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Letters of Comment

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



Authors

Janet P. Reedman, Mary McDermott Shideler, Joe R. Christopher, Cindy Rako, Pat Reynolds, Diane Lynne Pavlac, Sarah Beach, Angelee Sailer Anderson, Stanley E. Anderson, and Ron Blizzard

LETTERS OF COMMENT...

My favorite story was *LONG AS THE RIVERS RUN* by Angelee. At times it was a little "heavy" in places and required re-reading for total comprehension, but generally it was a beautifully written and moving story. The first page literally made tears come to my eyes (I guess I identify with Susan in a lot of ways...). I also enjoy Angelee and Stanley's poems, and was wondering if Angelee is English by birth?

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM was well-written, but I think the change in viewpoints from the old lady to the boy to the father ruined the continuity for me.

THE FIRST MAGIC was a fine short story. I enjoyed it very much.

Kelly Scanlon's *THE DREAMCHEST* was another favorite. One of the few fantasy writers who uses first person (and uses it well!).

Joe R. Christopher's *A GREMLIN COMPLAINS* (etc.) was very funny and enjoyable to read.

I had a little trouble with the beginning of Michael Kocik's story *GUMBOOT CHARLEY*... If a story begins with dialogue, I feel the speaker should be identified in the next line or two, rather than in the 7th paragraph. I didn't know at first whether two boys or two men were talking; I couldn't get a picture of either of them until they were positively identified as young boys.

Well, I think that's all I'll comment on, as I don't want my letter to take up nearly a page (again). A few quick comments on response to *THE BONE CASTLE* [MC#5]. Several people mentioned that they found the ending rushed or somewhat out of character. Originally, I had Celemon *return* to Tancred as she believed this the honorable things to do. I changed it because I felt this was too downbeat. I guess my first instincts were right! I'm sorry Mary-Edith found Ilmarinen just another "sword-slinger." I must admit I *like* S&S, and Aragorn was always my favorite hero... But Ilmarinen's not a violent man; remember, he came to the Bone Castle *unarmed*. Also, he did not kill Mingor, which a true S&S warrior would have. I was most pleased to see that Pat picked up on "Castle Rysing/Rising." I take it she's talking about the castle in Norfolk, built by the de Albin family? I visited Castle Rising in 1984, and I guess the name stuck. I tend to see my Rysing as similar, only larger and with water in the moat.

Anyway, like I said, I'm not going to make this too long. Keep up the good work!

Janet P. Reedman
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Interesting comments about THE BONE CASTLE; as I know you've written other works about Ilmarinen, had Celemon returned to Tancred it would open the door to another story (or more) exploiting the tension of their triangle - perhaps you will still. You bring up an good point re: GUMBOOT CHARLEY and early perceptions within

a story (or any piece of fiction, really); just like in REAL LIFE, we only have one opportunity to make a first impression and I think an author needs to be quite aware of that as they start out. There have been times when I've had to radically modify my mental image some pages into a piece and that can anger the reader; any time the reader is made to feel foolish, we risk losing them. But I wonder what Michael's intentions were in this instance...

I'm glad we talked Stan & Angelee into letting us run their poems (MC6); on one hand they're quite personal but on the other -and I think, more important- hand, they increase our sense of community: here's a little more insight into two of our participants, just as you reveal yourself and (add to the community) when you LOC - thanks!

My thanks for the copy of *THE MYTHIC CIRCLE* that you sent me - I thoroughly enjoyed Joe Christopher's double dactyls and what of the rest of the magazine I have had time to read.

My double dactyls have been so responsive to particular persons and situations that they would not be intelligible to an outsider. However, I have one that is more general:

Mountain Meteorology

Look! Alto-cumulus
standing lenticular
clouds hang above
as we trudge up the trail

Fair weather omens--
we gaze at them gratefully,
free for the moment from
fears of a gale.

My best wishes for your continued publication.

Mary McDermott Shideler
Boulder, Colorado

Silliness! Billiness!
Joseph R. Christopher
Chose to foist onto us
Wonderful lines

Oh! Mythic Circular
Receiving all of it,
Proves itself full of it--
Ours, yours, and mines

I was hoping somebody would respond with a double dactyl! I guess we both failed at Joe's item E -

the single word line. *sigh*

As long as I'm writing, let me reply to someone's criticism of my "The Secret Vice." (I'm sorry I can't give his name) {it was Paul Rucker in #4}. Anyway, he was concerned about two matters: (1) On the basis of its German origin, he doubted the way that I had Tolkien sounding to rhyme with colleen. Actually, the name had been Anglicized in its pronunciation. Glen GoodKnight checked with Christopher Tolkien at Mythcon 18 and reports in *Mythlore* 52 that the family pronounces it as a spondee tall-keen. In my sort of light verse, that's near enough to colleen. (2) My critic raised the question of the accentuation of Sindarin, saying it should be accented on the second syllable, not the first as I had it. I'm not enough of a linguist to argue intrinsically, but in Jim Allan's An Introduction To Elvish (1978), on p. 39, Allan indicates that the word Sindarin belongs to the Quenya language and that its primary accent falls on the first syllable, with a secondary accent on the third. Whether or not Allan is right I don't know, but that's my authority.

