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Letters of Comment

Paul Rucker

Stefan Bilandic

Gwenyth E. Hood

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Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

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Authors

Paul Rucker, Stefan Bilandic, Gwenyth E. Hood, Angelee Sailer Anderson, Ronald C. Morgan II, Pat Reynolds, Ollie Mantra, Sarah Beach, Melanie A. Rawls, Frances Garland, Janet P. Reedman, Diana Lynn Pavlac, Tim Callahan, and Mary-Edith Bridges

LETTERS SHORR GOMMENT

I am really pleased with how Mythic Circle #3 looks -- and not just because my story and art are in it! (I'm particularly impressed with the woman of flowers on the cover -- that fits right in with my Bloddeuwedd ["Flower Face" to the Celts]).

The story I liked most was "Tales of the Attondar" by Sarah Beach, although I feel there are too many similarities in this piece to Tolkien's Silmarillion, etc. That brings me to the clerihow: I will say this briefly, and not to arouse antagonism, and you can take it or leave it (blah, blah, blah): "Tolkien" is pronounced "Tolk-uhn" not "Tolk-een" as too many fans make the mistake of saying (and I can prove this: see pg 218 of The Letters Of J.R.R. Tolkien, Houghton Mifflin, 1981. It says "it is a Germanic name (from Saxony), an anglicization of Tollkiehn, i.e. Tollkuhn."). Also -- I find that the beauty of Tolkien's Eldarin languages comes out more strongly when the urge to put syllabic stress on the first syllable, Anglo-style, is somewhat suppressed. "Sin-dar-in" sounds much more sensuous and musical than "Sin-dar-in," for example.

I could go on endlessly because I have heard too many people mangle the pronunciations of any word connected with Tolkien. But enough -- it was a great issue and MC is definitely one of the better 'zines around. Thank you,

Paul Rucker
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Mythic Circlers

Thank you for issue #3 of your illustrious magazine. I've enjoyed each of the issues so far and it's about time I earned my keep with a letter of comment.

There's no doubt in my mind what is the best story of the issue -- it's "Tales of the Attondar." Although it's the longest story, it went by quickly and smoothly. Maybe that's because I've read most of the story before, in a slightly different version under the title of "The Silmarillion." It's still a good story, no matter who tells it. And Sarah Beach makes a few interesting changes to the original, by making Cadar a slightly more venial and pugnacious fellow than the original Melkor. The illustrations were also nice.

Of the shorter pieces, I most enjoyed "Archie's Game," and not just because the dog gets its just reward at the end! It's a striking moral tale of hidden checks and balances in the universe, and the ending is both horrifyingly inevitable and shockingly unexpected.

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If you must publish so much poetry, I wish you'd separate it out from the stories in the table of contents. And if more than one or two of the poems rhymed occasionally, that would be even nicer.

So Pat Reynolds would like to know what happened to Rapunzel Godiva in my story "The Princess in the Teflon Slipper." I did some research in the Encyclopedia Stupida, and here's what I found. Pat is correct about one thing: when Rapunzel got back to England, her husband (a rather nasty fellow named Godfrey Godiva) was so upset about her transgress against the French morality laws (not an easy thing to do, you understand) that he locked her up in a tower. However, she was eventually rescued -- not by a prince -- but by a kindly old witch named Mother Gothel who took Rapunzel to live in a briar patch where the poor girl joined up with the most advanced band of robbers of the day, Robyn Hood's Merry Persons, and eventually married Br'er Tuck, Friar Tuck's nephew. Charges of bigamy were never proven. Rapunzel refused to appear in court, commenting only that she had had a hair's-breath escape.

Stefan Bilandic
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

This was a special poetry issue -- I guess my introduction of the poetry section disappeared when we broke up the section and interspersed poems throughout the issue. What do you want in the table of contents, separate-but-equal treatment?! Actually, I think I've often listed poems in upper & lower case letters (versus all capitals) and we'll endeavor to do that in the future. We have nothing against rhymed poetry except the fact that it's harder to do well -- English is a rhyme-poor language and rhymed poetry can easily feel forced and awkward. Personally, I much prefer good non-rhymed verse to bad rhymed verse, but to each his own. As for Rapunzel, are you sure that wasn't a hare's-breath escape?

