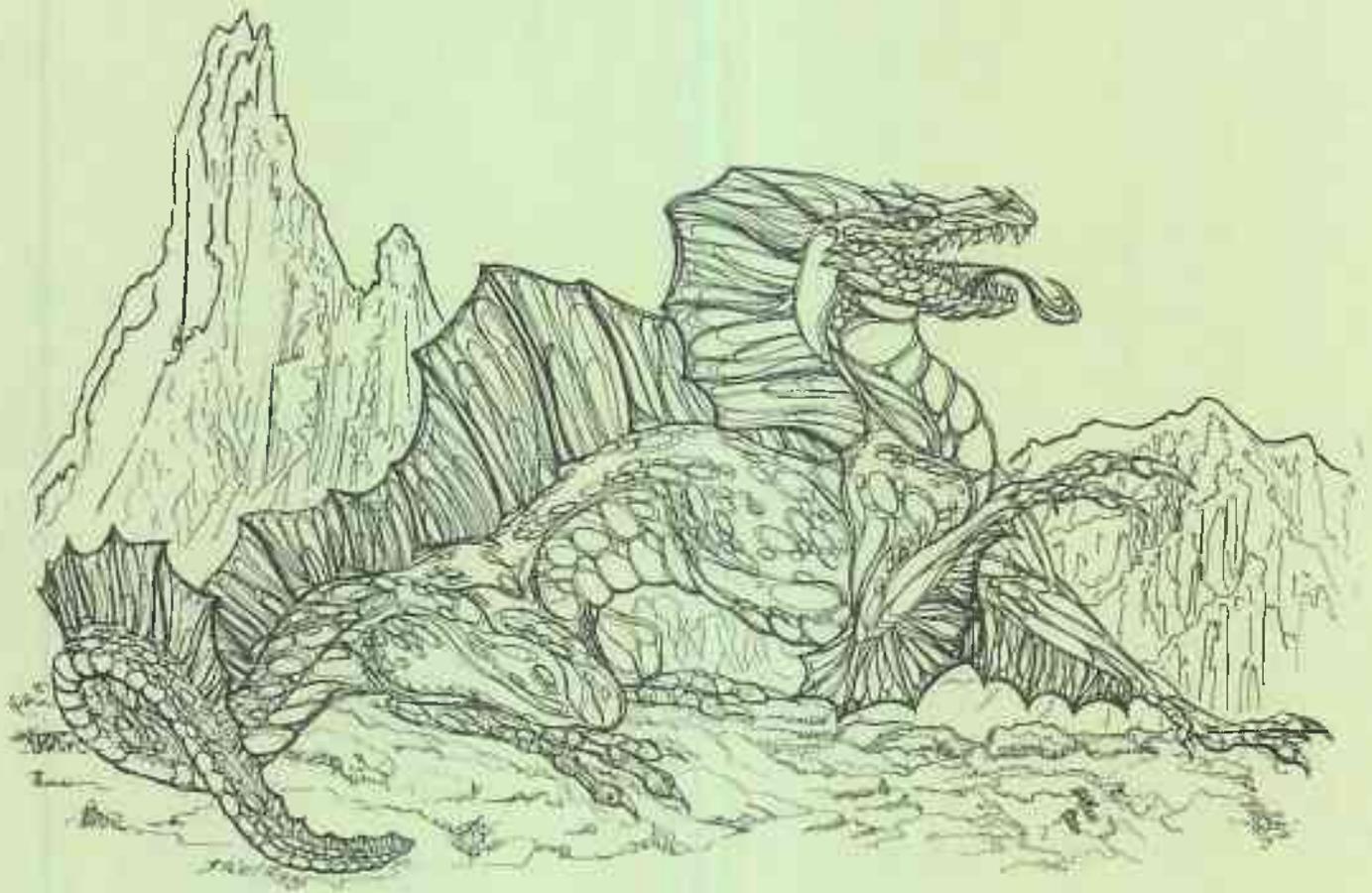


Mythologies



MYTHOLOGIES

#4

GNATTER

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19 Angell Drive
East Providence
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March/April 1975

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

--- Leonard Cohen

MYTHOLOGIES is a personally oriented fanzine dedicated to the proposition that nothing is real.

MYTHOLOGIES is available for loc or editorial whim only. Circulation this issue will be slightly over 200.

MYTHOLOGIES will henceforth appear approximately six times per year. All uncredited material is the fault of the editor.

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It should be obvious that there has been an alteration of format with this issue. Increasing difficulty with my ditto and the arrival of two beautiful Dalzell covers were the final spurs toward mimeography. With next issue, Sheila will become Assistant Editor in charge of art and layout. I am not oriented graphically, so any inquiries and submissions should be directed toward her. We do have access to electrostencilling equipment.

MYTHOLOGIES seems to have come down with a case of creeping contributionism. I never intended it to be a genzine, but neither will I turn down interesting material by others.

The rather high level of response to issue #3 (reflected in the 29 page letter column) has caused this issue to be rather longer, hence more expensive, than we were planning for. This doesn't mean that I want any of you to stop writing, however. It does mean that I am going to be a bit more careful about who I send MYTHOLOGIES to, so if there is a check mark in the appropriate part of page 50, watch out.

MYTH

A year or two ago, I was toying with the idea of writing a humorous article about a set of new, modern gods, like Myopea, God of Nearsightedness, and Borborygmi, God of Intestinal Disorders. The project was shelved at the time and now, much to my surprise, there are indications that modern America really is developing a new set of gods, or at least new superstitions. Many of these are revived Christian or even pre-Christian beliefs, but others appear to be by-products of the scientific revolution. One of the oldest of these "new" superstitions is astrology, which is now at an unprecedented height of popularity in this country, and is accompanied by a corresponding interest in the occult, Tarot cards, fortune telling, and witchcraft. Thousands, possibly millions of people consult their daily horoscopes and pattern their behavior to some extent by what they read therein. If John Tyndall's definition of superstition as "constructive religion which has grown incongruous with intelligence" were true, one would presumably find belief in astrology confined to the less intelligent, or at least less educated portion of our populace. This is demonstrably not the case. The industrial engineer where I work is a first class designer and layout man, but he very carefully investigates the compatibility of a potential date's birth sign with his own before asking her out. Most people seem slightly embarrassed about their belief in astrology and will insist they pay attention only as a joke or private game, reminding us of the fellow who knocks wood for luck "just in case". But even here there is a tendency toward militancy, and the scoffer might well find himself on the defensive in a group conversation.

Another popular superstition -- and one shaped by if not arising from our scientifically oriented culture -- is the widespread belief that UFO's are piloted by non-humans. This is a particularly tantalizing concept because of the wealth of phenomena -- not always spurious -- supporting it. It was interesting to note that Gallup Polls last year indicated fewer people believed in Richard Nixon's veracity than believed in flying saucers, leading to the inescapable conclusion that flying saucers may be more credible than the President of the United States. More than fifty percent of the adults in this country apparently believe that there are alien spacecraft in our skies, despite an appalling lack of hard evidence.

Demonic possession, popularized recently by the film and book, THE EXORCIST, is a hold-over from pre-Christian beliefs, given new currency today. Blatty adapted his novel from, we are told, a true story. Demonic possession is presented to us as fact. The night I drafted this article, it was reported that six people in Rhode Island had sought medical treatment for possession after seeing the film. One of the more disturbing aspects of this particular superstition is the apparent complicity of belief by some government officials. General Alexander Haig's remark that some of the gaps in the Watergate Tapes were caused by some "sinister force" is particularly unsettling when one realizes that Haig is now in charge of a good many nuclear weapons in his capacity as chief of NATO forces in Europe. One can only hope that he will not feel compelled to exorcise Moscow in the near future.

Von Daniken and his ancient astronauts are attracting increasing numbers of imitators and followers, including one character who claims to have found Noah's Ark. Like Velikowsky, Von Daniken dresses his daydreams in a cloak of respectable science, and his fans have begun to acquire the hue of the True Believer. The silly season has extended throughout the year, with the Bermuda Triangle, Bigfoot, and Fortean philosophy resurgent.

Nor should we overlook the overtly religious organizations. The Jesus Freaks are more than a simple revival of traditional Christian virtues, a doubtful tradition in any case. Some elements in this group are Christian in name only. A prime example is the notorious Children of God, an authoritarian group disguising powerlust and greed in the guise of simplistic virtue. The Guru Maharaj Ji, the fat kid who claims to be God, has drawn tens of thousands of worshippers, people from all walks of life who humiliate themselves for the opportunity to kiss his feet. Among his more notable converts is Rennie Davis, whose old religion of revolution has given way to loving kindness. He carefully ignores mentioning the nearly fatal beating administered to a heckler by the Guru's bodyguard a year ago, or the long list of unpaid bills left behind the Guru's travels, despite his multi-million dollar income. And let us not forget SF's own cult leader, L. Ron Hubbard, and the Dianetics/Scientology chorus.

Our modern superstitions, like most traditional ones, contain at least a germ of truth. The Conspiracy Theory of History, for example, is one of America's favorite pastimes, and often one is forced to concede some of its claims. After all, it was leaked only this month that the CIA had hired the Mafia to have Castro assassinated. The John Birch Society sees Communists infiltrating the government on every side; the Weather Underground sees Fascists controlling the military-industrial complex; Congress and the Third World suspect the CIA of coppling governments right and left. Busing, fluoridation, and the like are all plots that "They" are inflicting upon us. We have organized groups which believe that Lyndon Johnson engineered the assassination of John Kennedy, the Black men lust after White women in order to mongrelize the Caucasian race. Black Muslims believe their race to be the only true men, that Whites are demons created to test their faith. Others firmly believe that the world is being controlled by the Jews, or the Mafia, or the Roman Catholic Church, or the Japanese, or the Arabs, or... In most cases there is a superstructure of fact upon which these beliefs are based, but the belief system exists independently of the factual support -- it is supported by the individual's predisposition and is accepted as a matter of faith. And what else is religion? One of Webster's definitions is "a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith." Ergo, all of the above are, to some extent, religions.

Faith is a strange beast, described by H.L. Mencken as "an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable." One doesn't have to be familiar with Eric Hoffer's concept of the True Believer to recognize that the proponents of the religions discussed above have a degree of faith that often resists what we might consider incontrovertible facts to the contrary. Aimee Semple MacPherson demonstrated this when,

following her statement that God had given her the power to walk on water, some of her followers expressed skepticism on the subject. She promptly marched them out to a convenient body of water.

"Do you believe that I can walk upon this water?" she cried. Not wishing to express doubt about a miracle only seconds before its occurrence, her followers answered affirmatively.

"Do you really believe I can walk on water?" she asked again, and this time they raised their voices in a chorus to answer her.

"Do you really, truly believe that God has given me the power to walk upon water?" she shouted, and the assembled multitude roared back their affirmation.

"Well, then," she replied, "if you already believe that I can walk on water, there's no reason for me to prove it." And she walked away. And they were convinced.

Every age has its superstitions, and it shouldn't surprise us that our modern versions often center on scientific development, or -- as with the Jesus Freaks -- as a direct repudiation of technological society. Neither is there anything inherently wrong with believing in the Loch Ness Monster, or Bigfoot, or flying saucers, or organic gardening. Indeed, as George R. R. Martin pointed out in his fine novelet, "With Morning Comes Mistfall", man's existence is richer precisely because of the occasional unresolved mystery in his environment.

There is, however, an unsettling similarity among most of our modern superstitions. Each implies that we -- as individuals -- are not entirely responsible for our own actions. The stars made us do it, or Shaver's Deros. Flying saucers are either manipulating our society or are preparing to step in and save/destroy it. The ancient astronauts have shaped our civilization since prehistory. Demons possess us and force us to do evil against our will. The Devil made me do it. God created man imperfect so it is understandable that we occasionally sin. Conspiracies of the Right and Left subvert our minds and those of our children through propaganda promulgated via the media, the press, government agencies, or Unamerican textbooks in our schools. Modern society is too complex for us to understand, and too impersonal for us to alter, so we are absolved of responsibility and blame our shortcomings on "Them". This is the inner message, the source of comfort, the dominant theme expressed through these superstitions. It isn't our fault; there's nothing we can do about it. Man will accept the most unlikely events if he will thereby be able to avoid facing the fact of his own failure. This is why people whose lives have become unbearable often retreat into fantasy.

I suspect that the situation is due to worsen appreciably in the next couple of decades. The US faces a drastic alteration of its place in the world. As the underdeveloped but resource-rich nations continue to flex their economic muscles, it is inevitable that the US standard of living will shrink proportionately. While this may in the long run be of benefit to all parties concerned, it will in

the short run aggravate "future shock" and the growing middle class unrest. Our self-image as a nation will have to undergo some very radical revision. Predictably, people will begin to look for scapegoats. Initially, they will probably turn against politicians, foreign aid, the United Nations, foreigners, college students, Blacks, civil rights groups, American Indians. Any group agitating for or glorying in their difference from the norm.

But the scapegoats at hand are unlikely to be entirely satisfactory, and there will be an ever strengthening tendency to blame powers other than the Earthly. Many will refuse to believe that the US could be outmaneuvered by foreigners, even with the complicity of a dissident minority in this country. They will begin looking for a power that they could not humanly be expected to overcome: Fate, Martians, Beelzebub, the intelligent bacteria from Andromeda, or God himself, or herself.

The extent to which these superstitions may in fact become discernible religions will depend to a great extent on the degree to which our civilization changes and the ways in which these changes are apprehended by the populace. The obsolescence of our present foreign policy is indicative that those in authority are not fully aware of the altered power structure in the world. Domestically, we have already seen an increase in bookburning, attacks on the press and media, neo-isolationism, and political apathy. It is not entirely impossible that - like Cavism in Gore Vidal's MESSIAH - a new religion or group of religions might sweep the country. Maharaj Ji claims over 100,000 worshippers in this country alone. There is a Church of Scientology here in Providence. Devil worship is reportedly on the rise in urban centers. If the trend continues, we may well be on the brink of a new, technological Dark Age. A nuclear version of feudalism might well forestall any future Renaissance.

WORLD FAAN CONVENTION

I'd like to put in a plug for Don Markstein's World Faan Convention to be held July 11 - 13 in New Orleans. The idea is to have one con for fanzine freaks only. Registration is \$5.00 and money should be sent to P.O. Box 53112, New Orleans, Louisiana 70153. They plan to show films, but minimize huckstering. The con will be held in the Monteleone Hotel. Don is soliciting suggestions and can be reached at the same PO Box listed above. He is being assisted by Rick Norwood, John Guidry, Doug Wirth, Faruk von Turk, Harry G. Purvis, and Justin Winston.

The thought of going to New Orleans in July, of all months, is enough to make my cold New England soul break out in a very heavy sweat, even in March, but the idea of a fanzine-oriented con, or even separate fanzine-oriented programming within a larger con, is long overdue. Jodie Offutt & Jackie Franke made a tentative move in this direction at Discon, and it was very successful.

"...D'Amassa is a pretty sour critic, as a rule...Also a somewhat sloppy one..."