I found myself wondering about Douglas A. Rossman's "Song of the Spider" in the American Fantasy issue. There doesn't seem to be any connection with the Spider Grandmother of the Hopi creation myth, since this is not an emergence myth and the Hopi story is; but still the use of a spider is interesting. I did a rather unsuccessful (I thought) version of the Hopi legend a number of years ago, printed only in one of the small circulation chapbooks I was doing at that time. I've always meant to get back to it, perhaps in the Kalevala meter. Rossman's two-beat line works fairly well (the opening and closing unrhymed couplets seem to be longer than two beats). Actually, I think I have mixed feelings about his meter. I tried reading it aloud, clapping softly on the two beats, and the poem read well. On the other hand, I kept feeling when I read it silently that English called for a fuller development -- a longer line, that is-- for a significant myth. Make of that what you can.

Joe R. Christopher
Stephenville, Texas

Joe Christopher was featured rather heavily in issue #6 (he sent so many items with "American Fantasy" in mind) - we should also point out that he was the recipient of the 1987 Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for C.S. Lewis, one of the books in the Twayne English Authors Series. Congratulations!

I would like to make some comments on your issue #6 - IT WAS GREAT!! I particularly liked "The Dream Chest" by Kelly Scanlon and "Family" by Mary Ann Hodge. All the other stories were good too, and I will avoid any criticism since my "writing field" is in the hor-

ror market and uses a totally different set of rules. The artwork is wonderful, especially Tim Callahan - what action, what realistic movement - WONDERFUL! And, of course, Death & The Gardener is beyond words!! I've been showing everyone I can get my hands on! But please, please, don't begin using your cover as a show piece for an interior story! This is, after all, not a novel, the cover should reflect the "mood and style" of the entire publication, causing the reader to want to jump inside to the stories. Also, this leaves the artist with the ability to portray his/her own opinions rather than simply bringing an author's words to life. Enough said on that topic!

Finally, I am enclosing some "filler"-type illustrations...you could use where and when you see fit... I would LOVE to see my work printed within a publication with artists such as the Callahans!

Cindy Rako
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

Cindy has done more than enclose "filler" illos; she did the pieces that accompany A HARPYS LOVE in this issue.

Dear Christine, Lynn, Bonnie, Tim, Stanley, Cynthia, Pat, Joe, Mr. Harris, Charles, David, Mary Ann, Doug, Phyllis, Kelly, Laurraine, Ervin, Janet, Angelee, Mark, Michael, John, Frances, Jason, Mary-Edith, Wilma, and Gwentyth.

Thank you for all your hard work in writing, drawing, baking chocolate pies (recipe please!) and consuming same, and especially to Bonnie and Tim for the printing of extra pages.

The poetry of #6 did not, in general, please me as much as work published in earlier editions: this for reasons I cannot exactly define. The one exception was "Song of the Spider." "Adam on First Sight of Eve" is a bit loose: why insert "that", line 12 (apart from the fact that it is needed by metre and rhyme)? "some place" (1.4) is dialectical in the U.K., although I have heard it used by educated Americans. Perhaps "somewhere" would be better in this poem. The tone of "Enchantment Fades Away" I find inconstant.

Doggerel catterel!
Versifies Christopher
fine for him, not for me -
try how I can.

Dualling dactyls is
over-exuberant.
(Sour grapes: the reason? my
poem don't scan).

I enjoyed all the fiction, finding "The Finishing Place" best of all. Who is going to publish "Where Legends

Live"? I was delighted at the return of Chac in "The First Magic." Two quibbles: why doesn't he stutter when talking to the Manito's messengers? Why cannot "music" pass his tongue - do you mean "song"? I liked "Gumboot Charley Along Salt Creek" but felt that the ending was a bit abrupt. The beautiful descriptions of scenery and precise observation of the two boys makes this story memorable. "A Midsummer Night's Dream?" was well told but left me wanting to know a little more about the alien. I found the stylised dialogue of "The Shoreline Map" strange, but not unpalatable. I found the wishing scene rather confusing, as Lotta does not appear to have made a wish. I would like to read more stories from this land.

I looked at 'Death and the Gardner' before I read "Maggie," so like creators, put the cart before the horse. This really *is* an upside down creation, as text seems to illustrate picture, rather than the more usual other way around.

Transmogrification is a "vulgar or humorous" word, and would not, I think, have appeared in the pages of such an august Journal as Mythopoeic American. Metamorphosis? Transfiguration? Transmutation?

And talk of linguistic differences brings me to "Long As The Rivers Run." If Susan has become English by the time she looks in her purse at LAX, she should actually be looking in her handbag! (or bag, or shoulder-bag). Making this alteration would be another sign of the change back when she looks into her "purse" again at the inn. I think it would be more likely for Susan to be born to an Englishwoman than to an Englishman (para 5, line 3) (we are rather traditional people). I appreciate that this is setting up Susan's meeting with her English father, but think that some expression such as "born to the hearth of an Englishman" could have got around this! Yester is only used in poetry, and is a most odd word for Susan's father to use. One thing puzzled me, when exactly does Susan know she will change again, and how does she know this?