Issue 3 was particularly good for poetry. I was moved and impressed by several without being quite sure what they were about. For example, I wasn't sure whether "Gift" by Lynn Maudlin was about an encounter with a benevolent being or an encounter with a malevolent being at first and then a benevolent one. In the "Virgin" poem I was pretty sure but not quite sure that the virgin was going nowhere because she was about to be devoured. In Angelee Anderson's "Visitation," I was very

impressed but wasn't sure whether it was supposed to describe a mystical encounter with God, somewhat along the lines of St. Theresa (have I got the right Saint? Maybe it was somebody else) who upon being manhandled by the divinity was told, "This is how I treat my friends," and answered, "No wonder you have so few, Lord!" (Where did that story come from? I read it in one of L'Engle's poems). Or was this some other mythical creature, an elemental spirit of Muse, perhaps? But the poem was beautifully written and created full conviction that Angelee Anderson knew precisely the quality of the experience she was writing about, whatever it was. The three medieval poems by Paul Zimmer definitely enhanced the issue, accompanied by T. Callahan's wonderful illustrations. They certainly evoked the scenes they were meant to evoke and there was no question what they were about.

"Archie's Game" was a good compact story which ended in poetic justice, and the Maudlin illustration brought it out beautifully. "The Man Of The Billion Words" was a clever and entertaining story, though seriously, while I'd like to have fairies around, I hate to think the world was actually controlled by beings like the ones in that story. "The Last Card" was impressive -- the story and illustrations both had a great deal of character. The complexity of Bloddeuwedd's (what a wonderful name! It must have taken nerve to stick to it) character and intentions caught my interest and kept me reading. The ending was fitting, though I was sorry it was so unhappy. However, a few things did bother me. The workings of the resurrection stone was never explained. If it worked for its original owner without being on her finger after she was killed, why didn't it also work for Angus and Bloddeuwedd? Also I did not think the conversation Angus overheard was ambiguous enough to make him so angry. His mistrust of Bloddeuwedd would be more convincing if he only overheard part of it.

I was also impressed by Sarah Beach's "Tales of the Attondar," which covers the same ground as Tolkien's Ainulindale. I was impressed that she was able to choose evocative names so successfully. To be sure, some of the names confused me, just as Tolkien's did. I am definitely curious about what kind of plans Cadar has with Lennan. But I was distracted throughout the story by the misuse of "shalt" and "art" forms. In the Shakespearean/King James period which is, I presume, being evoked with this language, "shalt" and "art" and the -t ending generally applies only to the second person, singular, familiar form, "thou," as in "Thou shalt do no murder," and "Our Father, [thou] who art in Heaven." The third person singular forms are different, most commonly ending in -th, as in "he hath a demon" and "[he] sitteth on the right hand of God the Father." But "shall" is irregular and so is the verb "to be." The King James

conjugations for some common verbs, I believe, are:

I am	shall	have	sit
thou art	shalt	hast	sittest
he is	shall	hath	sitteth
ye are/we	shall	have	sit
are/they are	"	"	"

Shakespeare, writing about the same time, often uses the -s form instead of the -th form for the third person singular, as in "She speaks!" and "Here comes the lady!" For the verb "to be," the conditional or subjunctive "be" forms are used more often than they are today, in cases where the speaker is uncertain of a fact as in "Hail, virgin, if you be!" or "Turn thee and defy me, an thou be'st a man!" or "be he alive or be he dead/ I'll grind his bones to make my bread." If this annoying problem could be cleared up, I think the story would have a better chance.

I loved the Callahan illustration which went with "The Storyteller." I'd like to frame it. The one that went with "The Visitation" was wonderful too, but I still don't know what it means. I must close for now, wishing you a good fourth issue.

