the 16th century. This, I think, is a more complex, but more accurate, picture than Keller's "The population expansion of Europe began about 1650."

Children were still maltreated in the 19th century, sure, but were they any more so than the rest of the population? My own ancestors circa 1800 were living in very bad conditions, in an overcrowded slum area...but while the children may have suffered, it was not a particular suffering of children, just a result of the general attitude of the factory owners towards their workers. People used to solve the problems of an unwanted extra child in the family by starving the family pig for a few days (everyone kept a pig then) and then "accidentally" allowing the child to get in the sty with the pig. It never failed, apparently, and in those days before police and birth registration, who cared?

I do agree though that the present way of treating children is often over-protective and wrong: teachers in the schools for instance often forget that children are people at all, and treat them as objects on which they can work out their own hangups. I remember well several teachers like that when I was young. They weren't interested in the development of the children in their class at all, just in what it could do for them. One common failing was that children should be stuffed with as much knowledge as possible (no matter how ill-digested) so that they could get as good grades as possible in the end-of-year exams and make the school's record look good.

((In the US there is a growing tendency on the part of parents to fear their own children. They don't discipline them in the home, but assume that is part of the teacher's responsibility. That, coupled with our asinine ways of financing public education, and similar ridiculous ideas of what education is, has led to a growing population of functional illiterates, incapable of comprehending even their own newspapers, terrified of the necessity to communicate in print, with only the vaguest idea of the physical, historical, or psychological world in which they must function.)))

[PATRICK HAYDEN]

The entire history of dealing with children seems to be riddled with a common attitude that We Will Decide what to do with them, and they certainly won't be consulted. I don't like the child labor laws for quite different reasons -- mainly, when I wanted to work at age 10 - 15, it was next to impossible -- but nothing disgusts me more than a proposal to reverse the regulations and make the kids work. You know, a lot of the modern day abdication of personal responsibility that you speak of just might stem from this sort of refusal to grant people

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under 18 any sort of chance to make any of the really important decisions affecting their lives. It's an old saw but still true that people tend to live up to society's expectations of them, and if children are kept in protected incubators for the first quarter of their lives, the remaining three-quarters are not going to evidence any spectacular self-sufficiency on their part.

Your point about the importance of play is quite important. Eric Hoffer is right when he points out that hardly one of the great artistic, cultural, or scientific creations in history was conceived in the spirit of doing something "socially useful". On the contrary, they were mainly pure, sustained egoizing, in an utterly playful spirit. The trouble with a word like "play" is that it conjures up images of superficial happiness and smiley-cuteness in most people; what they don't realize is that play is more often than not carried out in dead earnestness. Hell, I'm playing on this typewriter right now: I'm not doing this for society's greater good, or even for fandom's -- I'm doing this because it strikes me as a Neat Thing To Do, write to a fanzine, and because it makes my ego feel good to do so.

((The child labor laws had two purposes. Not only did they provide some protection for children against exploitation, but they protected adults from competition they could not face. With unemployment as high as it is now, one can't really expect that laws will be changed to expand the available work force, unless the laws are made by the manufacturing interests, rather than labor.)))

/JODIE OFFUTT/

I agree with you that school is work and that play is important. I even believe that a lot of our over-planned programs for children are too much (Scouting, sports, etc.) when they leave children no free time in order to be bored. Bored children begin to use their imagination and creative abilities in figuring out what to do with themselves. I think children ought to work too. They should carry out trash, set tables, fold clothes, sweep floors, wash dishes, dust, run vacs, cook, mow lawns, rake leaves, and other things that are necessary to everyday living.

((Absolutely. I was lucky in that my Boy Scout troop was very loosely run, and we pretty much did what we wanted. The adults were only along for emergencies and to see that we didn't destroy the rest of the world. A second troop in the same town was completely organized. They had a schedule posted in the center of their camp sites. "The devil finds work for idle hands" seemed to be their motto. We had a lot more fun

I did a great many chores around the house, including the ones you mentioned, and lots of others. I wish I had been forced to learn to cook though, because except for very simple things, I had no knowledge at all when I finally moved out on my own, and the diet got rather monotonous before I picked up a bit more skill.

Perhaps part of this will be resolved with the increasing awareness of the illogicality of sexual stereotyping. Then, probably, we will fowl up our children evenhandedly, instead of as at present.)))