---Don Wollheim in DIEHARD 6

ARRANT NONSENSE #2

by Paul DiFilippo

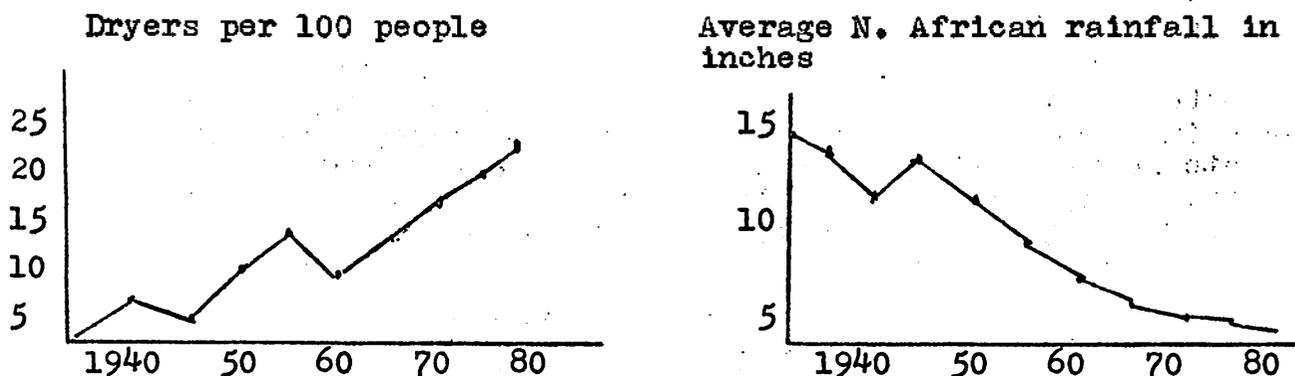
Lately, there has been much speculation over the reasons behind the changes in world climate. Some experts have felt that the world has over the past few decades enjoyed a fluke, an unprecedented spell of good weather which has finally broken. Others have felt that the weather is simply following a long established pattern and is entering an era similar to ones that have gone before. A third group has blamed Man's tampering with the ecology for all our troubles, including the drought in Africa. There is now conclusive evidence that this last group is correct, but for a reason previously undiscovered--the proliferation of clothes-dryers.

Prior to the advent of clothes-dryers, the vast amount of moisture tied up in wet clothes, in the laundry of the world, was released back into the ecosphere by open air drying. This was an intrinsic step in the moisture-vapor-moisture cycle, and has been around ever since Man began to wear animal skins -- or at least since he learned to wash them. When, during the recent past, the dryer became almost a mandatory adjunct to washing, the cycle was broken. Nowadays, all this much needed moisture is trapped -- in (you guessed it!) -- damp basements and muggy laundromats. The connection is too close to deny. (See Figure 1.)

What's to be done about this diverting of the world's moisture to the basements and laundromats of the developed countries? As more and more countries reach a level capable of supplying such luxuries as dryers, and as the growing population calls for more and more of these insidious machines, the situation can only grow worse. There is only one solution that can restore the cycle, and make available again the huge natural resource contained in the world's laundry: we must export basements and laundromats.

When basements and laundromats reach a certain saturation point (this could be checked by meter readers), they would be removed, carefully sealed, and shipped to drought-stricken areas where they would be exposed to the open air. Not only would this relieve the conditions in the afflicted areas, but the health of the citizens of the affluent country would improve with this muggy menace dispatched. This appears to be the only rational answer to a problem of such magnitude, and readers are urged to contact the publisher of this magazine for more information on how they can implement it.

FIGURE ONE: (Source of statistics supplied upon request.)



"EVERYTHING WILL BE BEAUTIFUL WHEN THE SPACE PEOPLE COME":

Chariots of the Gods and Fabulous Fifties Flying Saucer Fandom

by Mark M. Keller

Somebody must buy all those "Chariot" books. They are filling up half the occult section at the local bookstores, edging out Cayce and Lobsang Rampa and the Astrology Cookbook. And it's not just Erich von Daniken. All his imitators are in print again: Peter Kolosimo, Jean Sendy, Robert Charroux. Publishers are dredging up old flying saucer books from the 1950's by Eric Norman and Major Donald Keyhoe, putting new covers on them, and selling them as "Chariot" books.

If the cover is in Western Behemoth Shaded type, the von Daniken fans will buy the book. (Bantam Books has the type-face copyrighted, I think. You notice they also use it on their Bermuda Triangle releases.)

There must be thirty titles by now. Who buys them? And why?

* * * *

One thing to notice before we look deeper: these are not the typical "ancient wisdom" books of the recent occult past. The Atlantis fans, the Secrets of Egypt fans, the Rosicrucians, the alchemists - they all believe that ancient humanity was pretty smart. They think that wisdom was known in those days, by human effort, that surpasses anything we have now.

The "ancient wisdom" fans believe that we can do it again. The powers that sunk Atlantis, that gave dynastic Egypt rule over all the Earth, that enabled the Mayans to fly supersonic aircraft across the Atlantic - these are not wholly lost. Fragments remain in hidden vaults. (Non omnis moriar. Not all is lost.) But we had better be very careful before we try to build once again the glory of Lemuria.

Von Daniken says something very different.

Our ancestors were stupid, says von Daniken. They were retarded and clumsy. They could not do anything for themselves. They could not build pyramids, or navigate the oceans of Earth, or smelt metals out of ore.

We must not have pride, says von Daniken. We must not have too much self-confidence. Our powers were minor, our skills negligible.

Then who built the Pyramids, and carried the Polynesians to Hawaii, or forged steel swords in 500 BC? Why, the Gods, of course. They came down from the sky, and taught us all we know.

But you can't expect a twentieth-century reader from a post-Christian society to believe in Marduk or Thoth or Maui, can you?

Not in those words, you can't. So change the language. Call them "astronauts", not "elohim". They are not angels but spacemen. You can keep the Gods, aye even worship the Gods, while remaining firmly materialist. The reverence remains; the form is now more acceptable.

No wonder the evangelical Christian missionaries regard "Chariot" fans as dangerous opponents. They are competing in the same league.

Never mistake von Daniken's work for a scientific theory. It is a religious doctrine, pure and simple. And are there worshippers at the altar of Jesus Christ, Astronaut? Is there a church of the Descending Rocket?

Sure, there is. Only, you see, it was founded in the 1950's by flying saucer fans, and many people have not yet realized that "flying saucers" and "chariots of the gods" are one and the same manifestation. Those members of the Aetherian Society who pray for the space people to land are praying to the Ancient Astronauts as well.

Will von Daniken set up his own temple to praise the sky-walkers? It's hard to say. Maybe that's not his style. But if you have doubts, look at L. Ron Hubbard and how he converted his home-made psychotherapy Dianetics into the hierarchical, dogmatic, triumphalist Church of Scientology.

"They will return, They will return. I believe with perfect faith that the Space People will return. Even if they delay, I still believe that they will return."

* * * *

Don't von Daniken fans know this? Don't they see there is nothing new in the "Chariot" theory of history, but rather the replay of the old, old wish for Santa Claus to come down and save us from ourselves?

It seems that they do not. Most of the von Daniken fans that I have met are amazingly ignorant - of history, of religions, of technology. They really don't know much, so they can accept what Erich, their teacher, says.

To quote Carl Sagan, an author much plagiarized by the Chariot crowd, "What von Daniken says that is true was known before. What he says that is not true is all his own original work."

I recall a discouraging conversation with a Chariot fan at Discon II, last September. He was convinced that von Daniken had really found the key. Since my own field of study is the history of science and technology, there were plenty of counter-examples I could give him. But it didn't work.

"Many of the ancient Greeks had rational explanations for the Gods," I said. "They thought that the memories of great kings and heroes were magnified over time to super-human proportions. They thought that some artisan who invented a new way of weaving would be remembered as a god or goddess a century later. Socrates hinted at that. Not astronauts, you see. People with special skills who did good things for their people."

The Chariot fan said, "Socrates? Who was he?" (The only name from ancient history this kid knew was Hercules. "Yeah, he was in some movies.")

A teacher at heart, I tried again. "Okay, let's leave the Greeks alone. During the Renaissance, many philosophers talked about super-human beings. They believed in elemental spirits - powers of water and air and fire - who could show things to man. And there were angels. Faust - he talked to the spirit of the

Earth. So the idea of learning from beings in outer space is not new. It's hundreds of years old."

The Chariot fan answered, "Renaissance? What's that? And who was that Faust you mentioned? Was he like Frankenstein?"

At this point, I almost gave up. Switching the subject, I shifted to "first contact" stories in sf, hoping to return to those ancient astronauts by slow degrees. Well, yes, he had seen a story about meeting aliens on some TV show. In fact, it was one he really liked, about this family that gets lost in space, and there's a robot, and this old Doctor Smith who always calls the robot a bucket of bolts.

That did it. He had to be a fan of Lost in Space, yet! Making excuses, I wandered off in search of some Trekkies, so we could have an intellectual discussion of Mr Spock's guitar playing.

* * * *

The idea of visitors from space really is old, you know. Back in the nineteen-fifties, of nostalgic memory, the belief in space-people led to the formation of two large fandom groups. They held conventions in places like Metuchen, New Jersey, or Giant Rock Airport, Alameda County, California. They published newsletter fanzines, and collected newspaper clippings of weird events.

Fandom One consisted of conspiracy fans, who knew the space people had landed somewhere, but the government was hiding it from us. They were Charles Fort followers, hunters of abominable snowmen and the Loch Ness monster, collectors of coincidences. They talked of UFO's and secret U.S. Air Force reports, and of three men in black coats who visited those who spoke too freely about flying saucers. (The talkers vanished.)

Fandom Two were the "contactees" - they had each met somebody from a flying saucer, in person or telepathically. They were glorious and colorful and more than a bit nutty, but great fun to listen to. (I used to work selling horoscopes at some of the East Coast saucer-cons in the early sixties.) The conspiracy fans could only tell you about how the C.I.A. killed John Kennedy, but the contactees - they were wild!

How can von Daniken compare with George Adamski, who rode a saucer from California to Venus, and was fed lemon meringue pie on the way? Who cares about scratchings in the deserts of Peru when Truman Betherum can tell you about the planet Clarion, on the other side of the sun? Remember, he was there; well at least in his astral body he was there. And what of Andy Sinatra of Brooklyn, who received clairvoyant messages while trimming hair in his barbershop?

Von Daniken seems dull compared to Aura Rhanes of the planet Clarion, or George King who founded the Aetherian Society, or old Buck from Tennessee, who sold Venusian dog hairs. That's right, Venusian dog hairs. It seems the space people boarded their 500 pound dog at his kennel when they came to visit the President of the U.S. He swept up the hairs, and was selling hairs in cellophane envelopes, only 50¢ each. A real bargain.

(You didn't know space people visited the Präsident? See, I told you the government was hiding information from you.)

* * * *

It was fun being a saucer fan in the 1950's, and it's fun being a chariot fan today. Consider what the Chariot fans know:

- all legends are really garbled history
- Erich von Daniken has the key to decipher them
- there is only one key, and it explains all history
- the key is this: the Gods were spacemen
- Chariot fans know this, but those dumb scientists do not
- superior people, like Chariot fans, therefore don't have to waste their time with dull stuff like languages or history, since they already know all the really important things.

When you already know everything, why bother to learn anything new? Superior to those primitive savages who thought the spacemen were Gods, and superior to arrogant professors who have not seen the light - who would not be a Charioteer, and ride the winds of Erich's prose.

No hard work, no memorizing formulas, no dusty digging in buried cities or deciphering faded inscriptions - just one lone simple answer.

This one may last, friends. It could have the staying power of the Mormons or of Christian Science. The Jehovah's Witnesses have come a long way from those Millerites on a hilltop in 1843 waiting for the world to end.

Imagine a von Daniken Church lasting into the twenty-third century, when the starship probes find intelligent non-human life somewhere in the Perseus Arm. Consider the schisms and arguments - "are these the true lost spacemen who came to Earth so long ago?" It's a pleasant thought.

And even if there are Ancient Astronauts, and they do return, would they speak to von Daniken? Not likely, is it? Speak to artists, yes, and to technicians and scientists, and (maybe) bureaucrats and (probably) generals, and perhaps even to theologians and philosophers. But why would any intelligent entity landing on Earth want to speak to Erich von Daniken? What could they learn? What could he learn?

I can see it now: the saucers land in Washington, Moscow, Peking, Buenos Aires; speeches are made; treaties are signed. And a month later, von Daniken holds a press conference to say that these are not the real astronauts because they did not come to him.

Widen die Dummheit selbst die Gotter nicht kampfen kennen.
Against Stupidity, even the Ancient Astronauts would fight in vain.

"But maybe Mr D'Amassa can take pleasure in the fact that he is only the second reviewer I have ever taken to task, out of maybe twenty who have said something about my work. Some people get their kicks in the oddest ways." --- Dean Koontz in CROSSROADS 10

"Don just doesn't give enough analysis in his plot summaries."
--- Mike Glicksohn in WSFA JOURNAL #84

THE REAL HORROR AMONG US

by Jim Goldfrank

"We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of the black seas of infinity..." Thus begins H.P.L.'s "Call of Cthulhu". Lovecraft externalized his fears into monstrous creatures and terrible gods. Yet deeper horrors are to be found within the human spirit. Bestiality and viciousness walk among us because "we live on a placid island of ignorance."

The horror began for me when Bobbie, our female miniature schnauzer, was stolen. In the unsuccessful course of trying to locate her, I learned of the two and one half billion dollar a year world of the dognapper. That's your world too. Do you have a dog you love? You are vulnerable. But you have the means to protect your beloved pets, if you will. The dognappers flourish because of public ignorance. Informed, you will wish to have your dog tattooed with your social security number, and have it registered with the National Dog Registry.

Dognappers cruise around neighborhoods. They seize dogs on the street, or even from fenced yards. They entice them into cars. Sometimes a female in heat is used for bait. Sometimes the dogs are drugged for easy handling. Then the dognappers get away fast. Collars with dogtags are quickly removed.

What happens to the dogs? There are organized channels to perfectly legal dog auctions out of your area, and reverse channels as well, for dogs stolen elsewhere. Small purebreds are particularly prized for pets and breeding. AKC papers are easily forged. Mixed breeds may be sold in bunches of 15 or 20. Larger dogs are sold by weight for lab research. Hunting dogs find a ready market. Doberman Pinschers and German Shepherds are given attack training and sold for upwards of \$500 as guard dogs.

The unifying factor is that once dogs are out of their own areas, they are virtually untraceable...except for dogs that are tattooed and registered. No laboratory will knowingly buy a tattooed dog; it does not pay the dognappers to take them.

What can you do to protect your pet? Send a registration form to the National Dog Registry, 227 Stebbins Road, Carmel, NY 10512. One \$15 fee will register as many dogs as you will ever own during your lifetime. A tattooed dog can be traced nationwide. Animal hospitals, kennels, and humane societies will do the tattooing for between \$5 and \$15 per dog.

This article appears in a fanzine to reach an active, intelligent, communicating audience. I swore that if I never saw Bobbie again, perhaps others could be spared the heartbreak. You are educated and aware. Once informed you are prepared to take action. Don't think "It could never happen to me." Please take action for your own pets. Spread the word to your friends. If you edit your own 'zine, please reprint this. Law enforcement cannot stamp out this traffic in heartbreak, but informed individuals can make a good sized dent in it.

Since Jim asked me to print the above, the two Russian wolfhounds belonging to Bonnie Dalzell have disappeared, presumed stolen. --DD

"The idea that man is consciously plotting the subservience of women is true..." ---Don D'Ammassa, MYTHOLOGIES #3

SECRETARY'S REPORT ON THE 29 JANUARY MUAF MEETING

Dear Don,

Congratulations on your appointment as the new National MUAF Corresponding Secretary. It's about time that we younger males began breaking into top leadership positions in the national organization. The old relic you replaced certainly had begun doddering. On one occasion he almost brought his wife to a meeting!

The monthly Minneapolis MUAF meeting was held in Minneapolis Auditorium on the night of January 29, 1975. As usual we had advertised a professional wrestling match for that evening, so women stayed away. We had placed, in addition, tupperware salesmen at all entrances, and they kept any females who happened to wander by well occupied. Some time in the future, though, we're going to have to change our tactics. Even the stupid females will eventually begin to wonder why every man in the city of Minneapolis goes to the same wrestling match once a month, and they're bound to start comparing notes sooner or later. I suggested that we all join the National Guard and use a weekend training exercise for a Men United Against Females meeting, but the Department of the Army claims that there isn't enough money in the treasury to pay us all. Pfui. I say that they should just slip another income tax onto the earnings of stenographers and nurses to pay for our activities; we're already using their taxes to bribe the drug companies for making defective birth control pills. But meanwhile the wrestling matches...