Gwenyth E. Hood
Mansfield, Pennsylvania

Isn't it nice that we can enjoy poems without having to understand them? I can't presume to interpret "Visitation" for you (Angelee?), but as for "Virgin" I felt the title was the key (yes, she is going nowhere for she's the sacrificial virgin); as for "Gift," we're talking "of God" (as opposed to evil) here ("benevolent" sounds impotent); I'd like to escape the dark = malevolent equation (what kind of subconscious message are we giving to black kids with the fairy tale/ western assumptions that white = good and black = bad?). As for "The Last Card," my own interpretation is Angus as one of those hair-trigger, jealous males -- he is an ancient warrior, after all; and as I read it, he left the ring in Bloddeuwedd's possession so it couldn't help him -- perhaps it does resurrect Bloddeuwedd...

First let me say how much I continue to enjoy not only seeing my work in print but also the lovely artwork that has accompanied it. I found Lynn Maudlin's illustrations for "The Hearth" in Issue 2 very moving, and am quite pleased with Tim Callahan's illustration for "Visitation" (my husband thinks this one looks like me).

I must also comment on my appreciation of critiques of my work by readers in their letters. I especially appreciate Gwenyth E. Hood's analysis of "The Hearth" in Issue 3. Regarding her comment on the "long-distance" quality of

my writing; this may partly be a result of my ornate style, though the style does not seem distant to me when I am writing as it evidently does to some readers. In the case of "The Hearth," this particular chapter takes place at a substantial remove in both time and space from the rest of the novel from which it is excerpted, and so the distance here is somewhat intentional.

Some comments on Issue 3:

I found the quality of poetry to be generally much superior to that of the first two issues. Lynn Maudlin's "Gift" struck me as a sort of companion piece to my own "Visitation." I admired "Dog Days Gone" for succeeding in making something romantic out of something so

temporarily mundane as a median strip. "The Good Folk" contained a good idea, nicely told, but I feel that Mr. Connelly's style could use a little more polish and flair. "The Last Card" showed great promise; however, continuity seemed lacking to me due to the squeezing of a fairly substantial story idea into so few words -- perhaps this would be better as a novella.

To Sarah Beach: you handle the high style well, but I think a few of your archaic verbs were mis-conjugated (perhaps some were typographical errors?). "They wilt" should be "they will" -- "wilt" is used only with the second person singular, "thou." "These words art" should be "these words are" -- once again, "art" is used only with "thou"; by the same rule, "the light of the Sun" shall, not "shalt." "We seeth" should be "we see" -- "seeth" is used with the third person singular. "Thine thought" should, I believe, be "thy thought," as "thine" is only used before nouns beginning with vowels. Read a lot of the King James Bible and you will find that all this becomes second nature. Also, I would like to see you use your style at the service of content that is less derivative than "Tales of the Valar" -- oops! -- "Attondar." It is useless trying to compete with Professor Tolkien at what he does better than anyone.

To Charles Rampp, whose poem in this issue I like very much but whose stories I cannot make head or tail of: the dash is not intended as a universal substitute for the comma, the semi-colon, etc.

Finally, I would like to make some general comments based on the works published in The Mythic Circle so far; this is strictly personal taste, with which I expect that most of your readers would not agree. Regarding writing style, I would like to see stories that are more "atmospheric," i.e. concentrate on mood and setting as well as dialogue and action. Too much of the latter with not enough of the former makes stories seem rushed and jerky to me (on the other hand, my own style is probably too ponderous for most palates). In terms of content, I have noticed a superfluity of stories with

mundanely contemporary settings or based on Celtic mythology. While I like both these sorts of stories when well done, there are a myriad of other avenues open to exploration in fantasy and I hate to see those avenues neglected in favour of what happens to be popular at the moment. I feel sometimes in reading fantasy authors -- professional as well as non-pro -- that the major influences on them as writers are other writers. While I am the first to admit that the authors I love have had a profound effect on me, a writer's first resource for material should be his own life experience; this is no less true of fantasy writers than "realistic" ones, for we too are engaged in the business of truth-telling, albeit from a romantic or symbolic perspective.

