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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Welcome, everyone, to issue number eighteen of *The Mythic Circle*. Lots of excellent poetry this time out—we're looking forward to seeing your responses.

Speaking of which, we want to thank you for your letters of comment with respect to the last issue. Many of you took the trouble to send in detailed, careful, sensitive critiques of the stories and of the magazine in general, and we are very appreciative. Our writers need to hear how you respond to their work. Further, many of your letters are thought-provoking in themselves; witness Charles de Lint's enlightening analysis of the writing process in his letter below. Please continue to let us hear from you!

We hope you had a heartwarming holiday season, and our best wishes go with you in this the new year.

Tina Cooper and C.I.S. Lowentroun

LETTERS OF COMMENT

Dear Editors—

I'm sorry I missed writing a LOC for the last issue. I've finished #16. "Saint Tiffany and the Dragon" was my favorite. It was beautifully written and had a touching end. However, I did keep wondering why Tiffany didn't start out by asking for *advice*.

"The White Geese" by D. Lynn Smith is another fine story, touching and well written. I had some trouble with the timing, though, and the symbolism. I understood that the seven geese represented the seven children, and that the kindly old woman knew that it was necessary for the children to grow up and leave her, going where she could not follow. Also she would die some day, probably before them.

But seven years seems a brief time for all this to happen. If the children don't actually commit suicide (and they seem too full of hope for that) it's hard to understand why they couldn't write every now and then or come back for an occasional visit. There is a strong suggestion that the narrator is going to die at the end, but if going away with the geese represents going away with the children, then they all had to die before her. This seems a sad overthrow of all her efforts on their behalf.

"Tying up the World" had an amusing concept and some hilarious moments. But I was unable to believe, really, that this enormous boondoggle would only distract people from antisocial activities and not important ones.

Janet P. Reedman, author of "The Sorceress of the Slums," is a talented storyteller who, as I understand it, not only edits her own 'zine but has published semi-profession-

ally or professionally elsewhere. Her story has much to recommend it, but I assume she sent it to *Mythic Circle* because she wanted demanding and picayune criticism. So here goes. The use of the term "Lutherum" for the evil, male chauvinist god disrupted my belief in the subcreated world; it drew me back abruptly into the real world and its troubles and made me angry at the author for what seemed to be a cheap shot.

Also, my imagination would have been more captivated by the story if the struggle between good and evil within it had been more subtle. I don't mind if the protagonist is really good and the antagonist is really evil; in fact, I like stories that way. But it's different with clashes between whole societies. It is true, of course, that the worshippers of the Goddess and Her Son don't come off all that well. If the worshippers of Lutherum had been less uniformly wicked and treacherous and their policies less uniformly detrimental to the culture; if they'd had an idea or two that might have worked in the hands of a sincere person; if they'd had other strategies in addition to threats and torture to bring about conversions, the story would have impressed me more.

C.R. Schabel's "The Last Paragraph" was well written and held my interest. I liked the way the psychiatric hospital setting was justified; "All non-homeowners without valid Blue-Cross cards were automatically transferred to the County General Psychiatric regardless of their true mental state. In order to be eligible for care, however, a patient needed a psychiatric disorder. Consequently CCP's infirmary (its largest ward) was occupied with manic-depressives treated for acute appendicitis, schizophrenics choked with pneumonia, or even paranoids in advanced labor." I don't know whether this is based on real life or not, but it has a horrible aura of authenticity to it.

I don't know whether I could quite believe Mr. Samuelson's exaggerated courtliness. I'm also not sure how much we are to admire or sympathize with him. His violent fantasies about threatening editors, burning down bookstores, and shooting a "successful" author during a signing suggest a man with a weak imagination, since a person with normal intelligence could surely see that burning bookstores would solve nothing, editors can't publish what they don't think will sell, and even "successful" writers have problems of their own.

The girl in the coma, Mr. Samuelson's decision to read his stories to her, and the form they took in her imagination were wonderfully described. I didn't find it a satisfactory resolution to have Mr. Samuelson leave just when the girl was awake and calling for him. Now could I accept that he would still carry the stories around and yet fail to send them out for fear of another rejection. I understand that the story needs a resolution beyond mere wish fulfillment, but I don't think that was it. Perhaps he could have talked to the girl once or twice and encouraged her in her own writing. Perhaps he could have come back to the hospital and read to more patients in comas.

I enjoyed the humorous treatment of sorcery in "Double Take," but the ending seemed to tame and indefinite,