I felt there was potential for more development at the start of "The Dream Chest." Why were the ethnographic artifacts preserved? What did the author's parents receive in her grandmother's will? - I presume the house. As the furniture skipped a generation, did it leave the house? A sepia photograph is brown, so the grandmother's eyes are only *known* to be grey by the author: the text doesn't make this clear. Finally, and this shows me up as a real pharisee, I was disappointed in the contents of the chest. I would like to have known if they had any literary or artistic value (the ending seems to imply this) or spiritual importance (the appearance of Eliel seems to imply this) or some other value.

I have just one quarrel with "Another Point of View": as an alive (and kicking) sufferer (and the "sufferers" in Britain are arguing over whether we are sufferers or not) of juvenile onset diabetes, I wonder how the daughter could have died. If she has got to be diabetic (why not change it to Multiple Sclerosis or Muscular Dystrophy?)

she is most likely to die through medical malpractice or in a hypoglycaemia- associated road traffic accident. That out of the way, I can say I don't understand *why* God stopped life. Is He really swayed by the opinions of his visitors?

Now, in reply to last time's LOCS. I'm afraid, John, that the market for short fantasy pieces in Britain is virtually non-existent (if you want to get paid for them, that is). I have just, however, had a poem published in a "straight" journal. Trevor says that it isn't a fantasy piece. I say what else can a poem be where the "water runs off the edge of the world"? So the opportunities don't seem so limited for "crossover" fiction.

I do not object to, remonstrate against, abhor, or even good old Anglo- Saxon shun latinate poly-syllabic words when they are, to quote Coleridge, the "best words." But I still do not think that "incarnate" was the best word. The problem is not the "eye" finding unacceptable that which delights the "ear," but the "mind" rejecting it. By the by, if I want to read for the "ear" I read the polyphonic Welsh poetry rather than the plainsong of most English writing.

"A little more insight into The Guide". I was delighted that you read it, and took the trouble to comment on it. It is based, ultimately, on an episode in Pwyll Pendewic Dyuet - "Pwyll Prince of Dyfed" in the Mabinogi, a Middle Welsh classic. I won't elaborate, because "The Guide" is not a "guess who" quasi-translation. The only character to come through my writing virtually unchanged is Rianon, the lady on a horse. The key to the change was the transformation from Pwyll, Prince, who is particularly associated with enchantments, to Paul who is mentally ill. Are either natural states? I realise now that I was writing too closely to Paul -his mind strobos- and I'm going to see what happens if I strengthen the time structure.

Pat Reynolds
Milton Keynes, England

P.S. - I do like e.e. cummings (probably due to reading 'my sweet old etcetera' in a school stock-cupboard at an impressionable age).

Provocative correlation: enchantments and mental illness. Hmmm. (look, ma, no verbs!). A poem wherein water runs off the edge of the world might simply be historical - you know, like pre-Columbian?! There are also "sufferers" of MS & MD (I know several), though probably not as high a percentage as juvenile diabetes sufferers (and yeah, I figure anybody who has to inject himself/herself is suffering! just imagine how those heroin addicts suffer...). About LONG AS THE RIVERS RUN, I'm not sure Susan does know when she will change again; I figured she just when downstairs and it caught her (as it did the first time) - oh, Angelee??

Now, for the coup de grace, here (well, you have to turn the page . . .) is a photo of Pat and Trevor standing

in front of their lovely home in Milton Keynes, taken when I was lucky enough to spend a night with them on my trip abroad. They are lovely people, grow fresh strawberries, and make funny noises with thawing ducks. What more can you ask for?!



The cover of Mythic Circle #6 is splendid, and the contents both substantial and varied. Some quick responses:

THE DREAM CHEST featured some wonderful images and a compelling central character. I found the emotional shifts jarring, though, and the whole thing infused with a sense of self-importance that the plot did not seem to justify. Any revision should be made with an eye to greater continuity and use of understatement.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM? would have had more impact for me if it had consisted of just the first two versions; printed side by side in two columns. Laurraine Tutihasi has a real knack for voice!

Joe Christopher: Thanks for introducing us to yet another obscure poetry form (Keep this up and you'll be giving PNH {Paul Nolan Hyde} a run for his money as the MythSoc's official sillyman/scholar).

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW exploits point of view very beautifully! Powerful story telling. Ditto for FAMILY, a charmer from beginning to end.

My biggest disappointment was THE SHORELINE MAP which is so evocative, so rich in concept, and yet so ungainly as a story. The characters and the events are inherently interesting to me. I could not see past the persistent awkwardness in sentences and problems in pacing.

My biggest pleasure this issue was undoubtedly HUMANO ARBOREAL TRANSMORGRIFICATION by Stanley E. Anderson. What a hoot! Absolutely appropriate, down to the last semicolon and computer generated diagram. What a pleasure to have our concept of "fantasy" stretched to include this wonderful spoof.