Thank you for putting up with my nit-picky ravings, and keep the Mythic Circles coming.

Angelee Sailer Anderson
Westminster, California

In response to your comments on story content, perhaps Christine and I should tell you that we've got several pieces we're holding for Issue 6 -- our planned "American fantasy" issue as a tie-in with MythCon 19 (Berkeley, California, next July - with Ursula K. LeGuinn!). So, at least in #6, you'll be seeing some Amerind themes and hopefully other goodies as well. Writers, take note -- there's still time to submit! We don't have that great a lead time! But what about S. Dorman's two pieces in TMC #2? Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, respectively.

As for stylistic complaints, ain't it grand we've all got different taste?! What a boring world it would otherwise be. Finally, "Attondar" was printed from Sarah's computer disk, so we claim no responsibility for typos on that one (Joe Christopher's clerihew is another matter, a cause for blushing and many apologies); we also didn't put in all her specific accents (the limitations of American typewriters/computers!). As for your "nit-picky ravings," keep 'em coming!

The Good Folk and The Man Of The Billion Words are modern day fairy tales that don't lose anything by taking place today rather than several hundreds of years ago. Perhaps it's for someone to start a new Blue Book of Fairy Tales similar to the original but with all modern day stories. Archie's Game reminds me of the Beatrix Potter tales. It's not bad but I found the ending rather abrupt. The Mulberry is a strange story, something that sounds like a stage play. Most writers, I think, would have had Kira lose George and turn herself back into a tree. I'm glad that that didn't happen. Tales Of The Attondar is similar to the beginning of Tolkien's Silmarillis (sic), as well as David Eddings' opening to the

Belgariad. I hope Sarah goes into detail with this early time period, something which Tolkien decided not to do, believing there wouldn't be a market for such tales. The Last Card was an interesting story, but I'm afraid I don't see just what it was that Angus noticed under the old crone's wrinkles just before he died. The Storyteller sounds like the perfect introduction to a horror book, and the drawing is excellent. I'd like to see both of them at the beginning of a horror collection like "Dark Forces." Tim and Barbara might want to consider working together on projects.

I've noticed that Mythic Circle is growing with each issue. #1 was 38 pages long, #2 42 pages, and #3 44 pages. At this rate, by #30 you'll be bigger than Analog.

Oh, and by the way, I AM mad at Lucas for not starting Star Wars off on episode I, and even madder that he won't even consider making parts I-III and VII-IX. Hopefully none of Mythic Circle's writers will decide to just give up writing once they've gotten somewhere. I think that's the worst thing a writer can do, to both his fans and to himself.

Ronald C. Morgan II
Norwalk, California

-- strange page counts you've got there --
#1 was 40, #2 was 44, and #3 was 46 pages in length (technically, add another two pages to include the back cover). Our intention is to remain around 50 pages. In The Last Card, Angus saw the faerie-lady he thought he'd killed (top of pg 36), under the crone's wrinkles.

Dear Lynn, Christine, Paul J C, Peter, Mindy, Barbara, Paul E Z, Charles, Janet, Tim, Angelee, Sarah, Joe, Paul R, Gwenyth, Anne, Stanley, Susan, Jane, Mary-Lane, Deborah, Ronald, Lee, Bonnie, and Mary-Anne;

I have only had a quick glance through Mythic Circle Three on the train, as I hope to get this letter back to Lynn and Christine in time for Mythic Circle Four. Unfortunately, this means I've only had a few hours, and so I can only comment on a few things.

I was drawn by Tim's illustration to Hild; it reminded me of the work of Charles Keeping (who illustrates Rosemary Sutcliffe, Geoffrey Trease and Kevin Crossley-Holland). Hild itself was worthy of the illustration. It has some wonderful long alliterative lines such as "Hogni hurled ring and reason away". Despite the fairly strict rhyme scheme and general binding of alliteration, there were few forced lines and the striding-on story line was never held up to let the pattern of sounds be completed.

