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Letters of Comment

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possible for me to apply for reassignment? Perhaps a girl would suffice my needs most. I regret having to delete young Charles from your annual celebration but feel this dismissal will be in the best interest of all parties concerned.

Sincerely,

"Pesker" Miminata

Santa Surveillance Unit #1077-90876

Chuckie tossed the note in the fireplace. "I hate you."

"Now, now, dear Charles. All is not lost. Look in your stocking again. I gave you a present."

Charles' face brightened. Greedily he reached into the litter-stuffed stocking and searched until he found an oblong package about the size of a red pepper. When he wrapped his hand around it, it squished between his fingers.

"I see you've found it. It's all so sad," Pesker slyly grinned and wiped his paw across his brow.

Twinkling a rainbow host of lights, the Christmas tree's star danced to life, gliding around the furry branches. Pesker could feel its warm glow of happiness and hope brush against his fur. He leaned toward the heat. The star circled and circled, touching each branch, until it reached the shag carpet. It zoomed between Pesker's paws, sweeping him off his feet and out the window. Chuckie's jaw dropped in amazement.

Frank and Margaret Dare stumbled into the room. "What was that noise, Chuckie?" They looked at the starless tree.

"Charles, what happened to the tree?" Margaret nervously scanned the room. It felt empty and lifeless. She hesitated, rubbing her chin with her hand, but she knew that she had to ask the question. "Where is Pesker?"

Chuckie pointed to the open window. Margaret rushed toward it, searching the snow for paw prints, but she found none.

"Honest, Mom, he went out the window." Chuckie lowered his head and sniffled. "I think he's gone for good."

Frank and Margaret held each other, remembering the Christmas Eve when Chuckie was three that they had found Pesker by the highway when they returned from the Sanderson's Christmas party.

"If it's O.K. with you Mom, I think I'll go wash my hands." Chuckie trudged toward the bathroom.

* * *

Five miles away Pesker sat, somewhat humiliated, with a red satin ribbon around his neck. A Christmas tree, with a star identical to the Dare's, shimmered soft light across pastel pictures of balloons and baby animals painted on the walls.

"Do you think Amanda will like him?" Barbara McAnnally whispered to her husband.

"Of course. He's a very handsome cat. He has a glossy coat for a stray cat. We were very lucky Mrs. Pratt found him for us." He smiled at Pesker, who returned a dignified nod. Ronald hugged his wife, rubbing his unshaved face against her cheek. "I'm glad we decided to put the tree in Amanda's nursery. This is really a family Christmas."

They leaned over the crib and stroked the sleeping child's golden hair across her forehead. Her name was Amanda Jane McAnnally, and she loved cats.

LETTERS of COMMENT

Dear Editors

Thanks for the latest *Mythic Circle*. I particularly enjoyed the imagery in Mary Choo's poetry this time out.

I have to comment on your reply to my letter printed in the same issue. While Hood's celebration of Columbus irritated me, I don't believe I said, or even implied, that it shouldn't have been published. It woke a strong response in me and that's what good work should do, so that even while I disagreed with the content of the poem, her verse was still successful.

There's nothing more repugnant to me than material being screened for its political correctness and I have to admit that the idea of being considered a part of the camp that espouses such a blinkered vision of art disturbs me greatly. Do keep in mind that disagreement with another's views does not equal a cry for censorship.

Until again, cheers,

Charles de Lint

Ottawa, Canada

Thanks for the clarification. There have been times when we have published poems or stories about whose themes or content we felt ambivalent, but whose skill or imagery prompted us to put them before the readership. By all means, debate and discussion are welcome!--CISL. // This does not imply, however, that we have reservations about the content of Ms. Hood's work, which shows both technical skill and thematic integrity--TC.

Dear Editors

I liked "The Frog Prince" despite its predictability. (Sad princess plus happy frog-- what else could happen and still have a happy ending?) The story was told simply and directly, which suited its fairy-tale theme.

John Grey's poetry was, as usual, quite simply good. Although I usually do not like free verse, Grey does it

well.

"The Witch's Eyes." Isn't Co'llad afraid? He agrees too quickly to the witch's request. After all, he's not an adventurer, but a lazy dreamer kicked out of his father's house for sloth.

I liked "Moon Dreams In Aliador" up until the last two lines. I was disappointed in the "and then I woke up" ending. "The Green Man of the Wood" seemed fully realized and compressed in the way of good poetry.