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MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

[MARK M. KELLER]

Michael Carlson suggests that the estrogen pill is responsible for the current wave of neo-feminism. Perhaps this is a case where new technology produces wide-spread social effects, science-fictional, as he said. But the timing is a bit off: the real change took place in 1920, not 1970.

What? That far back? Yes, indeed. What happened was, the method of making cheap condoms from latex was perfected in the 1890's. Before that, male contraceptives (the only reliable ones) were made from sheep-gut as a luxury item, for use by nobility and upper-class mashers only. Casanova swore by them in the late eighteenth century, but the masses couldn't afford them. There was no safe contraceptive in wide use, so the "old morality" prevailed. Fool around, you get stuck with babies, or V.D.

Here comes Goodyear with vulcanized rubber in the 1850's. The increased use of rubber for tires and raincoats means more research on latex, the raw material. Doctors learn how to use soft rubber for syringes and gloves. Shortly, cheap mass-produced sheaths are on the market (first displayed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876). An interesting side note, this, that I discovered while doing historical research on the Brazilian latex industry. Rubber got into corsets ("girdles") soon after.

Twenty years, thirty years, a new century, and attitudes begin to change. The will is there, the technology is there. Kinsey's studies showed that the real shift in sexual morality took place in the 1920's, when the diaphragm for women came into wide use. "Mechanical" "clumsy", -- but it works. Look at the Women's Movement in the 1930's, as radical as any today. It was blunted and dulled in the 1950's and 1960's, with the "back to the kitchen" campaign, but it revived in the Seventies. The Pill from 1965 onward made things easier, but it didn't produce anything new.

Curious, isn't it? A major social revolution, caused by a simple improvement, and hardly anyone realized what was going on until it was over.

[SUE ANDERSON]

If nobody else mentions it, this is for David Moyer. "As is often pointed out, Paul Revere never got to Concord, it is noteworthy that it was only Lexington he originally set out to warn," says Esther Forbes in her biography of Revere. According to same, Revere and the other messenger from Boston, William Dawes, met Dr. Prescott in Lexington; the three started for Concord but were met by a British patrol. Prescott and Dawes got away, though Dawes didn't get to Concord. The British took Revere's horse and let him go; he went back to Lexington. I don't find anything in the book about a bill, but I recall having read about it more recently. NEWSWEEK? The bill is on display somewhere for the history buffs. The horse was borrowed and was never seen again.

((MYTHOLOGIES, the fanzine where you learn the truth about Paul Revere and condoms.)))

[FRANK BALAZS]

I have to ask Brett Cox why "it is no longer valid to view man as being on the same ecological level as other animals".. I'm sure that not too long from now man could set up huge communities totally cut off from anything but his own creations (excepting the bacteria in his stomach, some of which he'd be hard put to survive without), but I for one would abhor such a situation. As it is, I am often amazed and disturbed at how well, at how satisfied I am with a very minimal contact with "nature".

[DENNY BOWDEN]

My favorite of the ish was Keller's historically enlightening article on childhood in the past. I would, however, like to know where some of the information came from (regarding the Victorian "baby farms"). Sure would like to see another one like this from Keller.

[BRIAN EARL BROWN]

Liked the cover. I always wondered what Wizards did on slow Monday nights.

I wandered in on a conversation between Sheryl Smith and Robert Whitaker at Windycon II on what SF works would stand the test of time. When I came in they were at "of course, Heinlein won't last", 'I don't like Heinlein myself but it seems like he is already doing a good job of "standing the test of time" just as Lovecraft is doing.

((Since Heinlein is still alive, it can hardly be said that he has stood the test of time, whatever that is. But I agree. The popular, hack writers of the field - Heinlein, Burroughs, Lovecraft, and possibly Doc Smith - will last, I think. After all, Shakespeare was a hack, as was Charles Dickens. Certainly they leave much to be desired artistically, but if anyone tries to tell me that, for example, the death scene in LITTLE DORRIT isn't pure mass appeal and melodrama, I'd laugh at them.)))

[CY CHAUVIN]

You comment that you disagree with the notion that "rape does not justify killing the assailant". I don't know; I can understand how it could easily come about -- and often rapists kill their victims afterwards. But since women do survive rape, and no one survives murder, I'm likely to think it's less serious.