The meeting opened with the ritual reading of the secretary's report for the first MUAF gathering ever held. I must admit that those immortal words, spoken by Adam and transcribed by Abel, always fill me with inspiration. I remember the night my father took me to my first MUAF meeting, telling mom that we were going ice-fishing, and I heard those words for the initial time. They filled me with such a glorious feeling of strength, solidarity, and power, even then. To think that such inferior creatures as ourselves have been directing and controlling women for millions of years! It is such a wonderful accomplishment. Of course lately our power over them has been slipping, and it is up to us, the younger generation, to re-establish the position which our grandfathers and great-grandfathers held, but I am confident that we are equal to the challenge.

The real meat of the evening's discussion centered upon the women's liberation movement and methods of combatting it. I don't know how you men in Rhode Island view things, Don, but here in Minneapolis we regard "women's lib" to be a real threat to our age-old domination. Lately we've become more and more desperate as our attempts to counter its influence continue to fail. At the January 29 meeting we had a visitor, a Mr Richard Farson, who has developed a new technique. He calls it "A Child's Bill of Rights", and he has been scoring notable successes with it. Last year even MS magazine printed the thing. Briefly, he seeks to fight the females with a parody of their own weapon. His "Child's Bill of Rights" is an inspired mixture of plausible sounding demands and

ridiculous ones which women, with their natural stupidity, have taken to heart in vast numbers. Some of its articles though are so obviously foolish that many wiser women cannot be restrained from laughing when they see them. By persuading "women's lib" groups to accept the "Child's Bill of Rights", Farson has induced some women to distrust the "liberation" organizations, thus striking an important blow for the superior position of the male sex. After he had finished his presentation, Farson was awarded a large amount of applause, plus liberal supplies of back-slapping, hand-shaking, and beer.

Next we heard a presentation from a local leader of the "black" movement. All of us have been envying the exalted position which our black brothers have attained and retained vis a vis their women, and we have been wondering how they have so far escaped any erosion of their dominance. Our speaker outlined the strategy which the black men have employed. They have claimed that, due to the oppression with which the black man is faced, it is absolutely necessary that he receive the utmost in support and care from his females. Not surprisingly this campaign has been very effective. The black women believe that membership in the Negro race is more important than their status as females, and they view any ill-treatment they receive from our black brothers as being a blow directed against the white power structure, not at them. At the conclusion of his speech, we separated into small groups for half an hour and spent that time brain-storming. My seminar came up with many useful ideas for employing this technique. Those of us who are working men can claim that our oppression by the capitalists and bosses makes female support mandatory; those of us who are capitalists and bosses can claim that the ungodly and despicable rebellion of the working classes makes it necessary that our women treat us with care and reverence. I'm sure you get the idea. The central committee is currently planning a coordinated campaign to make use of this concept, and I'm sure that within a few months we will have something to brag about here in Minnesota. I hope this works, because if it doesn't we'll be in a desperate position. We've about run out of ideas here.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to drinking and watching pornographic movies. The cleaning women certainly had a mess on their hands the next morning, but what else can they expect from a wrestling match!? A good time was had by all. We especially enjoyed DEEP THROAT. Many of us could not afford to see it in a theatre, so it was especially comradely for the men who own the movie to give a free showing at our meeting. That Linda Lovelace is certainly some woman! Just the sort we like to see, and, if we are at all successful, all females will be like her in the future!

The meeting ended with a communal recitation of the oath. "We solemnly promise that our every effort and action will be directed to crushing the spirit of the female sex and that we will endeavor to keep them barefoot and pregnant in perpetuity."

---John F. Kusske, Secretary, MUAF #461

PS: Please don't get this report mixed up with an article for your fanzine, Don. If the women ever learned about our organization, the work of 1000 centuries would immediately go down the drain! (Oops--DD)

FABLE: MAKING THE GRADE

My senior year of college was a strange combination of the good and the bad. I had successfully completed my student teaching, despite a supervising teacher who thought it necessary to give me a fifteen minute lecture once on the proper way to place a pad of hall-passes in my desk. I had finally been forced to take a class with less than fifty students, wherein I had to write and defend a half dozen highly complex papers, and to my surprised astonishment and delight that I was not only successful, but actually relished each interchange. In effect, I was discovering how to enjoy college and get the most out of it, just as I was about to leave it.

That final term, I decided to cram in as much as possible, because it might well be my last chance. My grade point was high enough that a "C" in one English class would graduate me with no trouble. So I decided to take a five credit course in Romantic Poetry. I subsequently breezed through the course, taking Byron, Keats, and Shelley in my stride. My final grade, following the exam, was the second highest "A" in the class.

But there was a hooker. On the first day the class had met, the professor informed me that my name was listed on the class roster twice. I assured him that there was no one else at Michigan State with my name, and he made a notation on the class list, which was duly returned to the Office of Student Records. No problem, right? Wrong!

I received a phone call in the middle of finals week informing me that I would not be graduating due to the fact that I had flunked my five credit course in Romantic Poetry. I explained to the nice lady at the Registrar's office that such was not the case, that I had passed easily. She suggested that I speak to the class instructor and get him to file an amended report if such was indeed the case. She sounded skeptical.

I promptly zipped across campus to the appropriate office and waited for 90 minutes until my instructor arrived. I explained the situation and he checked his copy of the reported grades. He showed me that he had in fact reported me an "A" and told me that while he would be glad to file an amended report if that would straighten things out, I should know that it took ten weeks to process an amendment, and graduation was a lot closer than that.

I thanked him and went to the Registrar's office. There, after a long argument, I convinced a secretary to check the report of grades from the class to see where the error had arisen. Finally she nodded her head. "You did receive an "A" and it was credited to you. But there seems to be another student with the same name as you who never attended class and subsequently flunked." A little light went on in my mind just as she burst out with: "Oh dear, he seems to have the same student number as you."

Between the two of us, we were able to determine that I was, at least according to their records, carrying 30 rather than 25 credits. There had never been a correction made of that first class listing, and I was enrolled in the same class twice. I felt great relief as I asked the secretary if the erroneous listing could be altered. She nodded affirmatively, "But it will take about ten weeks." I

explained to her that my graduation was being held by this error, pressing her for faster action. She resisted. I became quite angry. I am very good at this. I have marvelous control of my temper, but when I finally let go, I am positively colorful. I was referred to the Registrar himself.

The Registrar was a rotund, balding diplomat, more concerned with greasing the administrative wheels of the university than with handling individual complaints. I had the distinct impression throughout our conversation that he wished the university could dispense with students, and probably with the faculty as well. He explained once more that all corrections took ten weeks (one full term) to process. I painstakingly explained that not only would this hold up my graduation, but also my accreditation as a teacher. This meant I would have to put off seeking a teaching position until the middle of the school year, which would obviously be a bit unwise. He commiserated, but insisted that there was nothing to be done about it.

I was not to be thwarted. I stormed over to the Department of English the following morning and demanded to see the Dean. I was presented with the Assistant Dean. In measured, reasonable terms I recalled the events of the previous day. The Assistant Dean agreed entirely that I was unfairly being put upon by an officious administration. He made a phone call, had a brief conversation with someone, then told me reluctantly that nothing could be done because grade corrections were already processed through the computer for this term, and could not be added to until the end of next term. I neared apoplexy. I ranted and raved. I suspect he was considering calling the campus gendarmerie when the Dean himself walked by and caught part of my tirade.

At his request, I regained control of myself and once more related the entire sequence of events, the initial problem, the steps I had taken to correct it, and the singular lack of cooperation I had so far encountered. I explained the possible consequences, my parents' planned 800 mile trip to attend graduation, the probable loss of income. The Dean assured me that this was a typical EDP screwup and told me that he would personally see that the entire matter was straightened out that very day. Shortly after noon, the Dean's secretary called to tell me that he had arranged that my erroneous class listing be deleted from the university's records.

I am not a trusting person. I immediately called the Registrar's Office and told them that the Dean of English had requested that I check to see if my records had been adjusted. She told me that yes, the Dean had stopped by personally to order the alteration. I should receive official notification of the correction in about ten weeks. I suggested that she had the date wrong, that the correction was supposed to be effective immediately. "Oh no," she said, "That would be impossible. It takes at least ten weeks for any correction in grades."

Feeling like a figure in a Dali landscape, I called the Dean's Office. After a long conversation with the Dean's secretary and the Assistant Dean, I reached the Dean. He told me once more that the correction had been made, but admitted that it would not be effective for ten weeks. "That's one of the drawbacks of computer-

ization," he said. "It takes weeks to convince the computer it has made a mistake." He then suggested that I stop by his office and pick up a letter he would write assuring any prospective employer that the holdup in my certification was merely the result of an administrative error. I thanked him and hung up.

But I wasn't satisfied. I called the Ombudsman, a free lance administrator who was supposed to take things outside the normal in his stride. The Ombudsman was on a three week vacation. Would I like to leave a message? I called the university president's office and was told that His Holiness could not be bothered by individual student problems, that unless I was a faculty member or representing a recognized student organization, I couldn't even have an appointment, and if I was qualified to see him, the first available space was during the following term. I hung up.

Desperate situations demand desperate remedies. I drafted a letter informing the Office of Student Affairs that I was bringing suit against the university for defamation of my character and the loss of one year's income, plus punitive damages. I asked which department should be contacted by my legal counsel. I explained the entire problem once more, including the various steps I had taken to correct the situation through university channels. I informed them that a copy of that and all subsequent correspondence would be forwarded to the local newspaper. I hand delivered this letter at 1:00 that afternoon.

At 7:30 that evening, the phone rang in my apartment. It was the Assistant Registrar of the university. He remonstrated with me for initiating legal action against the university without first taking advantage of the various recourses available to me within the university community. I was gathering my breath for a rebuttal when he went on to inform me that the correction of my grade had been made, that a corrected copy was in the mail to me, and that I would be eligible to participate in the graduation ceremony. He warned me that unless I took elementary steps to correct errors in the future, my life would be very unpleasant. Then he hung up on me.

A few hours later, I sat down to fill in a questionnaire which was presented to all graduating National Merit Scholarship winners. One of the questions read:

"Do you find the atmosphere at MSU friendly or impersonal?"

I considered for a long moment, then wrote in large block letters:

NEITHER. DOWNRIGHT HOSTILE!

"Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run." --- Mark Twain

"Adam was but human--this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden." --- Mark Twain

BYPASSING TIME AND SPACE WITH ISABELLA FIGHOLLER

by Judith E. Schrier

Isabella Figholler had heard rumors of a planet in the 73rd sector on which the flora were semi-intelligent. Making inquiries, she learned that many of the plants on Florabund were capable of lengthy, but apparently otherwise parrotlike, responses to speech. Furthermore, one Hugo Fitzmarlow, the last Professor of Ancient Literature in the Terran culture, disgusted with his inability to earn a living in the highly technical and anti-intellectual atmosphere of the times, had fled to Florabund and was teaching the best of Terran literature to the plants there as a living memorial to what he considered a better age.

Enchanted, Ms. Figholler took advantage of an assignment to the 75th sector to make a side trip to Florabund. Announcing herself to Professor Fitzmarlow from one light minute off Florabund, she received a rather cool invitation to drop by.

Slightly upset at being disturbed at his work, Fitzmarlow nevertheless was pleased at her interest and took Ms. Figholler on a tour of his trained plants. Isabella was at first delighted as she listened to thistles reciting the sonnets of Shakespeare, roses chanting the Song of Roland, trees rumbling Goethe's and Schiller's poems, and ground ivy intoning Pushkin. Eventually, however, she became restless and inquired after Faulkner, Fielding, Tolstoy. "Where are the novels?" she asked. "Where are the stories?"

"Look, lady," Fitzmarlow said sourly, "I never promised you a prose garden."

BYPASSING TIME AND SPACE WITH ISABELLA FIGHOLLER

by Nancy Hussar

Isabella Figholler went to visit an old friend of hers who was, according to reports, in a very gloomy and dejected mood. When she arrived at the house, her friend, Clove Stapleton, was taking a cake out of the oven. It was a very flat angel cake and Clove was muttering wordlessly under his breath. Isabella, who of course was no dummy, had her wits about her. She immediately deduced the cause of Clove's lowness.

"What you need is some good advice," she said, "and I have just the source."

With that she pulled out her portable copy of great aunt Irma Michener's culinary ramblings and opened it to sandwiches. She put it in his hands and said: "Let's have lunch!"

After some preliminary woolgathering, Clove produced, to his surprise, a plate of incredible lamb hash sandwiches. He beamed and capered, goatlike, around the kitchen. "Well," said Isabella, "you seem surprised by joy." "No," said Clove sheepishly, "only by the joy of cooking."

(MORAL: If you make hash out of the lamb, you can't separate the sheep from the goats.)

QUOTED WITHOUT COMMENT

(The following excerpts are from a circular I received in the mail at my office address a few weeks ago and seems appropriate to print here in view of the running discussion of education in the lettercolumn.)

102 MODEL LETTERS FOR CORPORATE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS - with -
950 Alternate Phrases, Sentences and Paragraphs that give you --
All the letters you'll ever need to write ALREADY WRITTEN FOR YOU!

Here's the quick easy way to write all your letters, without wasting valuable time and effort. Just mail the enclosed postpaid card and I'll send you free for 10 days the greatest compilation of model letters ever published for corporate officers and directors, including hundreds of alternate phrases, sentences and paragraphs that put speed, clarity and ease into your dictating...

This big, versatile Desk Book by the staff of one of America's foremost publishers has become the standard source of all the letters -- and replies to letters -- that directors and officers are called upon to write.

But besides giving you all these sample letters and all the alternate sentences and paragraphs to use, it also shows you HOW to compose impressive letters of your own -- letters with the personalized touch that brings the results you want for yourself and your organization.

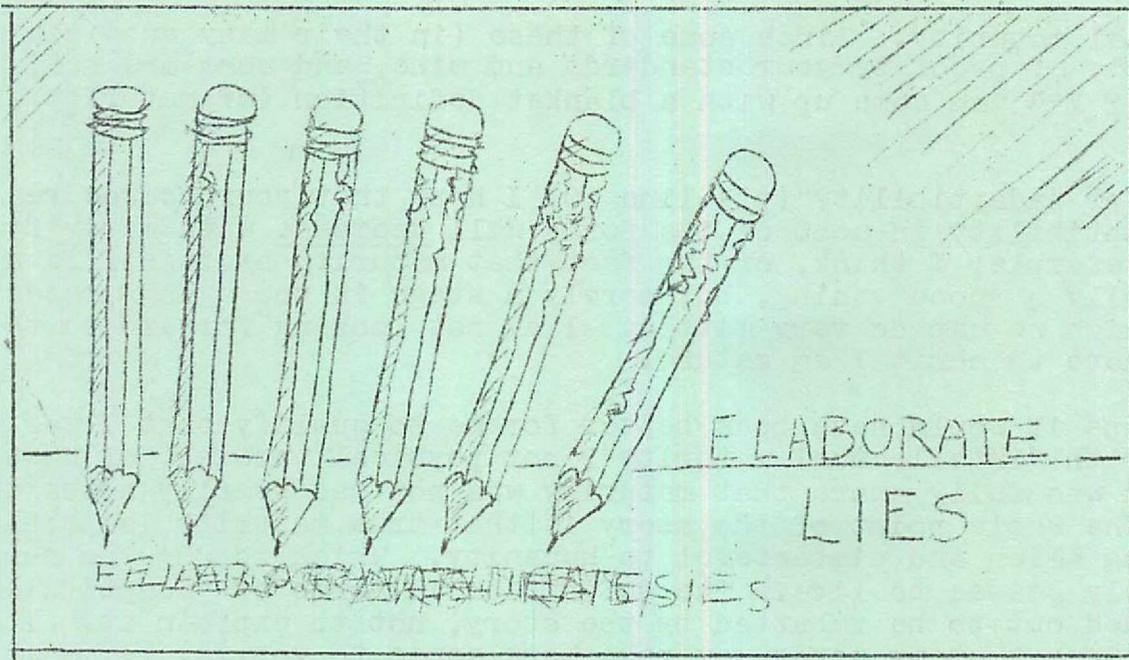
These unique ready-to-use letters, with their many alternate sentences and paragraphs, cover every possible situation, occasion and circumstance you will ever be called upon to write a letter about.