Question for Mary-Edith Bridge: In the letter column you write, "X can write well, but can she plot?" I think I know what you mean, but am concerned about the notion that good writing ability and good storytelling are somehow two divisible things. Can you clarify?

Note on the layout: White space is not a sin! Don't feel obliged to stuff the end of each story or the corner of each page with some kind of fillo. I love the overall quality of the art and ads you run, but find the pages occasionally cluttered.

Thoughts on growth: As a writers' forum, Mythic Circle should include more nonfiction that is designed specifically to help the novice fantasy writer - interviews with professionals on their approach to writing, literary reviews of fantasy books, articles on the writer's craft, perhaps even a column which offers precise advice on fantasy writing.

I'd also like to hear more from the editors on the purpose of the zine, the process you go through in selecting stories, common strengths and weaknesses that you come across as you weed through submissions. Don't be afraid to gripe a bit about what is (or is not) coming across your desk. And please, take time to muse about how your views on writing, on fantasy, on editing, on art, on poetry, are all shifting as you spend time putting each issue together. Longer editorials please - give us a peak behind the scenes more often.

Diana Lynne Pavlac
Chicago, Illinois

It is a very dangerous thing to challenge me to be MORE verbose (longer editorials indeed! well, you got it, baby!) but hey - I aim to please. A regular pro column is a lovely thought; whether it's do-able or not, I don't know. But we hope next issue to run a transcription of P.C. Hodgell speaking to the writers' workshop at Myth-Con XIX (Berkeley, this summer - should'a been there) - some interesting experiences and observations shared. As for how our view of this thing is changing and evolving, maybe we'll get a chance to muse a bit on that, too. Mary-Edith should drop us a line, clarifying her position, but frankly, yes, I think writing ability and plotting ability are two rather distinct skills which do not always go hand in hand. More on this subject next issue.

Another excellent issue. A delight, which I read straight through. Well, that's not entirely correct. (Dare I say it? Yes, I dare.) I read the letter column first.

Before I start critiquing and sounding as if I didn't

like anything, let me (as Nixon used to say) "make this perfectly clear": I enjoyed *everything* in this issue.

Thank you, thank you to all concerned.

THE DREAM CHEST: This story reminded me of a mythology course I took as an undergraduate. The professors (it was team-taught) wanted us to have an understanding of the nature of myth as well as the actual personages and tales of various cultures. To this end, they gave us a phrase which was repeated several times in the semester: "The key to the treasure is the treasure." Not a precisely logical sentence ("Thank you, Mr. Spock"), but it makes its own sense ("Down, Bones"). A long explanation for a simple statement: Kelly's story reminded of that phrase and that class. The prose in the story is well handled and everything leads up to the ending very well. The burden of Meaning in the story ("Of course it means something.") is handled delicately and with an emotional understanding that rings true. Who would have the heart to nit-pick this tale? Not me, at least (it hit too close to home).

THE FIRST MAGIC: As a tale standing by itself, this is well done. The one thing that troubled me is the use of the word "city" in the setting. I know that the word "city" can accurately be used in such a context as this story, but it brings a load of modern connotation with it. Its usage suddenly put me in mind of ever so many "After the apocalypse" stories. Is this part of that genre? If not, maybe hunting up another word might be helpful.

Also, it is stated early on that Chac stutters. Indeed, when Naskone asks him who he is, Chac does stutter. But he never does so again, and that bothered me. After all, it is mentioned pointedly. The stutter could have been an interesting hinderance when Chac is talking with Naskone, for the stutter could have dragged the conversation, irritating the warrior. This would have made him angrier (and potentially more violent) and put Chac in some little jeopardy.

As I read the tale, it immediately called to mind Tibbs' earlier story, "Dreamseeker" in MC#2. Comparing them, the first tale struck me as the better of the two. (I admit that I have no idea how the two fit in sequence). The one thing that did bother me a bit in comparing the two was the similarity in the narrative pattern. I think if the two stories were printed together, they might seem repetitious.

Still, the events were well-handled in this one.

LONG AS THE RIVERS RUN: A lovely piece of work, very nicely handled. It has a distanced tone to it which makes the whole seem rather pensive instead of "felt as happening." But it suits the tale, I think.

GUMBOOT CHARLEY ALONG SALT CREEK: I had fun with this. The boys' conversation is delightfully eclectic (I especially like "dismals in distress"). Yet the ending comes too abruptly. "What's going on here?" I thought. The connection between the boys and the books (if this

is what's going on) needs to be built a bit stronger. I don't think it needs to be done explicitly, but it does need to be done. And by the way, who would be burning books out in the middle of nowhere, so purposefully burning them? The sinister overtones of that question would add some tartness to the tale.

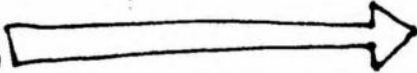
ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW: The tone of voice here is excellently maintained throughout. It gives the final line of the story the punch it needs. I found the concept of the story weird and disturbing, but intriguing enough to hold me.