I wasn't sure from your previous editorial if you equated all religion as superstitions; I hope not. At least, I hope you don't regard all religions as a means for shifting responsibility onto someone else. I recall one religious instructor I had saying that you should feel free to ask God for help, but always act as though you'd never expect it.

Well, where were you at Fan Fair? Larry Downes was very disappointed. He collects sercon fans, you know (first me, then Sheryl Smith. Had his pickling jar ready and everything.

((If someone assaulted me with intent to rob, I would feel justified in doing anything necessary to protect myself. After all, how am I to know he isn't planning to kill me as well? If that justifies

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killing your assailant (and I suspect it does) than certainly rape justifies it.

Yes, I consider all religions to be superstitions, and that includes my own.

Three days before I was to leave for Fan Fair, horrible things went wrong with my car, forcing me to buy a new one. This did terrible things to my budget and kept me home. C'est la vie.)))

[BRETT COX]

Moving on to other things: WUTHERING HEIGHTS is widely considered to be one of the ten best novels in the English language. Oh, really? By whom? And what are the other nine?

Regarding Dave Locke's comments on the draft: I see nothing immature or irresponsible in disobeying a law that was unconstitutional in the first place (under the 13th Amendment which prohibits slavery and involuntary servitude) or in refusing to fight in a war that from the point of view of US involvement was totally unnecessary, or in refusing to kill other people who pose no threat to the safety of your own country.

((You oversimplify too much. You may think the draft is unwise -- as do I -- but it is by definition constitutional, since it was upheld by the Supreme Court. You may consider the Vietnamese war unnecessary and the Communist takeover there harmless from our point of view, but that doesn't mean it's so. Even while I agree with your conclusions, your logic is lousy. In point of fact, the loss of Vietnam did in fact do the US harm, because we lost access to the oil deposits there. The fact that we may have had no right to them doesn't affect the fact that it was detrimental for us to lose them.

I'm not going to get in a pointless argument about literary values here. WUTHERING HEIGHTS places consistently in the top ten lists of literary critics, scholars, and writers. Others that occur frequently include MADAME BOVARY, MOBY DICK, TOM JONES, THE SUN ALSO RISES, and others.)))

[P AUL DI FILIPPO]

Those fans with a penchant for punning
Have sent saner types raving and running;
But now there's D'Ammassa,
Who thinks he can pass a
Injunction to stop them - how cunning!

((Ahem.

There are some who think I am kidding,
Re puns from MYTHOLOGIES ridding;
Although they dissented
I'll not be contented
Until these vile things I'm forbidding.)))

[GRAHAM ENGLAND]

The Sirois cartoon on page 7 raises a lecture given on BBC radio in

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their series "Personal View". It seems some states of the Union have already banned fluorocarbon propellants in aerosol sprays because of the feared destruction of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere. The Personal View queried the need for this - since the reaction is 1) reversible 2) there is plenty more oxygen in the upper atmosphere to reform ozone given that solar ultraviolet starts penetrating lower layers.

The "baby farming" still occurs - many working mothers give their children to child minders during the workingday. I don't have statistics on this - mortality is not the problem of baby farming now. Stunted Psyche is far greater due to lack of play and lack of affection.

[GEORGE FLYNN]

I think Peter Roberts' conclusion about "the majority of modern religions being American" is based on a biased sample. Asia, Africa, Latin America are apparently teeming with recent cults, but not many of them have the resources to send missionaries to Europe. The question is then not why Americans are so prone to religiosity, but why Europeans (or at least Britishers) aren't. Any theory on the subject had better account for the glaring counter-example of Northern Ireland.

Patrick Hayden asks, "What has scientific materialism to offer?" Truth, perhaps? If reality is "not acceptable to most people", so much the worse for them...and us.