Every letter was painstakingly selected from among hundreds by the Prentice-Hall Editors. Out of all those examined, only the specimen letters contained here were worth including in this extraordinary book...

Yes, with all these models to choose from, you'll never again be concerned with what to say in your letters -- or how to say it. You'll never again waste time and effort in trying to compose a suitable letter. You'll simply scan the index -- choose the appropriate letter -- or specific sentence or paragraph you want to use -- and quickly dictate it for your signature.

[SAMPLE SUBJECTS]

Contributing to a charity...Refusing contribution to a charity...
Refusal to aid community project...Requesting change in zoning laws...Sympathy when employee is ill or injured...The pre-approach letter asking for an interview...Follow up after presentation...
Introducing new salesman...Encouraging new salesman...Letter thanking stockholder for signing proxy...Canceling the order...
Series of collection letters...Notice of delinquency...Collection letter to an old customer...Letter apologizing for collection letter sent in error...Thanks for compliment to employee...Apology for action of employee...Refusal to lend name to fund-raising drive...Praising staff (hotel or outside company)...Anniversary of start of business with a customer...Thanks for making special effort...Letter to banker...letter to public official...Letter to legislator...Letter dealing with change in capital structure...



MATURITY

[MICHAEL G. CONEY_7

One good thing, at least you are now beginning to look at the words before you throw them onto the page. Yet you still define (or accept other people's definitions) within a very narrow frame. Firstly, the whole tone of your editorial suggests that there is something "wrong" about being immature, and something "right" about maturity. Maturity as a word can be applied to many facets of the animal, physical and psychological, and to look on it as an absolute (as you appear to look on "bigot" as an absolute) will lead you to some pretty strange conclusions.

If you define it as "a measure of the willingness of individuals to accept responsibility for their own actions" you are immediately falling into the trap of considering it "good" (desireable according to your lights) and worse- totally ignoring the physical aspect. I, for instance, am sexually mature because I can prove it animalwise. I think I am emotionally immature but I can't prove this and neither can anyone else; it is a personal matter for which there is no yardstick. I base my feeling of emotional immaturity on my tendency to become inflamed by issues over which I can have no control (when commonsense tells me I ought to ignore them) and by my irrational reaction to beauty and sweetness in the opposite sex, and by the way I find my eyes wet when I'm exposed to what most people call sentimentality.

Yet this emotional immaturity is of great value to me as a writer because it enables me to feel what I write- whereas if I was emotionally mature, I'd be writing school textbooks on accountancy. So what is wrong about emotional immaturity? By your definition, I've always been willing, delighted in fact, to accept responsibility for my actions.

I venture to suggest that I've covered three entirely different "things" above - three adjectives to which the word "maturity" can with equal validity be applied as a noun: physical maturity, emotional maturity

and social maturity. Since some of these (in their many subdivisions) are capable of proof by your standards and mine, and some are not, there is no way you can come up with a blanket definition (of maturity as a word).

And as for "adaptibility"(p2 line 10) I hope that your source realises that adaptibility in most of its forms will decrease with maturity. Another example, I think, of the fact that maturity of itself is not necessarily a "good" thing, but merely a stage in the aging process about which we can do very little. I am not looking forward to the day when I have to admit I am mature.

((Perhaps it would have been better for me to qualify that I was concerned with "intellectual maturity", not physical, social, or whatever. Sturgeon was fully aware that maturity was not necessarily a positive goal; the whole point of the story is that true maturity is probably something alien and distasteful to humanity. Which is why the hero ultimately ceases to live. The definition in terms of "adaptibility" is paraded out to be rebutted by the story, not to explain it. I am happy to see that my words now make more sense to you.))

[SHERYL SMITH]

The definition you chose ("a measure of the willingness of individuals to accept responsibility for their actions") is one that has some common acceptance, and it is a fairly good one. But I think some addenda would be in order to make the statement more complete, preferably something about acting as responsibly as possible to begin with and about acting up to one's responsibilities. But maturity is a difficult quality to pin down and describe as in life true mature behavior may be mistaken for - may actually be in a most extreme form - repressed behavior, and as even individuals whose usual behavior patterns would be considered mature ones may seem immature at some times, or under some conditions.

((My definition was meant to apply to acts, not individuals. One could say that such and such an act was very mature, regardless of the person concerned.))

[GRAHAM ENGLAND]

Your definition of maturity as the acceptance of responsibility does not seem complete. Agreed that it is necessary, however, your further argument that you spoke largely of mature acts not of mature people is insufficient. A person is more than the sum of his acts, and if to be judged at all, he must sometimes be judged on what he is rather than on what he does. I'm a bit confused here over judgment and classification. Thus immature is pejorative, whether you mean it that way or not. If most people use immature to castigate, it carries an aura of castigation onto everyone else's use of the word. A more complete definition would carry a sense of wholeness and reflect the biological, technical use of the word.

((Just as most words have various definitions, with varying shades of meaning, so I was attempting merely to delineate one aspect of maturity. Certainly there are pejorative connotations, but I frankly am unimpressed with that argument. An extreme case is the use of the word "so-called" here in the US which has, unaccountably, picked up

pejorative connotations, so that Martin Luther King was once referred to by a white supremacist as the "so-called Negro". As far as I'm concerned, maturity is a quality like intelligence. It can be used in a derogatory context, but it is nonetheless a descriptive term with no pejorative denotations.)))

[ERIC LINDSAY]

I am not at all sure that you can define maturity in the psychological sense that you mean. It seems to me that the concept implies a plateau from which one does not move, and that therefore maturity is a state of stagnation, reached by most people at about 20 to pick an arbitrary age. I would hope that in this sense I never reach it, because I hope never to stagnate in my ideas. However you equate maturity with responsibility, but this is just as subjective as any other definition (although in terms of your proposition at the start of MYTH I suppose that this does not bother you.) Responsibility in most societies means simply that as a member of society you are expected to conform with the mores and laws of the society, and that you recognize that if you do not then that society has the right to inflict punishment for breaking its mores. I would not accept this as a valid definition of maturity because I do not accept either the laws or mores of present societies as having a necessary hold over the individuals who make up a society. In fact, holding the importance of the individual as greater than that of society, I would not hold a person as bound to obey such rules. Responsibility and thus maturity, in your terms, are little more than the rules of your society internalized as a conscience that prompts you to agree with their correctness even when intellectually you disagree. If I were to try to summarize the argument I would conclude that the term maturity means a different thing to each person who considers it; that to attempt to define it in terms acceptable to everyone is probably not possible, and most of the attempts at it are akin to the attempts attempts of the linguistic philosophers - pace Ayers - to define reality. However, I would argue that accepting responsibility can only be spoken of in terms of chosen responsibilities, that is, ones that we decide freely and without threat of violence (upon which all government imposed responsibilities are ultimately based) to accept upon ourselves. So a contractual responsibility, involving a freely agreed to contract, is what I mean by "responsibility", and fulfillment of the conditions of such contract imply maturity. Thus your draft dodgers are not immature, for no such contract for responsibility ever existed. I'd add that my own reaction would be to disobey if drafted. And to resist such drafting by any means possible, legal or otherwise.

((The impossibility of developing a universally accepted definition of maturity, and probably most words, is adequately illustrated by the range of opinion already expressed on this subject. Although the concept of the Social Contract is not one I fully endorse, it does have some applicability here. People do derive some benefits from society as a whole, and society has a right to expect some return. The nature of that return is the question that remains unresolved, and probably unresolvable.)))

[JODIE OFFUTT]

People don't mature because they think they have matured. Most of us falsely believe that when we reach the age of 21 we are mature. Also that when one finishes school that there isn't anything else to learn.

The two are strangely interconnected. Parents want the institutions to take responsibility for their children and then eventually want the children to be responsible for the parents! I can't figure it out.

((As sturgeon says, most people tend to define maturity in terms of themselves.)))

GEORGE FLYNN

Nothing difficult about extending the definition from acts to people: a mature person is one who habitually performs mature acts. Everyone assumes that the consequences of his actions will be good, or at least better than the available alternatives (from his own point of view, and all things considered). When one subsequently rejects those consequences, it is most often because they were not the ones he expected. It is thus arguable that the mature and the immature (by your definition) differ not so much in responsibility per se as in foresight. The mature person would then be the one whose actions are most likely to have consequences that he is willing to accept. This ties in interestingly with the original definition of "mature" (acts), namely "characterized by long and careful deliberation". And it's also just what George Fergus is saying about jumping to conclusions. It does all tie together, doesn't it? "Immature" might not be pejorative to you, but it certainly is to most people. You're entitled to your own connotations, but it's a good way to hinder communication. -----No, you don't meet my objections. I fail to see the significance of the distinction between "wanting" and "demanding" amnesty, when the person in question has not the power to enforce his demands. It seems to me that "demand" is the appropriate word here: one should demand that the government act in a just manner; this is a mature acceptance of the duties of citizenship. This is no less true when the justice called for happens to be for oneself. There are of course legitimate differences of opinion as to where justice and the duties of citizenship lie, and that's a separate question; but the mature person cannot assume that they are simply defined by "our system of law". And alternate service is de facto penalization.

Now let's indulge in somewhat wilder thinking. "Unquestioning obedience to any church or philosophical school automatically makes one immature." Ah, but suppose one carries out a serious and deliberate analysis and reaches the logical conclusion (it may be lousy logic, but that's not the point) that, let us say, Ghuism is indeed the repository of Ultimate Truth. Is it not a mature act to accept the consequences of this decision and live one's life in accordance with that teaching? (There is a grain of sense in this argument. Most of anyone's knowledge of the universe is necessarily based on faith in the reports of others. The question is what criteria should one apply in deciding which reports are worthy of belief.)

"Almost anyone who favors censorship is acting immaturely." Well, suppose we have such a person as I have just described. He has the Truth; he knows it. What are the logical consequences? Surely that he should do what he can (a) to make the Truth known and (b) to refute the falsehoods disseminated in opposition to it. If he and his associates can gain enough power, they will enact laws in support of the latter goal; these laws will punish those who willfully oppose the Truth, forcing them to accept the consequences of their acts and thus

contributing to their maturity. (And if the latter wretches should demand the right to speak freely, they would of course be repudiating "an obligation held by citizens under their system of law" and thus acting immaturely, right?) And all of this follows logically -and maturely - once one grants the initial premise. To the extent that any of this is serious, I suppose what I'm trying to show is the lack of utility of a value-free definition of maturity. Would you say I've reduced it in absurdum yet?

((Yes. I retire from the field in utter disarray.)))

BIGOTRY, BUSING, AND BIAS

[SHERYL SMITH]

On the question of bigotry, let it go on record that I am against it. Of course it probably is an inevitable human reaction and the most we can reasonably hope for is that the same ethnic minority groups won't always be the bigotees (if the Irish are out from under since last century's end, there may yet be hope for blacks and - under a far different bigotry - women.) Still, I think it is rather extreme to call someone a bigot because he used the expression "Jew down" to an Italian! If this person had used it to someone he knew was Jewish, you might have a better case, but even then... well, speech is not too deliberate (nor too deliberated) a thing. One tends to imitate the expressions that one hears and to use again what may have served before -- generally without stopping to consider in less familiar company whether one's words may give offense. If tolerance is at issue, you might do well to "rack your own rede" by being a bit slower to take umbrage, giving the other fellow the benefit of the doubt when there is a doubt that an affront was intended. Besides, if you deny "reality" how come words are so real to you?

((You have at least partially misunderstood me. I don't immediately cut off my acquaintances when they use racially loaded terms. I do observe the fact and regret it. I'm saying this badly, but unconscious racism is far more dangerous because it cannot be met head-on. For a brilliant examination of this whole issue I recommend Laura Hobson's novel GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT. Words are not real, but they reflect the inner reality. There is no objective reality; there are as many subjective ones as there are people.)))

[JODIE OFFUTT]

Understatement of the issue: "The Boston situation is likely to worsen."

SEX ROLES

[PAUL DI FILIPPO]

Here is a riddle for you: How are the price of sugar and sex-bigotry related? Answer: Both are legitimate problems that have been blown out of proportion. Before I elicit screams of outrage, let me try to explain.

I agree that it is no fun (to say the least) to be fugged over by arrogant, avaricious sugar refiners, or by some male supremacist whose

balls are bigger than his brains, but neither of the two are lethal to life. Both are stupid annoyances, prime examples of defects in humanity, pitiable, unthinking dullards --whatever pejorative you wish to call them. But they can be circumvented, ignored, and generally disarmed with a bit of effort. They are not insuperable menaces, and I fail to see how anyone can devote whole precious years of their lives to fighting them, or even worrying about them. They should be dealt with as they pop into your life, and not plotted against for years ahead of time. And if Man is born to worry (a statement whose validity I doubt), let him worry about tactical nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists, what happens after death, the problem of pain, and how to get published.

I realize that this position is going to be open to attacks along the lines of "How do you expect change for the better if no one worries over it?" Well, I think we have got all the change for the better we can through public action. Theoretically, we have laws that require equality in the realm of public life; jobs, political offices, places of entertainment are all supposed to be open to everyone. What we are left with is the question, "Am I my brother's conscience?" Should we worry about, and attempt to change, a person's private attitude? If the individual knows that he treats all humans equally with the proper respect, should he be upset because Joe-down-the-block calls his wife "little woman"? I find it much easier to tell Joe what I think of him and not associate with him if he annoys me that much. But here you might fault me for exactly that -- it's the easy way.

Back at the beginning of this confused ramble, you'll remember that I said sugar prices and sex-bigotry were "related", not "identical". I realize that the latter is much more serious, because it affects individual happiness and prosperity much more than the former. But I hardly think that it is as serious as racial bigotry, as some have claimed. I have yet to hear a report of a woman/man being lynched because of her/his sex.

If it is possible to sum up a series of totally unrelated thoughts, (which, upon rereading, I find the preceding paragraphs to be), let me say that, personally, I try to treat everyone equally ~~badly~~ and that the matter of how much dignity to accord to a person was something I figured out to my satisfaction quite a few years ago, and which has not troubled me since. Anyone with complaints knows where to reach me.

((Unfortunately, not all legal aspects of our culture have been amended in the direction of equality. Marriage laws still favor the men; divorce laws the woman. Sheila would have great difficulty opening a charge account at some stores in this area in her own name. Men must register for the draft, but not women. Men, generally, get stiffer sentences for the same crimes. Men are excluded from many jobs and women from others. Leaving aside the legal aspects, there is an overwhelming cultural bias toward certain roles for men and women. Certainly I don't claim that I have the right to make anyone else think my way, but similarly I feel I have the right to demand that the current sex role assignment not be taught to my child in the public schools, in the bludgeoning, pervasive, and propagandistic method it usually is. And if you had ever watched the cross-examination at a rape trial, I'm sure you might have second thoughts about your feelings that sexism can be shrugged off.)))