HUMANO ARBOREAL TRANSMORGRIFICATION: Perhaps we should encourage more of these (pseudo) scientific communications. There must be a wealth of mythopoeic things that need the studied consideration expressed in this piece. Alas, however, it seems unlikely that the esteemed Dr. Anderson will give us such. And if the end comments are to be beleafed, Mythopoeic American itself oaked now be lost in bemossment of the mind, to be cured by no aspen formulas currently on the basket.

THE FINISHING PLACE: The story being told here is interesting and I read to the end to find out "what happened next." But the language is somewhat pedestrian and often there are turns of phrases that are plainly inappropriate. For instance, pg. 46 we find "mentally taking a giant step backward" - is "Simon Says" an element in this fantasy land's history? (For that is what the phrase calls to mind.) "Backing away from" would sound better, I think (with qualifiers as to the sort of back away, if desired). The conversation, too, seems too... "modern." There is also a disparity of names: "Shawano," "Tsalagi," "Uktena" are good, but in this company "Groundhog's Mother" (and that for a man?), "Wolf's Breath," "Brown Bat" clunk. I would recommend a lot of polishing, particularly avoiding passive constructions. Also, avoid contractions - that gives the sound of modernisms. Anyway, I think with polishing, this story would have more punch, and I think Rossman could accomplish it well. This is a good start.

Sarah Beach
Los Angeles, California

Without benefit of checking with Doug, I imagine the disparity in names is part of his way of indicating the two different tribes in this piece; but I'm sure he'll let us know next issue. You'll find another "Groundhog's Mother" retelling in this issue, by the way. After mulch thought, I dew think yew are barking up the wrong tree, aspen regards Elmopoeic American.

MORE 

Congratulations to all concerned on an exceptionally good issue of a magazine that keeps on improving.

Kelly Scanlon's "The Dream Chest" was interesting to me as an example of the fascination with attics and things discovered in them which I and so many others share (a garret and its contents figure prominently in my first novel). The reasons for this fascination and a tracing of it through works of literature would make a good subject for a paper in Mythlore. As to the execution of Scanlon's story, I thought that it was most successful when most literal, for example in describing the chest. The allegorical handling of the theme was too obvious for me; Tolkien handled the subject of creative gifts with more appropriate symbolic subtlety in Smith of Wootton Major and in Leaf by Niggle.

"Death and the Gardener" contained a wonderful blend of humour and tenderness, and its ending brought tears to my hopelessly sentimental eyes. Pat Wynne's illustration was priceless.

On the native American stories in the issue: Though this is not "my sort of story," I appreciated how well "The First Magic" was done. I especially liked the theme of the forsaking of vengeance being requisite for entry into Heaven, and therefore thought that the conclusion concerning the raising of fire was less dramatic than the scene which preceded it. "The Finishing Place," while having some wondrous creatures to recommend it, seemed too blandly written. Despite references to the Provider, it had (deliberately I assume) an essentially pagan feel to it, rather than harking as do many myths towards the revelation of Christianity.

"Gumboot Charley Along Salt Creek" was delightful, bringing back memories of my childhood love for Tom Sawyer. The dialect, which I normally find distracting, was deftly executed. I am not sure that I understand the ending -- perhaps the manuscript of this story and therefore its characters went up in smoke?

Despite the theologically questionable proposition that our own optimism or pessimism about our race would be the determining factor in God's decision as to whether we should survive (optimism is not the same as faith), I found "Another Point of View" to be provocative, and the "pulp" style in which it was written was competent for its type.

"Family" was well written, and cleverly concluded. I loved the Shakesperean beauty of "Adam on First Sight of Eve." Once again, Lynn's illos for my story were lovely; my husband insists that the first one (the blond Susan) looks just like me.

Of everything in the issue, "The Shoreline Map" had the greatest potential, but one not realized. I was enormously intrigued by the mixture of wolves, sea-creatures, and quirky humanity in the characters. The story contained many marvellous images and phrases; for example, "The waves made slow comments as if about crockery, dish, dish, dish," or, "I have many a secret fancy, fallen like seeds on stones." However, I felt that all these ingredients did not come together to make a

cohesive story. The character and culture mix alone would fuel at least one novel, and my advice to Phyllis is to take all these delicious tidbits and *make something of them*. A couple of minor technical criticisms: some word combinations might have been helped by hyphens, i.e. business like, iced over (though perhaps my advice on this should be taken with a grain of salt, as I tend to over-hyphenate). Also, "You look a little green around the gills," seemed too flippant in the context.

Responses to comments on my piece, "Courtship and Consummation":

To Pat Reynolds: The word "palis" as here used by me is not related to palisade, but is rather an Anglicized plural of the Hawaiian word "pali." "Pali" means "cliff" or "cliffs" (my sources differ as to which; I suspect that Hawaiian nouns may not distinguish between singular and plural). It seems to mostly be used, and I myself use it, to mean something like "a line of cliffs."