[D. GARY GRADY]

Since you have enabled me to enjoy the sensation of making a public asshole of myself, I hope you will print this paragraph to enable me to at least partially make amends. My source for the misinformation on Joan Little was an official of the NC attorney general's office, whom I heard in a radio interview. At the time I had not heard of the jailer, although I had heard a lot of shouting about the case. I had no reason to believe the official was lying or mistaken, and as I have seen many, many journalistic errors committed by NBC (in particular) I jumped to the conclusion that this was another case of news editing. (Let me interject that NBC is famous for this and frequently even adds sound effects. A few years back in Y ANDRO it was reported that they had added a laugh track to a Klan rally report (this from a man who had been there as a reporter for a local paper).) Well, I was wrong and I sincerely regret my stupidity. I do make an honest effort to avoid this sort of thing, but it looks like I'll have to achieve perfection next year.

Puh-lease mention to anyone who accuses me of male chauvinism that I strongly and emphatically favor women's lib. I LIKE feminists and detest "little women". But I simply will not let that cloud my perception of non-deterministic biological tendencies.

Did you read about the experiments done in the US where volunteers (heh heh) who had been convicted of sex crimes were put through a therapy involving simultaneous electric shocks to the testicles and photos of nubile young girls? Any day I expect to hear that Redi Kilowatt has been molested.

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(((If it's any consolation, Gary, I've been known to make just as much a fool of myself in pretty much the same way from time to time. It's a very...useful?...experience.)))

/BEN INDICK/

The pranks were amusing. You must, I do think, judging from the many episodes of your youth I have read, have total recall, or you lived about 42 years before you were 19. I, on the other hand, was born already 24 years old, and have, subsequently, lived in both directions, forth and back, simultaneously.

/TERRY JEEVES/

Cover, tasteful, neat but not gaudy...perhaps a trifle plain. I liked it though.

This "soft science" slant you mention in the editorial (and which in general, though not in toto, I deplore) is probably due to no small extent to the fact that to write of "hard science", one must have some knowledge thereof...not just half baked theories. It is no longer to burble as John Russell Fearn used to do, about "magnetic rays" and deal with mathematics as a matter of addition and subtraction (see "Mathematica" and its sequel). So, if you can't write knowingly about black holes (except those in your socks) or convincingly drivel on about computers without removing those garments to facilitate counting, then you must perforce find something that you can drool over without having some nasty expert yell "foul"...so the answer is to swing from established fact and strongly based theory to a topic which is still largely speculation, postulation and prior to copulation, just a gleam in its fond parent's noggin. ESP is fair game...oodles have been said about it, and precious little established. Sociology is about as near being a science as is weather forecasting via aching corns. So it goes...and so you get authors heading off up such trails. They get welcomed by readers like themselves who, lacking any more technical knowledge than how to refill their car's gas tank, naturally like to hear things that don't tax their brain cells (all three of them). There you have a large slice of the answer. Oh, there are good stories written on such "soft" topics...but then, there were even better tales written around the hard sciences.

((You seem to be ascribing a mission to SF, which strikes me as a useless endeavour. I fail to see any reason to differentiate between hard and soft science fiction stories.. It would seem to me that there are more fertile grounds for speculation where little is known than elsewhere. I think this is a matter of taste rather than of quality, intent, or purpose.)))

/DAVE JENRETTE/

I see you had a "figholler" in your issue. Would you check out a claim that I make to have originated that genre? In the early 50's, I wrote a long series of such things in Lee Anne Tremper's fanzine MERLIN, one of which was reprinted in Larry Shaw's INFINITY (Vol 1, no 1). Maybe I oughta discuss that with Harry Warner and get a footnote somewhere.

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/MARY MARTIN/

There's a subject I would like to see discussed. Apathy. Why is it that today so few people are willing to stand up for anything...their rights, other people, etc. I heard an interview on the Phil Donahue Show in which some psychologist had conducted a series of experiments to determine whether people would stand up for their own rights. One of these experiments involved having one of his students break in on people who were talking on a pay phone and ask them if they had seen a ring he had ostensibly left in the booth. When they replied "No", he would then ask them to empty their pockets. Everyone complied except one old man, who got sassy. This experiment took place in Grand Central Station. The results of all the experiments showed that almost nobody would object to being subjected to indignity except the old people.

The conclusion the psychologist reached is that our generation has been conditioned to be passive. "Don't resist the mugger, the rapist, whatever - you can't fight city hall." I am wondering 1) is he right? 2) is there anything we can do about it? I have noticed myself that people tend to let themselves be pushed around easily, unless they are in a group of friends.