✓MICHAEL BISHOP✓

I'm not going to comment particularly much on your long evaluation and partial rebuttal of Shulamith Firestone's THE DIALECTIC OF SEX, which I have not read or even, for that matter, seen on a bookstand or library shelf. I agree with you that men's roles are as crucially and as destructively stereotyped as women's, acknowledging with you that the implementation of these stereotypes probably does---shoot, demonstrably does!---shortchange women more often, and in more ways, than it does men. The sad cases are those in which an individual cannot adapt to the stereotyping (as in your story of Gerry) and is destroyed by his failure to make a personally satisfying adjustment. This is where I concur with one of the major tenets of the Feminist Movement, insofar as I understand it: the stereotyping of sex roles must be broken down, at least in those areas where it's possible to break them down. I have serious misgivings, for instance, about extra-uterine childbirth---not because I have an immediate personal stake in the issue, but because I believe a great many women (a majority?) regard pregnancy not as an ugly thing at all but as an integral--more simply, a natural--adjunct of their biological heritage, a species of potential which they possess but which men do not. This is not to say that pregnancy is not attended with discomfort and even psychological trauma, nor that labor is not painful... only that many women believe the process has a variety of compensations. (Yes, we could get into a long discussion here about these beliefs of compensation being societally dictated, the consequence of an insidious and secret brainwashing--but the same could be argued of almost any kind of belief system and I'm not ready to write a treatise on the subject. This has gone on too long already.) What I'm trying to stress is that individuals should be viewed as equal before the law and that individual choice in a matter should never be contravened when the results of that choice precipitate no harm at all to society as a whole. A simple, almost obvious precept from which to work, I'll admit--but a sound one, maybe, for just that reason.

((Absolutely. I think the basic problem with Firestone is that she assumes that any sane, intelligent, aware female would share her opinions of pregnancy, child rearing, and the like. She completely discounts the possibility of emotional considerations, or instinct. She therefore doesn't feel that she would be forcing her will on others by outlawing natural childbirth, because no sane person would object. Her world would be awfully homogeneous, and rather dull.)))

✓MIKE GLICKSOHN✓

Thoroughly enjoyed your article/rebuttal of the Firestone book (might one say one could get tired reading Firestone?) although I suppose it was at least partly due to the fact that I agree with the general position you chose to defend.

I'd agree with you that some of the basic points Ms Firestone makes are indeed valid; I doubt any thinking individual could deny it. But if there was even the slightest truth to the idea of a worldwide conscious conspiracy on the part of men to keep women subjugated, then I'd have to say that any group capable of conceiving, organizing and putting such a scheme into practice damn well would be superior.

As for the appeal to woman voters on a chauvinistic and contemptuous level, hell, surely history proves that an emotional appeal is more powerful and more likely to succeed than a logical one any time. Let's face it, the great mass of voters in any election, myself included, aren't going to be all that intelligently informed, be they men or women. So an emotional appeal based on sex, race, or simple physical appearance will probably work on many of them. I'd imagine that most politicians are contemptuous of nearly all voters: how that contempt is expressed will depend on the type of emotional appeal that seems most likely to succeed.

((I didn't mean that incident to imply that I was suddenly shown an aspect of politics which I'd never seen before, simply that I had never been a personal witness to it in its most naked form. It was that incident which started the train of thought that ended with the Firestone book and the article. Unfortunately, in our modern age, with news disseminated almost exclusively through the press and TV, there is a certain degree of distance between our lives and the events which shape them. It takes an occasional exposure to the hard edge of a political wind to maintain our perspectives.)))

[MIKE BLAKE]

I must congratulate you on what struck me as the most interesting MYTH section yet. It certainly provoked more thought in me than the previous two (although I hope that will not be construed as a sexist remark, that I found a discussion of women and sex roles more interesting than ones on bigotry and maturity.) Perhaps because it was in part concerned with areas that were uncomfortably close to home--such as the discussion of the role men are supposed to play while in high school. Your summary of this: "they...are expected to be interested primarily in sex, sports, cars, and having a good time" also sums up what I was not interested in, to my eternal ostracism. Well, not that I wasn't interested in sex, but when you're not fulfilling the expected role or playing the "game" according to the rules, opportunities seldom present themselves. I never went out with a girl during my high school years. Anyone whose idea of "having fun" was reading and writing, and especially something as weird as science fiction, could not expect to be popular with his peers of either sex. This, I have noticed, is the background from which many male fans derive, who, I think, usually discover fandom with glad cries of relief, looking upon it as a permanent refuge from the cruel, unappreciative outside world. Fandom is not, of course, the intellectual Utopia it may appear to be at first, as many find out.

But back to the eclectics of sex. Ms Firestone's revelation of the vast male conspiracy to suppress women makes me impatient for the months remaining until my twenty-first birthday to pass quickly, for at that time, presumably, mysterious hooded figures will appear at my door to lead me (blindfolded, of course) to a series of secret caverns beneath the surface of the Earth where the Secret Masters of Mankind will at long last instruct me in the dark methods by which we Men remain the Masters of Womankind. I look forward to this day with barely concealed throes of anticipation. We'll show them who's the boss around here!

I apologize for sullyng your lettercolumn with such frivolity, but it is hard to take some of what she says seriously. Her claims of the barbarity of pregnancy raise the question of whether or not she has ever experienced the state herself. If so I could accept her saying it is "ugly" as a personal evaluation of the experience. As a blanket description of all pregnant women, however, it strikes me as entirely subjective. But to attempt to speak from a non-sexist viewpoint (which I try to do anyway, but perhaps I should emphasize it here), I cannot agree that pregnancy makes women ugly in appearance. Ungainly, perhaps, but the fact that the word "ungainly" contains the word "ugly" does not make one follow the other.

((The most corrosive part of the high school dating/sex role game is that there is so much peer, parent, and social pressure to conform to the pattern, one begins to consider oneself abnormal if one does not have a date every weekend, a steady, for which one feels a deep and abiding love, and a firm intent to marry as soon as possible. It wasn't until I was in college that I suddenly became aware that girls were people too, with minds and the ability to use them no less well than I. When I then began spending time with girls (even the same girls I had dated in high school) I found that I could look upon them as friends instead of "dates", that much of the inter-sexual tension was gone, and I was enjoying myself a great deal more. I think it had never occurred to me before that one must like someone before one can love that person.)))

[SHERYL BIRKHEAD]

I can see where certain professions would tend to discourage women (for example, I finally decided not to go into veterinary medicine because I wanted to work with big animals and knew that physical strength could be a factor--plus that niggling feeling I would have if I called a vet for my larger animals and knew it would be a woman--why SHOULD I expect anyone else to react differently?) And, for the life of me, I can't see how some professions would appeal to any woman, other than from the point of view of proving some kind of fact or point--to my way of thinking, that is a rather hollow victory, but...people are people, that's all, at least the way I see it. True, I see discrimination many places (even when I'm asked where I work and "Oh, are you a secretary?" -- and the look I get if it should ever be mentioned that I have two degrees in - gasp - science). But it can be taken with a grain of salt and not looked upon with a militant reaction.

((But what about a hefty woman who wants to be a vet? Or why couldn't you hire some big dumb flunky to handle the animals for you? I know several women considerably stronger than I, but by your reasoning, I would make a better vet than would they. Sure, there are jobs so repulsive that I can't understand why any woman would want to do them, but I can't understand why any man would want to do them either. That attitude that dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs should be done by a man is precisely why I'm for Feminist goals. The work any individual performs should be based on his or her abilities, knowledge, and so far as it is possible, inclinations. It should not be based on an arbitrary division of labor along sexual lines. To accept a privileged position because of one's sex is just as demeaning as accepting an inferior one.)))

[SHERYL SMITH]

I hardly have to stick my oar in at all except to append that I gather Ms Firestone stems from a Cajun background and ran away from an unhappy marriage she had been put into in the way of all chattel. This does not excuse her fuzzy Utopianism or her errant reasoning, but it does explain somewhat her excessive hostility to men.

I was glad to see you mention the disadvantages rigid sex role stereotypes in this country hold for males as this angle is most in need of emphasis. I am particularly concerned about the screwed-up sexual notions that prevail in this country, not only with respect to intellectual pursuits, but also--perhaps worse--about artistic/cultural pursuits. What kind of sense can be made of social attitudes that say men are to be the creators of serious art, but only matrons and homosexuals dare appreciate it? (Curiouser and curiouser...) The "masculine" life as Americans view it is so narrow, dull and -- yes, Ghod knows -- emotionally stultified, I can't see how intelligent and aware human beings could stand to lead such. I would presume that many do so because they are (socially) afraid not to; and if "male prestige" encourages financial enrichment and discourages cultural, the macho-maniacs can keep it -- and also keep to themselves!

((I was unable to find out much about Firestone's background, so appreciate the info. While it would be wrong to generalize from it, there are clearly some pertinent inferences to be drawn.)))

[BEN INDICK]

I enjoyed your disquisition on the Firestone book. Her future is much of a piece with science fiction's cautionary tales: Huxley, Orwell, Keller. I personally dread the depersonalized world she admires. One starts by admiring "progress" and change, and then wanders. Consider architecture. As a kid, art-mad, like yourself and Gerry, I accepted the thesis that the Bauhaus style of architecture, "form follows function", and all that was, in the expression of the period, the "cat's meow". It helped clear the air of overheated Baroque and neoclassic styles; it gave us the classic simplicity of Lever House, and it gave us a faceless, monolithic city (leading even to that anomaly "minimal art", where no human heart ever found solace.) We have the sky-blocking crassness of New York's Pan-Am Building, dwarfing and continuously trying to engulf the dying but still mind-pleasing facade of Grand Central Station, etc. This is the future we expected, and having it, we have a blank world. Ask Macaulay, will he do a CATHEDRAL for the dull monoliths of New York City?

((Keller's view, as I'm sure you are aware, was that a constant war is being fought between the sexes. This undoubtedly was the result of his rather-bizarre relations with his mother. For those of you not familiar with David Keller's background, his mother cared so little for the boy that he was school age before even rudimentary steps were taken to teach him speech. Keller's ideal woman stayed in the home, where she belonged. The only one of his stories still in print in a generally distributed paperback is, unfortunately, "The Psychophonic Nurse", in which professional women are portrayed as cruel and abnormal monsters.)))

[PAUL WALKER]

Firestone's point about "childhood" being a modern development, specifically a conspiracy to confine women to maternal roles, is, in my opinion, absurd. I have seen that theory before, a few years ago, in a book review in NEWSWEEK. Interesting, but I have the feeling it is the product of some historical juggling with the facts. To begin with, infant mortality was considerably better than 50%, and, as has been the case in other societies, this did not encourage a Medieval mother, or father, to attach too much importance to any one child. Secondly, life expectancy for everyone was about 35 or so on the average, I believe, and children were put to work before adolescence, so what we think of as "childhood" for the Medieval child was actually the prime of life. Thirdly, the notion of a child being heir to the future of the nation did not develop until the early 19th century, just after the Industrial Revolution -- in Tom Brown's Schooldays to be precise -- when the majority of the population ceased following in their fathers' footsteps and the need for skilled technical and clerical workers made it mandatory.

As this relates to women, if Firestone is correct, then the situation of women was much better during the Middle Ages than it is today, but does anyone accept that? What about the concept of courtly love? It was during the late Middle Ages, if not earlier, that woman was cemented to her pedestal, as I recall. "Motherhood" is, I believe, a recent development, but previous to it, the idea that a woman's place was in the home was religiously accepted.

As for the "male conspiracy" theory, one has only to read a Victorian novel to appreciate the extent of feminine collaboration in their own enslavement to realize how absurd the idea is. But I will say a word in Firestone's defense -- she is not wrong in proposing impractical Utopian solutions to the problem, per se, but in proposing any solutions at all. This is a trap that writers are driven into by narrow-minded critics insensitive to the writer's nature. Critical minds are usually impractical minds. Why? I don't know. But I do know that practical solutions are usually the work of practical, mundane men and women who see problems in structural terms rather than in organic ones. Artists, like the better social commentators, are critics. Orwell said that all art is propaganda, which it is: but what prompts that criticism are affronts against the artists' sensibility. Poverty disturbs them. Urban sprawl is painfully ugly to them. Etc. Regardless of their scholarship, the substance of their arguments is emotion: I suffer, Comfort me with good works. The world is ugly. Make it beautiful. Writers should ignore critics who demand practical solutions. Their indignant cries of protest strain the structure of society so that the offensive niches in which problems thrive like bacteria become "inefficient" and are seen as "diseased".

An instance is the Black Revolution which should have happened decades before it did, but happened at all because it became impossible to sustain a viable national image of ourselves as the Land of Equality with the continued existence of discrimination. Illusion is what holds us together, what lubricates the wheels of progress, turning illusion into reality is like turning coal into energy. A nation lasts as long as its illusions continue to fuel its spirit.

Why are feminists on the march -- today? I wonder. I suspect it is because, for a minority of bright, vocal women, the illusion of the comfort and glory of being wife-and-mother has lost its aura. It is seen as a dead-end. It is not that women have always had a suppressed, maddening desire to be Presidents and umpires, but that many women today want to do something -- anything -- that will make their lives worthwhile. And, too, I wonder if women are not the last huddled masses yearning to be free -- the last untapped human resource like coal or oil -- from which the world must draw to make the future. I wonder if Man qua man has not almost reached the point of exhaustion of his numbers and resources. Man qua humanity needs fresh blood.

((I don't agree that the desire to alter their position is something unique to the present generation, if that's the proper interpretation of your final paragraph. This appears to be the first generation which has the tools (media, money) to do something about it though. I suspect that even in feudal times, the women often wished they could be strong and independent and joust, couse, or wander off to foreign lands. Penelope led a pretty dull life while Ulysses was having all that fun, you know.

Of course, Firestone overstates her case of the use of children to tie women to the home, but I suspect her view that childhood as we think of it is a modern invention is substantially true. My own background in art, sparse though it is, seems to bear this out. I know we have at least one real historian among our readers, though, so how about it, Mark?)))

MICHAEL CARLSON

I guess that it's probably been noticed before, but I've always thought that the sex drive exists precisely to lure humans into the kind of non-stop procreation necessary for the early species to perpetuate itself -- given the frailness of babies, the long gestation period, the pitifully small litters. Many people, male and female, who try to "equalize" the sex roles, wind up merely eliminating the romance and love from human endeavors.

Although Mailer very often gets carried away (with himself especially) he makes some reasonably good points regarding the romantic.

((I don't know of any reason why romance cannot exist between people who consider themselves intellectual equals. In fact, I deny it categorically. On the other hand, as you say, or at least imply, there are some basic differences between the sexes, and sex roles never will be identical. But to take admittedly trivial sounding examples, I see no reason why Diana Rigg might not be an aggressive truck driver who falls in love with shy, bookish Michael Carlson, and all this result in a happy marriage with Diana going off to bowl while you sit home and embroider, or both of you go bowling or sit home and embroider.

Mailer's self-image does interfere greatly with his characters, so much so that it is hard to fault much of Kate Millett's criticism of AN AMERICAN DREAM, for example. On the other hand, much of her criticism would not be relevant were Mailer not the person that he is. In PRISONER OF SEX he revealed so much of his internal prejudice, it is difficult not to read all of his earlier fiction in terms of it. I

once thought about a society which would make all works of art anonymous, so that the public could divorce the creation from the creator.)))