"Fairy Land in Aliador" seemed to me to need a little tinkering, in that some words appear chosen only to make a rhyme or fill out the meter rather than to add anything to the story and imagery of the poem.

"Planet of the Headhunters" is *funny*. But what does "Snazoid" mean? I can't figure it out.

"Lumen"-- I like it. It certainly doesn't read like a child's work. "Three Strangers"-- some of the grammar is awkward. A suggestion: "But never did find the youth that he yearned" might read better as: "But found not the youth for which he yearned." Some of the other lines seem to need work also.

"A Fable"-- *funny*.

"Puppet Ruler"-- good, but I didn't understand the ending. Do they just kill Borgil or do they kill him and turn him into a zombie, for revenge?

Is "Gossamer" about a real person? I hope not!

Choo's poetry-- I like the piling of images one atop the other and the complete compression of these poems, and yet I must wonder why they were styled as poetry at all; my anti-free-verse bias is at work here, and I must say that, although I like them as poems, I'd like them better as prose.

"The Cyclops Maid" is a truly lovely story. I would have been disappointed if Scylla had shrunk to human size instead of Gwenth growing to hers; after all, her size is her power and she shouldn't have to give that up in order to be married. I'm glad the story ended the way it did.

"On the Edge"-- perfect! I think you've tapped a common fear among the lovers of fantasy-- that others perceive us as crazy.

Keep up the good work, everybody!

Erin Lale
Sonoma, California

What are Snazoids? Different from Megatrons, of course. (In other words, an alien race!) And in "Puppet Ruler" I think the hint is very strong that the hapless Borgil becomes a zombie at the end. Great letter!--CISL. // Regarding "Puppet Ruler," my impression was just the opposite: I felt Borgil would be willing to cooperate in his own death (in fact, from the beginning of the story, death seemed a release which would be welcome to him), but would not accede to the life-in-death a zombie existence would provide.--TC

Dear Editors--

It was nice to see my three poems in print. Tim Callahan's drawing illustrates "The Art of High Fantasy" very nicely. A "sheer prowess with words," eh? I remember trying to avoid being too repetitious in word choice in "Romantic Iconography"-- perhaps that's the result.

One comment about my intention, if I may. I planned, a number of years ago, to write a series of poems to make up a sketchy "Art of the Romance." "The Art of High Fantasy" as a short introduction and "Romantic Iconography" as the Freudian treatment are all that ever got done. (Freudianism is easy to handle.) I started another verse essay, on the political aspect of the romance, but I never got beyond the opening. This does not mean, for a reader, that the project is worth doing ("Why discuss the Romance in heroic couplets?" I can imagine someone asking) or that I necessarily have done it well. But if my peers in *The Mythic Circle* do not condemn the two poems too strongly, perhaps in the summer of 1995 I will be able to add another installment or two...

I have read the first two stories in *The Mythic Circle* 13. "Frog Prince" was nicely done in its reversals. I have tried to imagine a professional market for it, and failed. But it was fun and worth publishing; probably that's one of the reasons the semi-professional and the amateur press exists-- to provide markets for such works.

"The Healer and the Storyteller" is a more complex work, and my reactions are more complex also. I think Erl has too many abilities for a short story, probably for a novel (this is the problem with Superman in the comic books): he can heal, he can shape stone mentally, he seems to be able to give a cat extra intelligence, he composes music, he can sense when a person is lying and can use a type of empathy beyond that. Second, I found the allusions to Jesus distracting (re Erl's father: "If you know me, you know him," also the Biblical echo in "the greatest kind of love"). That said, I think the inset stories of the storyteller worked well, and I liked the idea of the attraction between the healer and the physician's daughter. By the way, I don't think I agree with the story about the type of love which was described as the greatest: within the story, this was a type of *eros*-- an unrequited *eros*, but still *eros*. I suppose the statement that it is "always rewarded" was a statement about a spiritual reward, which Arik takes to be a statement about the returning of *eros*. At any rate, the story seems to be playing a type of *eros* as *agape*, and I'm dubious that the jump may be made. Ah well, an interesting story and, over all, nicely written.