Individuality seems to be on the decline. People are unwilling to commit themselves to an opinion before finding out what everyone else is thinking. A classic example of this is the "show of hands" type of vote. Large majorities are common in that type of voting, because people look around and go with the majority.

How much of this homogenization is due to mass communication? Everything is measured in terms of a norm nowadays. I am referring to the grand process of Labeling. Are you a rightist? A leftist? Are you for Women's Lib (although nobody ever asks a black man if he's for civil rights)? People may unconsciously become too used to associating themselves with a group, and too unaccustomed to thinking for themselves.

I conjecture that fandom is probably one of the largest repositories of freethinkers left. That is because the average fan led an isolated life prior to becoming a fan, and because of this isolation was forced to think for herself. This also at times leads to large quantities of obnoxiousness, ie, superiority feelings. Does belonging to fandom (which is a group, of sorts) then start the deindividualism process? I doubt it. For one thing, fandom is an amorphous beast without a set of policies.

(((I'm afraid your speculations are pretty much the same as my own. One of the subjects I'm considering for the next "Myth" is "Courage", which would obviously discuss some of the questions you raise. I feel that while fandom does allow a great deal more freedom of thought and expression (in general) than society as a whole, it does also tend toward homogeneity. How many SF fans are opposed or even mildly critical of the space program, for example? Some fannish sub-groups (local clubs in particular) seem to almost mirror the prejudices of the surrounding society almost completely. Sometimes they go to great lengths to illustrate how they are "different" from fans.)))).

[SAM LONG]

Jesse Helms is an anal pore. He had a TV station in Raleigh and was archly conservative. He particularly opposed the University of North Carolina (at Chapel Hill), my alma mater; he claimed it was a hotbed of atheism, socialism, etc., and managed to get one instructor almost fired for teaching Andrew Marvell's well-known poem, "To His Coy Mistress", in an English Lit class. He supported the "gag law" that would have forbidden Pablo Picasso (a communist, so he - P i c a s s o - claimed) to speak on the campus -- or Alexander Dubcek for that matter -- but would have allowed Hitler, presumably. The law was rushed through the state legislature, passed somehow, and went on the books because the Governor of North Carolina, alone among the fifty state governors, has no veto power over the State Legislature. The law was finally repealed several years later, but only after the accrediting agencies threatened to discredit the university if it were not.

Peter Egg Roberts' letter was interesting both in its contents and in the questions it raised. But I don't think you've got it right as to why Americans seem to be more given to "nut" cults than other folk. I think it's because we've always been a pluralistic society, religiously speaking. Churches were disestablished early on, and there's the fact that the greater number of colonists and immigrants in America came from the lower echelons of the societies they left, which would increase the "low church" aspect, which is behind the multiplicity of small denominations.

Note to Eric Larsen: There's a good course in Meteorology at NC State. You might try that. There's always a need for forecasters, etc. I myself am working for a Master's in Environmental Engineering. That is, Pollution Control, which will use both my chemistry and meteorology background.

[TERRY HUGHES]

For me the highlight of each issue has been Paul Di Filippo's column. He has a fine writing style and delightful sense of humor. Who else could ever sense the evil that lurks in landromats? He must have a wash'n'wear mind.

[FRANK DENTON]

Was the Sirois cover an original idea or does Al know THE FACE IN THE FROST by John Bellairs?

((Al?))

[ELLIOT SHORTER]

I am sick and tired of the generalization that all men expect, or demand, repayment of any nature for their paying for dinner, movies, etc. I am a man and I don't expect sexual favors in such cases. However, if you wish to equate companionship and conversation with expected repayment I guess then...I expect to pay when I instigate the date and yes, feel threatened, actually more insulted, if the lady offers, or demands, to pay her share. Hell, I planned the thing. It's an edifice I built. To ask to share is to say I can't plan well. If because you are aware that I am short of funds, then you destroy the gift I am making to you. Yes, it's an ego trip. So what?

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[ROY TACKETT]

I question Elst Weinstein's statement (or, rather, the statement of the people to whom he refers) that civilization will stop because of the closing out of research grants and the ending of "non-essential" research. Research grants were unknown before World War II and civilization managed to struggle along. I would agree, though, with both Elst and you that the Dark Ages await in the not too distant future. Just how dark they will be is a question that is still open. When one looks at the babblings of pseudo-intellectuals one is tempted to conclude they are already upon us.