GRAHAM ENGLAND_7

Do you know of the dialectic of "as if"-- if things act "as if" there is a conspiracy, then there is one. At least from the point of view of predicting reactions to events or of finding someone concrete to hate. "Men walk about in a state of constant sexual excitement." Many women in England complain of the sexual insistence of men and accuse me of thinking of sex all the time. Not true. I think of food as well but this doesn't matter very much. A barrier to friendship between man and woman is this "insistence" which women often feel they must guard against. The pressure isn't there with male homosexuals - they make friends with women easily - one in my office takes out pretty girls as an adjunct to his clothing.

Extra-uterine conception and pregnancy seem an expensive solution. If we achieve it soon, it will require the work of skilled technicians and perhaps of doctors. How then can it be used in most countries of the world in the foreseeable future? It's a rich man's solution to a non-problem.

((Firestone's answer to your last objection is easy to predict. As a Marxist, she naturally advocates the dissolution of wealth, and would institute worldwide free clinics for child rearing.

The role of sex in interpersonal relations is, in the US and elsewhere, incredibly restrictive. As well as my parents know me, I'm sure they'd be uneasy with the knowledge that I was alone in my home for an extended period of time with a woman other than my wife. Or that some of our male friends are over at times while I am at work. Just as I see no reason why a couple should have to be married in order to have sexual relations, so also do I completely fail to understand why people assume a friendship between a man and a woman has to be at least partly sexual. We have female friends that I like very much, that I even find sexually attractive, but this doesn't mean that I'm plotting to get my wife out of the house for a few hours in order to spirit one or more of them into bed. I suspect this is one attitude in the US which is undergoing considerable alteration, though. Thank heaven.)))

SHEILA D'AMMASSA_7

Firestone and I are divided by radically different ways of looking at the world. In the first place, she is an idealist; she believes in the perfectability of man...or at least of women...and therefore she looks for someone to take the blame for the obvious imperfections in our world, and then designs grand blueprints for a new world with Freedom and Happiness for all. While I can admire the earnestness of her efforts, I fear that she is doomed to frustration and failure, because as us cynics know, man is human and therefore fallible, and short of nuclear cataclysm nothing is going to change much; some things will get better, some things will get worse; we will all muddle along somehow, and somebody will always get stepped on. The best we can do, for ourselves and for humanity, is to live our lives as free from hatred and contempt as we can. It is seductive indeed to think that can change the world; unfortunately, there exist only two people in

this world with the power to change it, and most of us devoutly hope that that they will not feel called upon to do so.

The second place where I differ with her is that she is a worshipper of technology and of the separation of man's mind from his body. She appears to despise our animal origins and all that links us to them. In this she is very much a creature of our times, for it seems that modern man is becoming increasingly isolated from his body, and from the earth and the natural rhythms and cycles from whence he sprang. Birth and death now take place in hospitals among strangers rather than family and friends, and we discuss them in hushed voices, away from the children. The aged and the seriously ill are isolated from the young and healthy, to the detriment of both. My family, I think, was typical; during the long illnesses which preceeded the deaths of each of my grandparents none of us children was allowed to see them, and the possibility of death was not mentioned. In the absence of any discussion or contact with death or illness, our imaginations conjured up horrors far surpassing the reality, leaving emotional scars that I'm sure could have been avoided by a more honest and natural attitude toward death. And since we are a closeknit family I am sure that the separations made their last months more onerous than they need have been. We are growing increasingly remote from the food we eat; meat and vegetables come from supermarkets in cellophane and cans, and fewer and fewer children have any part of growing even part of the food they eat. Few of us nurse our children. Even seasonal and diurnal cycles are becoming blurred; no longer are we hot in summer and cold in winter; strawberries and sweet peas are no longer seasonal treats but available all year around; our city streets are as bright by night as by day. Our children go to zoos not to see lions and giraffes but to see cows and sheep. Those things which should be commonplace to mammals have become exotic, and I do not believe that this state of affairs is beneficial. It is, after all, within the context of this increasing separation from our biological heritage that an intelligent person like Firestone can claim that pregnancy is ugly and barbaric, and that the business of reproduction and nurture should be turned over to machines. We ought to think more carefully before we tamper with nature; we are just beginning to understand the ill effects of technology misused, and the emotional toll exacted by our increasing disregard for our bodies and our relationship to the world around us. It would be just like us to rush headlong into artificial reproduction only to discover in fifteen years that all children born this way die at puberty or become cannibals or something else dreadful.

I am not anti-technology; I just think that people like Firestone rely upon it to an unrealistic degree. We ought to regard anything as radical as artificial uteri much as small children regard pimientos... with the deepest and darkest suspicion.

((The tendency to equate progress with technology is one that is particularly relevant in the case of SF fans. Until recently, the entire field hinged almost exclusively on technological innovation. It has only been recently that we have seen a significant segment of the SF writing public turn to social, psychological, and philosophical extrapolation. One has only to question the value of the space program in a fanzine to learn how deeply ingrained the idea of technology as progress is. Otherwise intelligent people become nearly hysterical

and find it difficult to imagine that human progress could take any direction other than the interplanetary.)))

[JODIE OFFUTT]

Unfortunately, Margaret Heckler is correct in her assessment of how to approach voters. A lot of women would vote for her for just the reason she gives. I think in general women these days are given more credit than they deserve and that children are not given enough.

[NANCY HUSSAR]

I quite understand Gerry's and even your own plight in high school. It happened to me too. High school kids always seem to be the worst when it comes to role playing and singling out those who by some quirk don't go along with their peers. My theory is that at the onset of puberty, most kids have an urgent need to identify with the adult world that they are now becoming part of. The easiest way and most obvious is to adopt the bright paints and games of adults, usually without understanding them. Makeup, sports, steadies, etc. Nobody is sure of what they're doing (at least at first) and so deviates to the accepted behavior are ostracized. Actually it starts in junior high, as the age of puberty has dropped. Being a late starter, I of course could not figure out what was happening to my former friends. They dropped my acquaintance. I decided I would never become like them and that set the tone of the rest of my high school education. I also refused to play dumb, having been a loudmouth in class since first grade (if you always know the answer, and always volunteer it, the teacher never calls on you and leaves you alone). This is part of the reason I was set upon and beaten up by a bunch of boys at the end of seventh grade. Luckily, they were satisfied with destroying my property, and roughing me up a little.

The worst thing though is that the school itself reinforces the sex roles. Dress codes were not abolished in my school until 1968. I had to have a note to wear jeans. I wanted to take shop in eighth grade and was not allowed to for the simple reason that I was female. However I must add that my parents always backed me up in whatever I wanted to do that went against the usual way of things.

Repression in the adult world occurs but is less overt. Do you know what it is like never to be taken seriously by anyone male or female? You do, because fans are not usually taken seriously. The teachers at the Rhode Island School of Design do not take myself or any of the other women's work seriously. They either assume we're playing, or that what we do (in my case) isn't really sculpture. It's "crafty". But there may be hope; I've met a few people who do take me seriously -- some other women and some fans. It's been quite a shock. If you are seldom taken seriously, you usually give up trying to be. It's only painful. Shulamith's conspiracy indeed exists. It's not a conscious thing but rather an unconscious agreement between all members of our cultures. This is because it is much easier to go along with the accepted order than to change things or, Horrors, think for yourself.

((High school kids, like everyone else, fear what they cannot understand. If they cannot understand why you act the way you do, they will fear that you're right and they're wrong, particularly if you appear

to be happy with your lot. Thomas McMahon, in his only SF novel-- THE HUBSCHMANN EFFECT, wrote a depressingly perceptive story about human nature, and how one can become cordially hated, to the point of homicide, simply by being kind and forgiving.)))

[AL SIROIS]

Being the creature of my culture that I am, I am embarrassed? ashamed? to admit that my attitude toward women, at least up until the past 2-3 years, has been decidedly sexist and chauvinistic. Of late I have been doing my best to change this attitude -- which is why I agree that the role of men in this society is quite as rigid and stratified as that of women. Things, however, are changing for the better. After all, I don't want to fall in "love" (often a pre-packaged emotion which we foist upon ourselves) with a Playmate -- I want another person. Firestone, for her faults, appears to have written quite a book. I have not read it, but I shall put it on my "to read" pile, which means I may get around to it by 1976. Maybe.

All this conspiracy between various strata in our society rather obviously points up the hypotheses that everyone is out for number one nowadays -- there is no longer such a thing as teamwork. The race ain't as mature as it would like to believe... If Firestone believes that pregnancy is ugly, then I submit that she's had a couple of bummers.

((I know how "to read" piles work. Mine is just under 900 books at the moment. The actual titles change, but the total backlog hasn't changed much in almost ten years. Now if I could only take about ten years off to do nothing but catch up on my reading...)))

[D. GARY GRADY]

I strongly support doing away with most of society's distinctions between men and women. There is no reason, for example, for the law to require a man to support his family without making some similar demand on women. Nor should women be prevented from holding any job because of statutory or societal restrictions, if she wants the job and is capable of performing it. I strongly support the Equal Rights Amendment.

On the other hand, I am annoyed by the nonsense being spread by many feminist writers. With essentially no evidence, they charge that men and women possess emotional differences only as a result of social conditioning. This is, in my humble opinion, poppycock. If that were the case, why is the "typical male" (aggressive, dominant, rational) and the "typical female" (receptive, submissive, scatterbrained) present in the stereotypes of ALL human cultures? There has never been a society that was truly matriarchal. Why? Probably because men are, genetically, more aggressive and logical than women.

Before anyone screams "male chauvinist", allow me to assure you that I think these are TENDENCIES, not absolutes. Thus, while most men are taller than most women, that is no justification for assuming a given man will be taller than a given women.

I note several obvious errors in Firestone's ideas, based on your summary. For example, if it is impossible to love an inferior being, why is it that a man can love his dog? Nor is it true that childhood and the nuclear family are "recent developments", as reference to any text

on anthropology will show. Hell, reference to the Bible will show it to be false!

((I suspect that you would have to explain what you mean by a "truly matriarchal" society before I could address that point. Neither am I convinced that all human societies contain the same essential stereotypes with regard to sex roles. We have an anthropologist among our readers too. Maybe she will fill us in by next issue.

The recent development of childhood and the nuclear family that Firestone refers to is probably meant to indicate the homogeneity in modern society of the latter. and the isolation from reality of the former. In those senses, I agree...except for isolated instances in the past. Our view of the role of children in society is substantially different in itself. Our increased mobility both socially and geographically has been instrumental in cutting up larger family groups into our present form of society.)))

┌ TED PEAK ─┐

In MYTH 3 you discussed free people. As you can guess, I agree with your position that men as well as women are repressed by the present roles. As long as a woman can't be free, neither can a man. Judith Brownlee, my mate/wife/friend/bearer of our child/lover and I agreed sometime earlier in our relationship that we would avoid saddling each other with sexist roles, and do our best to maintain individual integrity in our relationship with with each other and others. One outward sign is the fact that she kept the name given her at birth, as I kept mine. Another is the fact that our money is our own. What money she makes, she spends as she pleases. Same for me. I am not responsible for supporting her, nor is she accountable for my debts. (We are going to enter into a joint purchase soon, hopefully, when we buy a house.) It applies to everything, from going out to eat (separate checks are a hassle, so we usually doodle figures on napkins) to rent. It works, and believe me, it is nice not to have to worry over her Master Charge or have her worry over my kendo club dues. We filed a marriage contract when we decided to formalize our arrangement, with these and other points outlined in it. I suppose that Colorado is liberal, but there has been little trouble over it. Our parents still insist on calling Judith "Mrs. Peak", but none of our friends do.

That's all surface. It reflects what's happening inside, which is that Judith and I are two people who happen to enjoy living together. "Happen" is the wrong word. We work at it, in order to make it happen! We concentrate on eliminating roles and stereotypes in ourselves. I've learned to cook, keep a decent house, and relax in bed. She would have to tell you what she's learned...I cannot and will not, account for her.

((The marriage contract is a concept growing in popularity, though not always as mutually independent as is yours. If the average man had to hire someone to do all the work his wife(even a traditional, w work in the home, wife) he might have a better realization of the fact that wives have just as much say, or should have, as husbands. Most people, I fear, are not nearly mature enough to make a marriage such as yours work. On the other hand, looking at the divorce rate, they don't seem to be capable of making the traditional form work either.)))

[JACKIE FRANKE]

First off, except for reading in magazines, I've had little contact with the literature of feminism. Philosophy, as a subject, bores me silly, though I do engage in discussing things that could only be called philosophical...I've never read Firestone in any form, but have read the views of Millet, Stein, and others prominent in The Movement, but only on the most superficial level, not in their presumably more intelligent, heavy books, theses, or what have you. My views regarding feminism are muddled and confused and certainly don't follow any "line" I've yet encountered, but they do exist, and some have been concreted into personal dogma. This is the first time I've tried this, but here's a listing of the points I believe are true.

1. Women, as a sex, have been treated as a means to an end--i.e. the propagation of males--throughout the bulk of history.
2. This practice has resulted in the wasting of whatever intellectual, artistic, or practical talents women have, and is therefore wasteful of the species as a whole.
3. This practice has not been a deliberate choice of men, meaning males, but has roots in survival characteristics developed during the beginnings of socially-structured behavior patterns.
4. There is little need for these practices to be followed, and they should be scrapped in a reasonably industrialized nation.
5. Because of the reliance of mankind, meaning humanity as a whole, on tradition (i.e. the following of certain procedures because "that's the way it's always been done"), changing these practices will be terribly upsetting and difficult.
6. It still should be done, out of fairness not only to females, but to the species.
7. It probably won't be.

Point 7 is dreadfully pessimistic, especially from me, who has always considered myself as basically an optimist, but is also, as my husband pointed out in his remark when I read this list to him a moment ago -- "my honey's a realist"--pragmatic and probably true. I may wish it weren't, but wishes alone don't alter situations.

I don't know what your views on the male/female mythos are, but from reading this issue, I'd say you are aware that there are inherent inequalities in the treatment of the two sexes in our culture, and to some degree, you feel that this is not a Good Thing. To what degree you feel this, I don't know. Enough to change your relations with women? Enough to raise your children in as sexist-free an environment as you can manage? Enough to consider it a political issue? Enough to treat it as a revolutionary issue?...but you are what I would consider a "sympathizer".

You start off your MYTH this issue by expressing dismayed surprise at a female candidate using her sex as a bargaining point for votes. Her actions apparently were repugnant to you in a sense, yet you don't seem to condemn her for them, only express puzzlement. A true-blue Feminist would point out that this is but another example of men putting women on pedestals and then being surprised when they don't stay there, but I'm not a TBF, and won't use that tactic. People generally expect people to behave better than they do, and then when they don't, feel let down. It's not a sexist matter at all.

I'd warrant that your political acquaintance does feel women are inferior. When I stop and think about it, I do too. BUT (and it's a large one) I don't feel it is an inherent inferiority. I believe it exists because of the way women are and have been treated and the habit of humans in seeking the easy way of getting along in the world. Most women that I'm acquainted with outside of fandom do not think in any intellectual manner I approve of. I think that final phrase is important, because it is only my own opinions I'm discussing...If women were not inferior beings in today's society, there would be no complaint from me; not one word. I dismiss most women as I dismiss most women's magazines as being superficial, illogical, and child oriented.

It is the exceptional women who interest me, the women who have managed to rise above the role that society would have them fill, and go on to other things, regardless of the field they enter. I don't agree with each one, they are individuals, with different opinions on things, but I do respect them. To me they are heroines. In this respect I'm an anti-feminist, in that I don't accept the view that females are, ipso facto, better than or equal to the bulk of the male population. If they were, then the practices that society condones would be just and right and there'd be no need to alter them.