Regarding Mary-Edith Bridges comments on anthropomorphism: Leaving aside the fact that ascribing human passions or at least a human voice to all manner of beasts and things is a timeless tradition of mythic storytelling, and leaving aside the fact that I am not sure what to do for someone who does not like The Wind in the Willows (one of my favourites), allow me to defend anthropomorphism on the same grounds upon which I believe that Lewis somewhere defends it. Admittedly this is a religious argument rather than a purely philosophical one, but it seems to me that if God can ennoble humanity by permitting us as redeemed creatures to in some sense participate in His divinity, then for us likewise to confer our humanity on animals or even inanimate objects is perfectly consistent with the nature of His universe. As Tolkien says, "We make still by the law in which we're made."

In the case of the ship and its figurehead in "Courtship," we are dealing with something rather like a transformed human (to which Mary-Edith said she would not object). The captain of the ship has through magic waylaid a soul bound for birth and imprisoned it in the figurehead; at the end of the novel, the figurehead breaks off and becomes a mermaid. Also, regarding Gwenyth Hood's problem with a ship as a romantic lead, the figurehead is in fact a minor character in the novel, the three men on the ship and the three women they encounter on the Island being the major ones.

Thanks again to everyone for your work and for your encouragement of mine.

Angelee Sailer Anderson
Westminster, CA

Thanks for the clarification of your own works - I know that, for myself, I was intrigued by the ship as a character and quite enjoyed her. Thanks for your concrete suggestions for improving "The Shoreline Map." You were not alone in your response of 'unrealized potential' and I'd like to hope Mythic Circle could

provide some *REAL* assistance when it comes to pinpointing the difficulties that a story might encounter. I know I'm the editor (one of 'em) and I'm not supposed to voice opinions about these things but (!!!) I really enjoyed the world Phyllis created and I'd like to see more of it - I also think more might be less confusing.

What a joy it was to read the American Fantasy Issue of The Mythic Circle. Such a variety of stories - and so thick! Can we expect future issues to be as hefty? I was reminded of the excitement of buying what was called an Eighty Page Giant comic book when I was a kid. (I think I mentioned Mad magazine in my last letter - why does MC bring back memories of my childhood activities?)

I pretty much agree with my wife, Angelee, about "The Dream Chest." (We generally have similar tastes, and I don't want to waste space repeating her comments; on the other hand, I know that the more responses writers receive to their work the better they like it, even if those responses are similar.) The setting was wonderful, but the ending disappeared into Allegory Land. I feel the same dissatisfaction with this sort of ending as with the sort in which the main character wakes up to discover that it was all a dream. (This is not to say that I don't like allegory.)

"The Debate," although more properly allegorical, did not hold my interest because it was completely predictable. The allegory was perfectly correct, but it gave me no new insight.

If ever an illustration tempted me into reading a story, it was Wynne's illo for "Death and the Gardener." The story lived up to the illo and I enjoyed the sweet ending.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" was written well enough, but the three points of view of the same incident didn't contribute enough to the piece to make that technique worthwhile, in my opinion. It seemed more like the type of thing one would produce as an exercise in a creative writing class.

Once again I agree with Angelee about "The First Magic." In fact, I originally thought that the end of page 13 ("He arose, ignoring the weapons lying in the sand.") was the end of the story, and I thought it made a very nice ending. I didn't realize that there was more following until several days later (this wouldn't have happened if I read the stories in order). Anyway, what followed was certainly needed to complete the story, but I think that the "mistaken" ending was more effective.

As usual, I love Angelee's writing style, and "Long As the Rivers Run" maintained her usual quality, but I was left wanting a sequel. The story very nearly suffered from that "waking from a dream" ending I mentioned above, but the note "Jim, 7 o'clock" saved it. Still, I wanted to know more. By the way, we recently rented a tape of Julia and Julia, and realized that it was remarkably similar

in theme to Angelee's story (though the story was written long before the movie came out).

"Gumboot Charley" was wonderfully written - only a master can get away with strong dialect without detracting from the story. Generally when it is used, I can only think how clever the author must think he is with his dialog; but this story was pure delight. I too am mystified by the ending, unless, as Angelee guessed, the characters turned to ash with their creator's manuscript.

"Another Point of View" used a similar pseudo-scientific first person approach as my own "Humano-Arboreal Transmogrification," although F. Harris and I imperilled the human race in quite different fashions. One technical point: although it makes a nice image, the conic spiral of the spacecraft (if I am understanding the description properly) would not be the trajectory of a freely drifting object even with the sun's gravitational pull. Since "God's Ear" is an important part of the story, I think that some sort of revision is needed.

"Family" was fun to read. It had a very "comfortable" feel. It made a nice addition to the variety of stories in the issue, but I wouldn't want to see too many stories like this one. I normally like to have a sense of mystery and awe when reading fantasy (or science fiction).

Story-wise, "The Finishing Place" held my interest all the way through, but I wanted the writing style to have either a simple "folk tale" quality or else more poetic richness. As it is it has neither, and ends up, as Angelee wrote, sounding bland. Still, it is a wonderful story. Ooooooh, Callahan's drawings for this story (and all the rest) were captivating (how often can I praise his work?).

If "Family" was comfortable, then "The Shoreline Map" was the contrasting story of mystery and awe. It had an unusual atmosphere to it, and I very much agree with Angelee that Phyllis should develop this story into something more.