[AL SIROIS]

I deeply resent the fact that government officials -- many of whom, in the recent past, have been proven to be incompetent, criminal in nature, and unrealistic in attitude both to themselves and the USA as a whole -- feel that they are competent to reveal (or not) what they think I should (or should not) know about given machinations of our judicial, domestic, foreign relations systems. I mean really! It's horrible. Talk about elaborate lies. No one knows who's telling the truth any more. As John Lennon once said, "Just give me some truth... all I want is the truth." I resent the fact that these government clowns do not feel me capable of being trusted with knowledge of what my country -- which expects me to runoff and die for it upon occasion -- is doing at home and abroad. And my parents wonder why so many people of my age are more than a little embittered by the things which have happened in the past 10-15 years. Hah! I may be an American, but I take no great pride in that fact. Nor do I feel much in the way of patriotism.

((The danger is in over-reacting, in becoming too apathetic to have any moderating effect on the system, or too hostile to produce any thing other than a further swing in the opposite direction. Despite recent revelations, our domestic policy has been conducive to at least as much freedom for individual citizens as any other country, a great deal more than most. Our foreign policy has been a mess, primarily because we've used a heavy hand when we shouldn't, haven't used it when we should. For example, our machinations in the Dominican Republic were counterproductive. On the other hand, in the current UN sessions, we've been far too soft voiced, a trend which Moynihan seems determined to reverse, finally. But the fact of our own misjudgments and misdeeds has colored our reputation. We are too willing to kowtow to the Third World, even though our record is still better than that of the Soviets. But because they don't bend to world pressure, the Soviets have a certain degree of respect we've lost. If it were my decision, the recent decree on Zionism and the expulsion of Nationalist China would have led to a cut off of all the extraordinary funding the US does of that organization. I'm not interested any longer, for that matter, in whether or not the UN survives at all. Similarly, Kissinger is far too trusting of the Russians. I'm supposed to be a bleeding heart, soft on communism, liberal, but I think he's conceding too much to them. I've become convinced of late that it's the conservatives who are more likely to sell us down the river vis-a-vis the Russians. Liberals are too sensitive to the charge that they are "soft"; no one worries that the conservatives will be.)))

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[TOM COLLINS]

A few years ago at a Southern convention I was discussing Vietnam with an acquaintance at a party in a hotel room occupied by someone else. The lady who possessed the suite, overhearing part of our discussion, and perhaps inher cups as well, loudly demanded that we leave the room immediately, she wasn't going to stand for that kind of talk, and what were we here for if not to discuss science fiction. Now I was impressed at once with the fact that our private conversation was none of her business, and that her attitude of flight from reality was unhealthy (though I've seen it before), but I recognized also that it was her room, and if she wanted to censor all conversations that took place where she was serving the booze, well, however I might differ with her views, she was paying the rent. She also saw fit to join the hearty applause when a Guest of Honor decided, last weekend, to make his own political views, the subject for a major program item, and one, moreover, that one paid for separately and in addition to the convention's membership fee.

((That's a tricky problem, Tom. What isn't politicized lately. If I were to make a speech and refer to Roger Elwood as the Richard Nixon of SF, wouldn't I be making a political statement? If I were listed as making a speech about, say, The Role of the Female in the Works of Michael G. Coney, and instead gave a speech on the UN resolution branding Zionism as racist, that would be dishonest of me, and I would be morally responsible for recompensing everyone who paid to get in. If, on the other hand, I were listed as giving an unspecified address at a science fiction convention, while it would be very poor judgment to ignore the nature of the convention, I wouldn't feel the obligation to provide something that was entirely relevant. Be honest now, if that GoH had rambled through thirty minutes of anti-Nixon jokes - good anti-Nixon jokes - would you have been as upset?)))