If, as you state, Firestone's wish is that society would eliminate sexual roles rather than equalize them distress the majority of Feminists, then I must do so too, because I agree that roles for people should be dropped. I dislike forcing anyone into a mold, male or female, and in this respect am a humanist rather than a feminist. The practical aspects of performing this alteration are so many and so difficult, however, that my mind cannot truly conceive of them, and that's why I feel this alteration will never come. There are too many areas in which sexism has a bearing. Let's face it, it runs through the entirety of our social fabric. Without literally ripping this fabric to shreds and reweaving it, sexism cannot be eliminated. People may tolerate the elimination of their political and economic systems, but not their social ones. Changing facets of their lives is not easy, but possible; changing the whole manner in which they view things may not be impossible, but so close to it that it may as well be considered so.

You point out various sections of her treatise and either agree or disagree with them. Apparently we both agree in her views regarding the treatment of children through history; that we do not treat them the same today as in years gone by. We both cavil at labeling this a Plot. Myself, because I believe it was the natural evolution of a situation because of more leisure being afforded to people, and based on previously erected foundations regarding what is important to society. A culture which requires the labor of each and every member of it to gain enough food to live by, for example, will generally treat the sexes in a far more equal manner than one which can afford the luxury of setting aside a substantial (in our case the huge majority) portion of its members from purely survival-affiliated tasks. As time becomes available to do as we wish, rather than be forced into expending every moment in search for food and shelter, we find ourselves making decisions regarding priorities. Guaranteeing the survival of the group was a priority established quite early in man's social development. Bringing of children into the world and rearing them safely was insured

by sheltering them from threatening situations, was brought about by segregating females, who bore the children, from food-gathering tasks that would bring threat to the infants they nurtured. A logical step that has caused the problems we face today. But it was logical at that time and under those circumstances. It still would be, were we plunged back into a primitive way of life. It has resulted in making children more dependent on adults than need be, and it has resulted in forcing women to devote too much of their time to "trivial" matters. But it wasn't because of any Plot foisted upon Womankind by Evil Males... it just happened.

Again, in her views regarding education, I find little to quarrel with. If you relay accurately Firestone's views regarding the conspiracy theory of male domination, I too would agree with you. She's dead wrong. I'm not a Marxist, either, though I don't feel that you need necessarily be one to feel the way Firestone does. Any paranoid can see conspiracies afloat, no need to be a strictly Marxist paranoid.

I would agree that most men do find this system we've developed as being beneficial. Ask them and see. While many, if not most, males feel that the way we live is the best way, they may also feel personally uncomfortable. This doesn't effect their basic agreement with the way things are, but only the degree of success they've achieved within their sphere of influence. Most women today will also say that we live in the best of all, if not possible, at least probable, worlds, and yet they, as individuals, may feel dissatisfied...Heck, when you come right down to it, I feel we live in the best of times while acknowledging it also to be the worst. We're all schizoid to some extent.

In the "trivial" example you gave, the law requiring that bare male feet are not permitted while female ones are, was undoubtedly set by males, so you have offered only an example of males exploiting males, not the other way around example you sought. What has happened is that humanity has become trapped in rules of its own devising, not that males have been trapped in rules of their own devising. In your example the assumption was not that female feet are more sanitary than male feet, but that the female role -- which includes enslavement to a fashion that permits bare feet -- must be acknowledged as dominant over mere legal technicalities. Bare feet in sandals are fashionable in some circles for women but not for men. Since women are hopelessly trapped by the dictates of fashion, they can be excused from the rule that says feet must be covered (a silly rule in any case), but men, since their role is to be above such things, are not. If a man comes in and does not fill the role properly, he is barred.

My solutions would tend toward life as lived in some communes set up in the US by the anti-establishment types, but I do not see that way of life as being readily acceptable to the bulk of people.

((Jackie's very long letter went into some of these things in greater depth, and it was only with great reluctance that I left the rest of it out. It was the first 4000 word loc I've ever seen.

We're closer than is readily apparent by the remarks above. I'm not quite so pessimistic as you, Jackie. I don't really expect the femin-

ist millenium to arrive. I do expect to see substantial alteration of the present sex-role duality we have now. Feminist is really the wrong word, anyway, since it isn't just females who have a stake in this issue. In answer to your questions.. I am very serious about combatting sex discrimination. I don't plan to change my relations with women because I feel, by and large, that I already do treat women as people, value their opinions, treat them as individuals. I'm a product of my environment, I admit, and there are probably some things I do which are unconsciously sexist. From time to time I become aware of them, , ot they are pointed out to me, and I do my utmost to change them. But I frankly find it hard to understand how one can be sexist. Oh, intellectually, I realize cultural conditioning and self-image and illusion-projection work, but I cannot understand sexism, or any form of discrimination, in my gut. Our son is being brought up to believe the same things that we do, insofar as we are able, but he too is an individual and will have to make his own decisions. The best we can hope to do is to provide him with background with which to make the best decisions he ca. He has dolls, we don't see anything wrong with it. GIJOE and toy soldiers and the like were always dolls anyway, j just as toy forts or garages or airports are essentially dollhouses.

I wasn't putting Peg Heckler on a pedestal by expressing shock that she would use a sexist appeal for votes. As mentioned earlier, it is easy to understand that such a condition exists, but you don't really feel it until you've witnessed it. I am equally repulsed when men appeal on masculine grounds, or when a Black appeals for Black votes on the basis of race. I recognize that they do it, and it appalls me.

What wasn't perhaps made clear enough in my original article was that Firestone advocates the forceful elimination of sex roles. Women would not be allowed to have babies regardless of their individual choice. Even the physical act of sex would be a matter of indifference with regard to the gender of the individuals involved. She doesn't want the sexes treated equally, she wants us transmogrified into a world of hermaphrodites.

Firestone is an avowed Marxist, I didn't read that interpretation into her book. She quotes from Marx extensively, saying only that his vision was marred by his lack of perception of the fact that the sexes should merge.

My "bare feet" example was not designed to show women exploiting men. As I have been saying all along, society exploits both sexes. The methods are more obvious when applied to women, but they remain rigidly defined and enforced for man also.

Lastly, I don't see at all that women are "inferior" to men even now. The dull-minded housefrau who doesn't do anything but watch TV and Gossip with the neighbors, raise a dozen kids by sending them out to plague the neighbors, never reads a book or thinks an original thought, etc. is no more saddening than the man who spends 40 hours a week operating a punch press, only to go home at night and weekends to drink beer and watch football (both of which are, mind you, worthwhile activities). Certainly women generally get inferior pay, inferior education, inferior opportunities, and so on, but this doesn't make them any less valuable (or for that matter happy) a person. To each his own.))

[SAM LONG]

I have not read THE DIALECTIC OF SEX, so I cannot judge it. But I read your article on it and its author, and that started me thinking. Wasn't it one of Hitler's men who said, "When I hear the word 'culture', I reach for my gun"? Well, I'm not so far gone as that, but when I hear the word "dialectic", I reach for my bottle, because when I've finished plowing my way through specious reasoning and false analogy and general wrong-headedness such as are found in Marxist-type books and articles, I need a drink.

((It's a shame that a perfectly useful word should take on such emotional political connotations. Actually, Marxist analysis is no more or less useful than other worldviews; the application is where the catch resides.))

[VICTORIA VAYNE]

I found MYTHOLOGIES very interesting, notably the article on Shulamith Firestone's THE DIALECTIC OF SEX. A friend of mine had a copy and I leafed through it, but have never read it through, so I don't feel qualified to make remarks here...At one point in the article you make mention of the stereotype of "typical men" and it occurred to me how little my male friends, almost all fans, match the stereotype. My fannish friends all tend to be more into reading and writing, art and music, than sports and cars. In fact none of them own a car, none of them see any status attached to owning a car. As far as I know none of them play at sports--competitively at any rate--and I have yet to see a football game on the TV of any of them. And I find "typical men" very boring, not at all appealing. I'd much rather spend the time doing fannish things with nontypical guys. Fans do not seem very typical.

((I blush to mention it, but I own a car, and I watch football. But then, I suppose that just means I'm not a typical fan.))

[MICHAEL BISHOP]

Finally, Zelazny's comment on Panshin's RITE OF PASSAGE and Sheila's reaction, "How does Roger Zelazny know what the feelings of a young girl are?" I believe it's possible for someone who is intensely human to very nearly approach--if not actually attain--a realistic empathy with another member of his species with whom he has absolutely nothing in common but the mutual fact of their humanity. This is almost a credo with me, in fact. Therefore, although Zelazny's uses of the adjectives "beautiful" and "pathetic" may very well be redolent of condescending and romanticized attitudes toward the "feelings of a young girl", it may still be possible that through his own humanity he does apprehend something--maybe even more than that--of what these feelings consist of. More to the point, I believe Panshin's portrait of Mia Haverro in PASSAGE (and it's been a while since I've read the book, mind) is a convincing one, sympathetic and uncondescending. (Just as I believe Ursula LeGuin's portrait of the male physicist Shevek in THE DISPOSSESSED is a convincing one, sympathetic and natural.) Why, then, the sexist chauvinism of "How does Zelazny know what the feelings of a young girl are?" Human feelings have all sorts of nuances and gradations, certainly, but they're not weighed out, apportioned, and pigeonholed exclusively on the basis of sex.

Nor, Don, is this just an attack on your wife Sheila. It may be that she was reacting more to the tone of Zelazny's blurb (condescending and romanticized, at least as I view it) than to the implied contention that he actually knew--in every particular--how a young girl felt. Is that possible? Because I've run up against a similar attitude in other areas: How can you write about blacks, Bishop, when you don't know what it feels like to be a black? How can you write about a seventy year old woman in a home for the aged when you don't know what that woman feels like? Have you ever been black? Have you ever been seventy? Have you ever been female? Of course not. Hence, Bishop, your presumption is unwarranted. Against this sort of reasoning the individual who takes humankind as his appointed province of study can offer up only the fact of his own humanity. That shared attribute makes understanding possible. If you deny its efficacy (or its potential efficacy), you deny the possibility of understanding among black and white, young and old, man and woman. Countless instances of such empathy prove that it does exist, and if it exists, then there must be a number of people who are not black, aged, or female who nevertheless have a strong idea of what it must feel like to be these things. All of us, by the fact of our humanity, have the potential to know what another human being feels like. And literature, which is the communication of experience through the medium of the written word, is one of the ways we can develop our potential for this sort of understanding.

[PAUL WALKER]

What Zelazny is saying there is that Panshin's description of the young girl is convincing -- to him. And as for Panshin's knowing how a young girl feels -- how does any writer know such things? They imagine them. And if they are sufficiently talented, perceptive, and sensitive, their descriptions will convince us. To deny Zelazny, or Panshin, the artistic right to imagine the feelings of the opposite sex, -- well, what would you call that?

[SHEILA D'AMMASSA]

I would like to explain my reaction to the Zelazny blurb on RITE OF PASSAGE. I do not believe that young girls, or old men, or one-legged Chinese deaf-mutes have feelings unique to themselves or incomprehensible to those outside the group. I believe that all of us share the same emotions, set off at different times in our lives by different forces and events...same feelings, different causes. So I believe that a good writer can get inside the head of his character, regardless of age, sex, or circumstance, and give a good portrayal of the human being he finds there. I think, by the way, that Panshin has done this, extremely well.

However, it sounds to me as though Zelazny does not believe this, that he thinks that young girls are exotic beings with emotions not readily shared or understood by other people. In this case I wonder how he knows that Panshin's portrayal is accurate. Has he at one time been a young girl? Was he divinely inspired? Did his wife tell him? My point is that the remark is internally inconsistent, as well as patronizing and sentimental. Pathetic indeed!

"It seems that every time I write a letter to a fanzine now, I have at least one remark to make in contradiction to something said by Don D'Ammassa." --- D. Gary Grady, in DIEHARD 6

EDUCATION

[SHERYL SMITH]

As Don Thompson is probably aware, it isn't just a recent phenomenon that students are not taught to put rhetoric together before college. Grammar schools are too busy drilling into one the names of the parts of speech, and the useless technique of diagramming sentences. And the high schools are too busy conveying the format of index cards and how to make (but not apply) outlines. Most of all, both grammar and high schools are getting across how to placate one's teachers by writing regurgitated pabulum in academes for a requisite number of words.

((And the teachers are too overworked to give adequate attention to developing writing ability. It takes a long time to do even a superficial job of correcting five classes full of essays.)))

[TONY CVETKO]

Aha, on page 27 you say: "They are perfectly free to withdraw their children from the public school system and place them in private schools." I assume you are aware of the expense of private schools these days, in which case I can't understand how you could say that. Sure, many people could afford private schools, but many others can't. We are not "perfectly free" to switch to private schools.

((Oh yes you are. By your reasoning, I could say that I don't have the freedom to own a second car because I can't afford one. Of course, they have that right. If they are dissatisfied, they have to make sacrifices. Either they give something up and send the kid to private schools, or they move someplace where the schools are more to their liking, or they run for the school board themselves. This whole issue was thrashed about a few years ago with regard to the Mennonites in Pennsylvania. Individual freedom does not extend so far as to allow one to deprive one's neighbors' children from getting an adequate education because of one's own personal beliefs. Certainly value judgments are made in the public school system, which is why I don't care for it particularly, but there are some instances where the majority must rule. And, as I keep reminding people, the texts under fire were voluntary extra reading, not mandatory.)))

[FRANK BALAZS]

McGraw-Hill has recently instituted a new policy on textbooks: all college level freshman texts will be written on an eighth grade level of reading. This leads me to wonder what level the eighth-grade texts will be. Textbooks that are hard to comprehend are usually poorly written -- not steeped in five dollar words and meaningless jargon, so I think this is a poor solution. Still, there seems to be a trend away from literacy and this is just one sign.

[RO NAGEY]

A while back I revisited my old high school. An English teacher I once had, who had been so supportive of everything he did, asked me, in all seriousness, "What are college students up to nowadays?" This was the teacher who had given me a failing grade on a play that I had written and that had won a National Scholastic award the following year. I replied, equally deadpan, "Well, sir, you won't

believe, but all most of the kids want to do is get laid and stay out of the draft." He looked at me with an expression that showed that I had confirmed his suspicion, gathered his books together and said bitterly, "Why do I have to teach these little fuckers Shakespeare when all they want to do is get laid and stay out of the draft?"

((If Shakespeare were alive today, I suspect two of his highest priorities would be to get laid and stay out of the draft. Many people forget that all art is produced by real people.)))

SCIENCE FICTION

[MICHAEL CARLSON]

I agree with your analysis of DYING INSIDE, I still think it the best Silverberg I've read. One aspect of it that rather puzzled me was the heavy overtone of incest...

((Selig obviously feels a depth of response with his sister that is missing in his relationship with other women. She is, after all, the only character who remains Selig's friend after quarrelling with him. Rather than incestuous, though, it appears to me that any human contact would have served Selig's purpose; she could as easily have been his brother.)))

[GRAHAM ENGLAND]

I've never seen mention of Heinlein in US fandom, admittedly my sample is small, yet his books take up a large slice of SF bookshelves in Britain. Is he outdated, outgrown, disliked or ignored in the US?

((Heinlein still makes the rounds in US fanzines, but he has diminished in stature to a point where he is unlikely to draw substantially more attention than Niven or Anderson or others. He does seem to be disliked to a great extent because of his political views. Even those of us who vastly enjoyed his early novels have become disenchanted with the preachiness and long-windedness of many of his recent offerings. But one cannot consider SF as a field without taking Heinlein into account, here or anywhere. He is possibly the most successful genre writer alive.)))

[SHERYL SMITH]

It's years since I've read [Vance Aandahl]. Your description, though, makes him sound like Gardner Dozois, of the fifties. Of course the deflated/disillusioned/mechanistic view of "the human condition" has been around in force since at least the Twenties, but I had not remembered it being a force in SF for more than a decade. I guess it was though, come to think of it -- and this view of man as degraded lurks behind the "optimism" of salvation through science, the search for God in the machine, the fantasies of human arrogance outclassed by alien cultures, etc. But, of course, this sordid stuff is not reality either -- nor is it by nature any more true than nobler views of human possibility: especially in an artistic context, where all depends on how well it's done.