Joe Christopher
Stephenville, Texas

Thanks for your comments. We look forward eagerly to

your poetry-- more on "The Art of High Fantasy" is especially welcome here. Re professional markets, well, those can be as idiosyncratic, shall we say, as small press. I've seen stories by major authors that I wouldn't print-- and some of our stories ought to be winning awards. (Of course, it is a matter of taste, or "chacun a son goulash" as they say.) But in The Mythic Circle we can take chances; frequently we publish a story that we sense might be flawed, but which we feel will be benefited by reader feedback. These letters can be immensely helpful to our writers, so please keep them coming!-- CISL // And we really meant our praise in describing your "sheer prowess with words."--TC.

Dear Editors

"Frog Prince" was a wonderful twist on the old story. Well-done humor is rare in literature in general, and especially rare in fantasy. Alex McGilverly manages to deal with practical concerns (yes, of course, the newly human Albert would be naked, and the King and Queen would be scandalized) without breaking the fairy story mode.

I have some quibbles about "Follow." Why is the size of youth foolish? What would parents do if two-year-olds were six feet tall? Also, does the narrator often wish to jump into other cars, as "like so many times before" implies? If so, then this episode is suddenly less enchanting. Although I sympathize with the feeling John Grey describes, I'm frustrated by the structure of the poem. Are the line breaks supposed to imitate stop-and-go traffic?

Much as I admire the long and insightful letters of comment that some readers write, I think I'd better close here. Thanks for all your good work!

Jane M. H. Bigelow
Denver, Colorado

Thanks, Jane. Serendipitously, you have a story appearing in this issue. Perhaps others will return your good offices and send in comments for you!--TC

Dear Tina & Sizzle,

I liked "The Healer & The Storyteller" quite a lot but I had difficulty finding its focus or perhaps it has a certain dreamlike quality that made it hard for me to focus, I don't know which. I thought "Sonnet For Star-Eyes" was lovely, although I want to add an "even" to the "And now I can remember our surprise" line but maybe I'm placing the emphasis incorrectly.

The subject matter of Joe Christopher's poems echo discussions I've had with other writers, sitting about on a long evening, talking and pondering, but - amazingly! - made me just a touch uneasy to read in the stark black and white of the printed page! Hmmm. Perhaps my ancestors from Iowa surface in me at long last...

"The Frog Prince" is delightful although, as hopping

requires both sets of legs, I'm not quite sure how they hopped "hand in hand" or even "foot in foot."

"The Witch's Eyes" is clearly, in its brevity, a "fairy tale" but I am disturbed by this lazy dreamer making good entirely on the (evil) prompting of the witch and (good) advice of the sparrow; there is no moral here, no lesson, and while I've been briefly entertained I'm left empty. We are not even given the substance of his dreams.

"The Planet of the Headhunters" is a complete delight (and gives me a warm wash of nostalgia, remembering how my son used to make up spontaneous, epic songs about rockets and alligators and swamps--). The two poems by Allison Marshall are very good and remind me of that earnest superiority I felt throughout my teens and early twenties ("you're not wise 'til you've lived a life untamed"). Having survived it, I look back with a fond shudder and am grateful for the passage of time!

I found it difficult in "Puppet Ruler" to keep track of all the names; for instance, who was Jarek and why was his death so important? We only get the one passing reference, early on. Thus I found it an unsatisfactory resolution.

"Gossamer" is beautiful and chilling.

I like Gwenth and Scylla from "The Cyclops Maid" and especially their mutual respect and high regard based on aspects of character (courage, intellect, good humor). In answer to Schabel's queries, I suspect the Beloscoff's ring could be used in a gradual manner, trading it back and forth, until both reach an acceptable size (new question: what, if any, repercussions would there be for maintaining an "unnatural" size?). As to children's eyes, that would be a matter of genetics and paired eyes are obviously dominant so 3 of 4 kids would appear "human" while the 4th would appear "cyclops" and the children of that 2nd generation "cyclops" would appear "human" - thus the race, Cyclops, dies out.

I want to like "A Visit From Mom" more than I actually do. I need a little more clarification as to how long has "Mom" been hanging around, as her presence seems to surprise Marshall, the roommate, but not the narrator. Are we to infer that ignoring her fluttering presence is "the guilt" to which he refers, or merely her presence? I guess I'd like just a little less ambiguity.

Lynn Maudlin
Altadena, California

Thanks for the comments! We liked Gwenth and Scylla too. "The Cyclops Maid" offers a delightful combination of appealing characters and rip-roaring plot - Schabel does it again! As to "Puppet Ruler," I, personally, didn't find it confusing, but clearly confusion is possible and and if so the author needs to know this.--TC