[SHERYL SMITH]

To Carlson, on Mailer: I am not sure whether you're saying that Mailer's adolescent approach is justified because of America's adolescent environment, or that THE AMERICAN DREAM is adolescent as a consequence of the American Dream's adolescence. But either way it is no go. Bad art does not seem any better (or even more excusable to me) in the light of what influence made it bad, and it certainly isn't valid procedure to write about a puerile subject puerilely. Further, I much doubt Mr. Mailer is "aware" of his adolescent attitude as such: many traits and notions of his that seem spoiled-brattish to me, he apparently sees as essential facets of his "masculine" character, for one thing; for another the sallow structure of THE AMERICAN DREAM was burdened unmercifully with ill-grafted and (like D.H. Lawrence, another 20th century adolescent author) silly mythological mumbo-jumbo in an attempt to give the novel significance - and I submit that had Mailer realized the puerility of the work, he'd have spared us the pretentious mess. Anyway, the end result of Mailer's klutzing around are chintzy, gawky novels whose mature protagonists behave - with Mailer's blessing - more childishly than do the children in many other novels. Aside from the fact that the man does handle words skillfully and professionally, his stuff reads more like therapy than art. If you want to read about

the American adolescence, try Salinger; and if you want to read very fine, yet very American novels, try Melville (excepting BILLY BUDD, a klunker) and Faulkner and John Gardner. There is no need to take one's Americana from a third rate literary figure who has not fulfilled his early promise, unless you happen to like literature on the big baby level, in which case you will also want to check out Hemingway, Maugham, and Thomas Wolfe, Dreiser (if you're willing to put up with much tedium) and the aforementioned Lawrence.

((Sheryl, it pains me to say that the above strikes me as about 75% nonsense. There are as many American Dreams as there are American people, and I see no reason why Mailer's is any less valid than Faulkner's. Less appealing to most of us, perhaps, but just as valid. And Mailer's adults act like children precisely because most American adults act like children. Many writers see the role of art as to reflect reality, not improve upon it. I happen to think Mailer is over-rated myself, but Wolfe and Maugham are certainly the equals of Faulkner and Melville. Personally, I'd consider Hemingway as their superior. And how can you examine the American dream in the works of Lawrence and Maugham in any case? What about James Baldwin, Donald Barthelme, John Barth, Hubert Selby, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, and others who write of characters we either pity, despise, or recoil from? You are trying to put too rigid a straight jacket on literature. And what's wrong with BILLY BUDD?)))

/CHRIS EBLIS/

A really outstanding cover. Is Sirois pro?

((Pro what?)))

/GEORGE FLYNN/

I consider myself a liberal, but I don't think my definition agrees with yours or Paul Walker's. "I feel that people ought to be held responsible for their own actions." Certainly they should be responsible, but there are problems in holding them to it. Like it or not, no one is totally free: we are all subject to pressures (from both heredity and environment) which makes it difficult to act responsibly, and the strength of these pressures varies greatly from individual to individual. True, it's possible for an individual to largely overcome these pressures; but it's wishful thinking to adopt a policy based on the assumption that most people can do so. The characteristic fallacy of the conservative is to hold that people are in fact responsible for all their actions (or inactions); the characteristic fallacy of the liberal (typified by Victoria Vayne's letter) is to assume that people aren't to blame for any of their actions. Within this framework, the choice of a rationally conservative or liberal position amounts to a judgment on which of these extremes is more dangerous.

As should be obvious, I use the fragmented, topical format for the letter column. I have recently received a letter from one fan who objected to having letters edited in any way. The advantage of the topical column, I believe, is that it enables me to present the best parts of letters in a format that suggests a conversation. I'd be interested to know if anyone else feels I've done dirt to their ltrs.

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Ed Conner, Michael Bishop, Sheryl Birkhead, Graham England again,
Ellen Faye Franklin, Pauline Palmer, John Robinson, Dirk Mosig,
Jessica Salmonson, David Moyer, Tom Morley, Lee Carson, Bud Webster,
Paul Walker twice, Ray Bowie, Lesleigh Luttrell, Mike Glycer, Eric
Mayer, Jim Goldfrank, Bob Tucker, Rod Snyder, and Bruce Townley.
Several of these arrived late and I may use parts next time.

If there is a check mark in this _____ space, I suspect that you
are not particularly interested in MYTHOLOGIES. Write me a letter and
tell me I'm wrong if you want to see more issues. If there is no
check mark there, you are going to receive at least one more issue of
MYTHOLOGIES, but write me a letter anyway.

I should have listed above the following kind person:

SHERYL BIRKHEAD, 23629 Woodfield Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20760

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