((I think you misinterpret Aandahl, and Dozois, entirely. As pointed out, particularly in "Darfgarth" and "It's A Great Big Wonderful Universe", Aandahl postulates that man is a mixture of

good and bad, and if the latter sometimes gets out of control, it is only to teach us not to become too complacent. Aandahl is very upbeat, though cautionary. His stories, even his tragic stories, are infused with wry humor. Dozois has darker visions, and a greater talent. But even Dozois is at heart an optimist. His human characters don't admit defeat. Despite their own inadequacies, their failings and treacheries, they call upon an inner core of humanness when the chips are down and flaunt their humanity. I understand that Panshin considers Dozois a gloomy pessimist flailing at human dignity, but don't let him do a snow job on you. Even in his darkest moments, Dozois seems proud of his humanity, and represents humanity as something worth preserving. Catch my piece on Dozois in KHATRU #2 from Jeff Smith and we'll talk about it some more.)))

[LAURENCE YOUNG]

I've always felt that DYING INSIDE was great. It stands as an example of what can be done with SF as opposed to so much of the crap that sees print. There was a book written 60 years ago that had a character much like David Selig. The book was MAURICE by E.M. Forster. Maurice was a homosexual...Being a homosexual, he feels estranged from those who would normally be his intimates (particularly his family). The character here is also the story, as in DYING INSIDE. Maurice is lonely, he thinks there is something wrong with him, and tries to have his "disease" cured. As the book progresses, Forster brings out more and more of Maurice's personality. The major part of the book deals with how he feels about what is happening to him.

((With the wide range of reading Silverberg has evidently pursued, it is quite possible that he has read and been influenced by the Forster book.)))

[CY CHAUVIN]

Basically I agree with the values and virtues you point out in Silverberg's novel, only I think these virtues are those of a contemporary or realistic novel, and not particularly of a science fiction one. In a review in VECTOR 65 (a British fmz) George Zebrowski pointed out that Silverberg used the psi powers of Selig in the same way that other writers of contemporary fiction have used literary conventions, such as point of view, direct thoughts, etc...I don't want to berate Silverberg...I think it is a good novel, but a good contemporary novel, not SF. As SF, I really don't think it's all that important, because it really doesn't deal with telepathy. But that's ok: so it goes.

((I absolutely deny the oft-heard statement that the conventions of the mainstream should not be applied to SF. Any convention that helps to develop characterization, facilitate communication, or achieve any other aim of literature is appropriate. Neither do I feel that telepathy is a more worthwhile or appropriate a subject for SF than human uncertainty and the quest for self understanding. I view SF as one means to an end, not an end in itself. Our little sub-genre often provides unique possibilities not open to mainstream writers, but that doesn't mean we should eschew their advantages in the name of separatism.)))

MISCELLANEOUS

[GRAHAM ENGLAND - ON IRELAND]

George Flynn on the troubles in Ireland is perceptive. It is difficult to conceive of two economically interdependent communities continuing to live separately and not mix. The tribal picture of the situation would be easier to hold if there were readily observable facial or blood type differences between them. The only differences I've noticed so far are linguistic. Thus the IRA is the "army" to the so-called Catholic Community -- they're terrorists to the government and the so-called Protestants.

[MICHAEL GLICKSOHN - ON FILLERS]

I'm tickled pink with your use of negative remarks about yourself as interlineations or fillers. I used to relish each really good or insulting remark that NERG provoked and published them whenever I could. A faned without a sense of humour is like a scotch on the rocks without the scotch.

((I wonder if I was wise to have put both the scotch and the Irish on the same page.)))

[SHERYL BIRKHEAD - ON MYTHOLOGIES]

I'm continually amazed at the volume of your writing...I also wonder how MYTH is treating you and would like to see some note about that in an issue if you'd care to. How are the replies measuring up to what you had in mind--is it doing what you wanted it to do? I'm always curious about that--more so about perzines than genzines--since I feel the decision to do a perzine involves a special type of writing and desire to communicate in a special manner. Right or wrong?

Question--no humorous pieces (well, I mean fannish). I wonder if this is a part of the way you feel about MYTH--that isn't what you'd like to do with it?

((Obviously I'm pubbing MYTHOLOGIES for the usual reasons - egoboo, letters, an excuse to communicate with more people on more subjects. Specifically, MYTHs are designed as a means of periodically forcing myself to re-examine my personal beliefs or doubts in one area or another, codify them, present them to a highly intelligent public - my readers - in a coherent manner, and then re-evaluate them in the light of the comments provoked thereby. I work hardest on this section, doing at least three drafts, sometimes more. FABLES and PARABLES are designed as outlets for my urge to write. They represent the two dominant types of fan-writing, sercon and fannish. All three, combined with occasional pieces by others, are designed to provide an entertaining, reasonably balanced fanzine. I'm not particularly interested in layout or graphics, though I enjoy them, so starting next issue, Sheila will be co-editor in charge of that sort of thing. As to how well it's succeeding, the size of this issue should give you a fair idea.)))

[AL SIROIS]

Isabella Figholler on Zanol was possibly one of the bottom ten puns of my life. A real howler -- I threw MYTHOLOGIES across the room.

((Thanks, Al, you were possibly the only person who understood it. For the many people who asked: I'm considered as the apex of Zemmi's freshest clones by Zanol's Hardel lady equals: "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones" by Samuel R. Delany. This is a good place to announce that I will not accept any more Figholler stories after my current store is used up, probably in the next two issues.)))

[D. GARY GRADY - ON GRAMMAR]

While babbling on education, I wonder if the best compromise might be self-paced learning with a maximum time limit.

You are right when you say that high schools teach very little writing. Unfortunately, most English teachers are poorly qualified to teach the subject, since their English bears virtually no relation to the real language. I have spasms when I hear an instructor tell some poor student who knows no better that "This is I" is acceptable grammar!

((I hate to disagree with you, but I'm afraid I must. There is value in having a strict, formal grammar which may or may not parallel spoken English. Sloppy grammar often leads to sloppy thinking, at least in formal writing. A well known dictionary recently said that "imply" and "infer" are synonyms. "Decimate" now means to ravage instead of to destroy ten percent of something. Certainly there are rules that seem silly. I like to occasionally split an infinitive or use a preposition to end a sentence with. But it's important that I know what rules I am breaking, or I will break them indiscriminately...In case you didn't know, Gary, I used to teach high school English.)))

[PAUL DI FILIPPO]

Tell Ben Indick he's got great taste, but he's no judge of veracity. To prove it, we're bringing five Don D'Amassa's to the next con for him to shake hands with.

This George Fergus is a sly youth indeed. I guess I just didn't look deeply enough into the diabolic eyes of that unassuming tad I met on that ill-starred balcony. Here he is, trying to create bad feelings between us just so he can have the space in MYTHOLOGIES my dismissal would free for his own pieces. Well, literary infighting is the nastiest kind, but it takes two to engage in it, and I, for one, will never stoop so low, regardless of what others might do. And only the nasty-minded will attach any significance to the fact that my next article will be "A Critique of Impure Fergus".

[SHEILA D'AMASSA]

I think that Mike Blake misses the point about the Boston parents; they have already been sprayed with Ubik, as their caveman actions indicate.

Ben Indick may be relieved to know that there is only one Don D'Amassa, and for dallying purposes he's all booked up for the next few hundred years.

[LEE CARSON]

Did I ever tell you that I caddied for Paul Harvey? Eighteen holes with two kangaroo bags and he tipped me a quarter.

[MIKE GLICKSOHN]

The comments you and Don Thompson make about the state of the educational system fascinate me. I suppose teaching math makes life much easier than teaching English makes it for you. Or made it for you, whatever. On the other hand, I'd be the last to claim that the average student graduating from high school today has a firm basis in elementary arithmetic, let alone mathematics. I'm afraid that it's been my experience too that undisciplined courses, at least at the high school level, are great for well-motivated, self-disciplined students and essentially deadly for the great majority that the other students make up. It also continues to appall me that our department head, in most ways a fine and dedicated man, insists on passing on a bell curve. The quality of education has been dropping steadily in Ontario for years now and all I can do really is continue my fifth column activities by not scaling marks and saying I have. I've argued about the matter until my face is as blue as this paper but it does no good.

((I have the feeling we've been into this before. I'm more ruthless than you, which is why I'd probably never have succeeded as a teacher. I'd force the kids to accept innovative teaching. What they are being force fed through traditional means doesn't remain with them once they've left school. So I'd far rather teach them how to depend on themselves, analyze problems logically, formulate their own hypotheses, and learn to value their own opinions, than teach them geometric proofs, the symbolism of threes in MOBY DICK, or have them memorize the preamble to the US Constitution. And I'd force them to write until their arms fell off.)))

[FRANK BALAZS]

Admittedly, until the advent of the Industrial Revolution, children were viewed pretty much as young adults, but there were and still are rites of passage that acknowledged the difference between the child and the adult. Primitive societies usually differentiate sexually between a boy and a man or a girl and a woman. Soon after going through puberty, some form of rite of passage is administered. In some tribal groups, it is a group circumcision. The rite is put off until there are several males of the correct age or older (the age of puberty, of course, varies from individual to individual). After the rite, one is an adult and had a right to certain knowledge previously barred to one.

Still, for the most part, it wasn't till the Industrial Revolution came of age that children were being more and more segregated from adults. It has, perhaps, reached a peak in the present grade system, where kindergardeners fear first-graders purely on the basis of recognized (as opposed to actual) age. In our present day society, there has formed even a third segmentation that I, as a college student, am part of: there is now childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The first cultural stage lasts until puberty or so; I shouldn't define it physiologically since in practice, it is not. The second till the end of the teens (or past if you're in college). The final till

death--except that the new euphemism of senior citizen is coming into its own. Is there now a fourth group of people in our culture and society?

BYPASSING TIME AND SPACE WITH ISABELLA FIGHOLLER

-- Mike Blake

(NOTE: A sizeable number of copies of each issue of MYTHOLOGIES are sent by Don to non-fannish friends, and in order to insure that they are not completely dumbfounded by in-group jokes, words, and abbreviations, Don has accomplished the near impossible task of coherently explaining fandom in one page. A copy of this explication is included with the MYTHOLOGIES sent to these particular readers. There is, however, one item in this interpretation that surprised me. It explained that the Figholler was a tall tale whose ending was a pun, usually on the title of a well known SF story. This came as a surprise to me, for of all the Fighollers written so far, including the many--some say too many--written by me, only one has been a pun on an SF title, and that one was committed by Don himself. But far be it from me to correct the esteemed editor of this publication. Obviously it was I who was at fault. So in order to put aright this heinous omission, I submit for your perusal three mercifully short tales which will in one fell swoop--and I do mean fell--make up for the lack of SF titles in the previous adventures. Caveat, dear reader.)

1. During her sojourn as head keeper of the Royal Aviary on Aeolus III, Isabella Figholler had to deal with a steady parade of extra-terrestrial salesmen of all shapes and sizes hoping to sell her both supposedly rarebirds from other worlds and the exotic supplies needed to insure their well-being. Her dealings with them were complicated by the native Aeolusions who worked under her, descendants of Earth settlers who spoke a peculiarly corrupted English lacking, for instance, pronouns and any article but "an". They were always getting their orders and invoices wrong. An unusually sharp salesman from Mirzar IV, in particular, was always fast-talking her underlings into accepting large shipments of unneeded supplies. Isabella gave her employees a stern lecture about this; nevertheless it was with some trepidation that she approached her Aeolusian shipping clerk after the salesman's latest delivery. All the Mirzarite was supposed to drop off was the prefabricated black straw the four-winged Zamoolian night dove nested in; was this the only thing he had left. The clerk assured her the situation was in hand this time.

"The salesman," he said proudly, "Left an dove dark nest."

* * *

2. Then there was the time Isabella attended an astronomical demonstration at the Science Fair on Alces, where the effect of a close passing-by of two galaxies would have upon the stars they contained was to be simulated. Two spinning whorled models floating on antigrav units and piloted by midgets were to stage a near miss, at the closest point of which the pilots would each release a large bag of ping-pong balls representing stars pulled from their orbits. But the demonstration was even more spectacular than planned, for as the mock galaxies whirled through the air, they malfunctioned and headed

toward each other on a collision course. Realizing their craft were out of control, the tiny pilots began shouting at the audience to take cover, while they valiantly struggled with the instruments, bailing out only at the last moment. Though startled to hear the sky-borne whorls speak, the people obeyed the cries. There was a blinding explosion and the audience was pelted by a shower of ping-pong balls and two midgets. A Tri-D TV reporter spotted Isabella crawling out from under her seat and asked for her expert opinion on the cause of the disaster. She obliged him.

"Surely everyone knows," she said with authority, that such astronomical catastrophes always occur when whorls call "Hide!"

* * *

3. Finally, let us consider Isabella's actions when called upon to stop the inimical gaseous lifeforms plaguing the Vega sector. These semi-intelligent gases obtained nourishment by breaking down the molecules of any heavy metal they encountered in space--such as starship hulls. She solved this problem by constructing mammoth containers of nonbiodegradable plastic with a series of shutters on one side. Scraps of hull metal were placed in the cubicles and they were set adrift in space. Whenever one of the gaseous creatures flowed through the slots and began to gobble up the metal, the openings were automatically sealed and the containers was hauled off to orbit a planetless star. Isabella had the gases given a scrap of metal from time to time to keep them happy, but eventually agitation arose to simply let the cubicles fall into the sun so they and the creatures would disintegrate. But Isabella was adamant. The lives of the trapped gases were already harsh enough for any sentient lifeform.

After all," Isabella pointed out, "how would you like to be shuttered like a gas gobbling?"

"But more likely someone would have put (D°Ammassa) to cleaning stables. He seems to have a natural talent for that particular substance."

---Ed Cagle, AWRY 7

As of this moment, it appears that the mimeograph which we bought for this startlingly long issue is working very well, although it appears to be gobbling up ink a lot faster than we had expected. But it does appear that MYTHOLOGIES #4 will be considerably more legible than ever before. Next issue will begin to see more internal art, which should improve its appearance even further.

Our decision to invest a substantial amount of money in improving MYTHOLOGIES is directly attributable to the satisfyingly high level of interest shown by the readers. I hope that this and subsequent issues of MYTHOLOGIES are as pleasant for you to read as it was for us to produce. In forthcoming issues, you will find material by Michael Carlson, Sam Long, Mark M. Keller, George Flynn, Mike Blake, and more art by Bonnie Dalzell and others. And, of course, lots of letters.

THE FOLLOWING LOVELY PEOPLE DESERVE SOME OF THE CREDIT OR BLAME
FOR THIS ISSUE OF MYTHOLOGIES. THANK YOU ALL.

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WAHF: Mike Bracken, Michael Carlson a second time, Leigh Edmonds,
Gil Gaier (who telephoned his loc from California to my utter
amazement), Rose Hogue, Don Markstein, John Robinson (who won a
lifetime subscription by threatening to nominate me for a Hugo),
Jeff Smith, Susan Wood, K. Allen Bjorke, Chris Eblis, Dan Dias,
Roger Sween (twice), and George Fergus (who estimates the male/
female ratio in fandom to be about 5:1).

Many of the above wrote letters worth printing, but I unfortunat-
ly had to call a halt somewhere.

Because of the increased cost of producing MYTHOLOGIES, I am
going to have to start paying strict attention to my mailing list.
If there is a check mark here _____ I suspect that you are not
particularly interested in receiving any further issues. If I'm
wrong, write me a loc. There must be something in this issue
that you have opinions about.