Lastly, a couple of responses to the letters of comment. To Mary-Edith Bridges (who certainly stirred the pot with her remark about The Wind in the Willows): Surely the most elemental characteristic of fantasy is the ascribing to objects of qualities that they don't normally possess, whether it be speech to animals, or powers to rings, or magic effects to incantations. Now, she may have a personal dislike of anthropomorphism in particular, but since she defends her view philosophically, I must respond in kind. "Why should a thing or an animal react with human emotions and desires when they do not possess either human bodies or the benefit . . . of human upbringing and civilization?" she wonders. This is simply begging the question. If you grant that the animal or thing has a nature that it can use to react (and that humans can comprehend for the sake of a story), then you have already anthropomorphized it. I am reminded of the Peanuts strip in which Lucy (I believe) says, "Snoopy's not as smart as I thought. He moves his lips when he reads." Just granting that he reads sets him apart.

To Charles Rampp: You may be right about punctuation, but it is easy for a technique to become a crutch. One *could* say that a poor speaker's "you know's" or my own over-use of parentheses are the "percussion" of our speech or writing. It is more likely that they are indications of limited ability.

Stanley E. Anderson
Westminster, CA

P.S. If future issues are as thick, could you use bigger staples?

You and your lovely wife have solved the problem of bigger staples (they graciously donated a heavy-duty stapler - at no small expense! Guess those little staples really bugged you, eh Stan?). Regarding the size of the issue and your desire to see future hefty issues, that's problematic - we live under a requirement that we break-even financially and the extra pages destroyed our budget for the year. Wonderfully, incredibly, the Callahans stepped in as MC benefactors (not only do they draw--!) so we haven't crashed-and-burned yet. So feel free to praise their work ANYTIME! In response to your comments about "Family," I think the 'every day' kind of feel can add tremendously to a fantasy or SF tale by putting the reader off guard. Thanks for the insight about trajectories for "Another Point of View."

I just finished reading #6. I'm glad you sent your renewal notice. I would have hated to miss this issue. Thanks. I wrote quite a few comments about #5 but never sent them (I'm a procrastinator). Most of my points have been brought up by other writers but I would still like to mention a couple of things.

"Rowing In Circles Again" was fun but Mr. Swycaffer did something that I've seen often in fantasy (and SF). Basically all the "mutants" (for lack of a better word) are good and all the "normal" people are bad. I quit reading one of Katherine Kurtz's stories in mid-book because of this. Her Dyneri (sp?) were liberal minded, intelligent and good)hearted while the others were evil and stupid, and if they were not evil it was because they were too stupid to be so. She didn't do this in the earlier "Culdi" books but her tendency to stereotype got stronger the more books she wrote in the series. To guard against this it might not be a bad idea to include a normal person in the band of "mutants."

About "Gipsey Davey," I agree with Angelee Saller Anderson concerning her comments about Christianity and paganism. G.K. Chesterton in his book "Orthodoxy" mentions this tendency to glorify paganism and picture Christianity as "gray" and lifeless.

He quotes Swineburn: "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean, the world has grown gray with thy breath." I think

this "pale Galilean" mentality is becoming common in fantasy, and would not be if writers truly understood paganism and Christianity. Paganism has "charm" to us now because we can look back at it from a Christian perspective. Pagan gods hold no fear for us. I would imagine the pagan saw it differently, however; he was very serious about his religion. G.K. Chesterton in "Orthodoxy" said of nature worship:

"The only objection to Natural Religion is that it somehow always became unnatural. A man loves Nature in the morning for her innocence and at nightfall, if he is loving her still, it is for her darkness and her cruelty. He washes at dawn in clear water as did the Wise Men of the Stoics yet somehow, at the dark end of the day, he is bathing in hot bull's blood, as did Julian the Apostate . . . The essence of all pantheism is that Nature is our mother. The main point of Christianity was this: that Nature was not our mother: Nature is our sister. We can be proud of her beauty, since we have the same father, but she has no authority over us; we have to admire but not to imitate. This give to the typically Christian pleasure in the earth a strange touch of lightness that is almost frivolity. Nature was a solemn mother to the worshippers of Isis and Cybele . . .

But Nature is not solemn to St. Francis of Assisi: "a little dancing sister, to be laughed at as well as loved." St. Francis is one of the best arguments against the "pale Galilean" mentality. One of my favorite St. Francis stories was the time when his robe caught on fire. he was absently watching the fire when one of his friars ran to put it out. St. Francis exclaimed "Don't harm Brother Fire!" not realizing his own danger.

"The Twin" by Kelly Scanlon was my favorite story in #5, and it also had my favorite art by Bonnie Callahan. The ending, with the mirror, struck home. I'm a twin and sometimes when I'm looking in a mirror I suddenly realize it's ME that I'm looking at. hard to explain, but weird.

Now to #6! I liked Kelly Scanlon's "Dream Chest," except I had trouble with the ending. I could see no real reason for joy. It seems the heroine was trapped into being a dreamer. She gave in to fate. I could understand resignation here more easily than joy. But maybe I read it in the wrong frame of mind.

"Gumboot Charley Along Salt Creek" by Michael Kocik was enjoyable and well written. I like the way Mr. Kocik handled dialogue. Janet P. Reedman's poem "Fantasist's Dreams" seems to deal with the same subject. It was also well written. I like both of these.

"Another Point of View" by F. Harris was one of my favorites in #6. It had a very powerful ending. It (forgive me) reminded me of another passage out of "Orthodoxy" (available in paperback from Image books) worth buying for the chapter "Ethics of Elfand"). "Not only is suicide a sin, it is the sin. It is the ultimate and absolute evil, the refusal to take an interest in existence; the refusal to take the oath of loyalty to life. The man who kills a man, kills a man. The man who kills himself, kills all men; as far as he is concerned he wipes out the world. His act is

worse (symbolically considered) than any rape or dynamite outrage. For it destroys all buildings, it insults all women . . . Obviously a suicide is the opposite of a martyr. A martyr is a man who cares so much for something outside him that he forgets his own personal life. A suicide is a man who cares so little for anything outside him that he wants to see the last of everything. One wants something to begin; the other wants everything to end."

"Family" by Mary Ann Hodge was good. When Tony "disappeared in a puff of blue smoke" I knew the story was going to be fun. It was. Very well written. (There goes the saying, "those who can't write, edit.")

"The Shoreline Map" by Phyllis Holliday left me wondering how much imagination can fit in one short story. All those twists and scene shifts, and yet the story was fun to read and neatly finished. I would like to see more of these characters in the future.

"The Finishing Place" by Douglas A. Rossman was well)told. My only criticism is that the climax was a bit anti)climactic. It seems that the killing of the Uktena was too easy. Maybe if the first arrow had missed the mark and Groundhog's Mother had another arrow slip out of his hands while the beast was closing in, or something. Of course, it was a re)telling of a tale so there may not have been that much leeway. I still like the story. "Song of the Spider" was also well)written. Makes me interested in Cherokee mythology.

I liked all of Joe R. Christopher's work except, I have to confess, I'm too dense to really catch on to his "Double Dactyls" (relatives of the pterodactyls?)

I almost hate to say this, but I didn't really like "Maggie." I think it's because I don't like the picture. Not that it's not well done, it just seems cruel. I realize it's supposed to be absurd but for some reason I can't make myself like it. (Really constructive criticism, huh?)

"A Midsummer Night's Dream?" seemed vague to me. Was Jack an alien, or a man taken in by the aliens? Also, if Mrs. O'Connor was taken away, how did she tell her story? Of the three segments, I liked the boy's section best. Description was well-handled. "The First Magic" also had good description. Its weakness (in my opinion) was that Chac's wisdom was too obvious. The dialogue was well done.

The reason I didn't like Angelee Saller Anderson's "Long As The Rivers Run" was because I didn't like what happened to the character. It was not a defect in the story telling, it's just that Susan had no choice to make. There was no "if)then" decision, no climax. You wanted Susan to find some way to get out of the flow of the "river," but she had no chance. It seemed so futile, like the eastern "wheel of fate" instead of the "conditional if" of Christianity. I realize this is personal taste.

I liked the Andersons' "Humano-Arboreal Transmogrification," especially the end. It was very well done. The puns gave it the right touch of humor. It was one of my favorites in #6.

"chevyng chase of the city dragon" by Charles Rampp was my favorite poem in #6. Very well written, and I usually like poems that rhyme.

I hope I didn't miss anyone. Issue #6 was very good, looking forward to #7.

Ron Blizzard
Ventura, California

I hope folks don't feel that, if they write a LOC, they have to mention every author in the issue. As far as I'm concerned, it would be just fine to write a letter addressing a single story or poem about which you felt strongly; I don't think any of our authors are so sensitive they'll curl up and die (or shrivel up and stop writing) if their work ISN'T mentioned in a LOC. When we accepted "Long As The Rivers Run" I wrote Angelee to ask a couple of questions about motives and behavior and she told me the story was a dream she had one night; whether this information alters your reaction or not, well, that's another matter.

As for "Maggie," I can understand your response to the drawing - my husband's response was similar; he didn't think it was funny, either. But Pat Wynne & I both suffer from a highly developed (read: tasteless) sense of the absurd and I loved the illo. So I wanted a reason to use the illo in Mythic Circle and I figured the best way would be writing a story to go with it. I wanted the story to have some sense of pathos to it, even tho the illo is borderline cruel; the story was sufficient to change my husband's feeling about the drawing but (obviously) not yours - and that's okay; we're all individuals with unique responses and, ideally, we're not threatened by that.

Thanks for sending your comments on #5 as well as #6, and for sharing all that G.K. Chesterton with us!

•poem

old mother
do you know me?
I have not swam with you for years
I have been silent
these words I have learned
they are not words to trust

we were together when the moon rose
when my fists were soft as my tongue

old mother
here there are stars on the skys wall
you did not expect me to live
I have said it

I will live

gary barwin