If only there were not the miles, I would lend Joe my copy of The Mabinogi

edited by Patrick K Ford (University of California Press). This has another tree-poem, the basis of Greaves arguments. It is a good translation (good = I like it as a poem in modern English!) of Cad Goddeu, "The Battle Of The Trees."

I don't understand the title of Durindana, but I liked it best of all Paul's poems. The others are more vignettes.

dog days gone is excellent too. I will read it again at my leisure, and no doubt do all the take-it-apart-and-see-how-it-works exercises I was taught in school. Right now I don't care how it works, it does.

It has struck me that understanding literature is rather like understanding writing (in the palaeographer's sense). It is easier to see the pattern in something unfinished or unpolished. I was struck with this thought when I read your comment that the gods can sleep with whom they like (or words to that effect!) as I read The Last Card soon after. I did not, at first, like this story very much. I got lost. Where does it take place? It seems like St. George's Channel to me. Bloddeuwedd isn't the Bloddeuwedd I know,, but I don't know who she is: tywyll teg and sidhe and uncle Tom Cobley and all it seems. I didn't realise that I wasn't supposed to understand Welsh.

When the author chooses not to write in the characters/landscapes/culture, I prefer the gods (or heroes or cultures) to be kept distinct. Then I can at least place my own preconceived ideas around the words. Apart from the total Celtic Stew, I really liked this story: I would like to see Paul do a re-write in a non-Celtic setting!

Best wishes to all (Merry Christmas, if appropriate).

Pat Reynolds
Milton Keynes, England

-- It seems to me that the more you know about the subject about which an author writes, the more likely you are to struggle with the details -- and their inaccuracies. This is clearly the case for you and The Last Card -- you know more about the Celts than the average American reader who will, therefore, not notice the "Celtic Stew" aspect of the piece (I certainly didn't; I'm not sufficiently familiar with that area). I am glad, nonetheless, that you enjoyed the story itself.

I hope everybody takes the time to read Hild aloud -- it really is a terrific piece and much stronger when spoken (as is the case with most poetry) AND it appears again, in complete and correct form, in this issue (*sigh*).

Dear Lanolin, Christingling, Uncle Toddy,
Quinton Wormwood, Mahatmamma, Brer
Rabinowitz, Stan, Laurel, Andy and all the
Hardies:

Having burrowed through your recent issue (MC 3) in a pique of everest, I thought it recumbent upon me to lay to rest several sleeping dogmas before they bloom. Before setting type to paper, however, I spent a week translating the Sonnets From The Portuguese into the original arabesque, and another two weeks hunting for my passport so I could return. I am presently adrift between two brunettes, somewhere off the coatsleeves of Camus, in the Horace of Mann. The weather is haughty and stapling, by turns, and must account for a certain contortuplication in this l.o.c. Without further hairdo, these are my random thoughts:

1) I noticed there were no stories about screaming socialists, dispensing reams of pamphlets, as thick as the Federal Budget, on chilly street corners. Is there some editorial prohibition against people who drool for a living promenading through your pages?

2) Creative typing aside, the topography of your magazine needs some work. There is nothing worse than unemployed topographers spending all day surfing, when they could be out surveying unmarried women like the rest of us.

3) All your pages were numbered consecutively! While I have nothing against regularity, literary magazines should be like parking meters: they work only when you don't have enough change in your pockets. Perhaps you could run out of paper during the middle of a printing...or insert ads for tennis shoes, where the endings of epic poems should be...or transcribe old English madrigals into reggae, just to throw the scansion off...

4) I don't mind gods of different religions meeting in fiction. What I object to is when sprites from poems start dating hallucinations from short stories, and then begin procreating in all those sly pen-an-ink drawings in the margins. I find this pernicious.

5) Finally, while 37% of your readers seem to favor a Gaelic lilt to their writing, a full 43% prefer garlic with a lemon twist on theirs; but, what I want to know is this: if you take all the contributions and lay them side by side, could you make a Spanish omelet? This issue has not been resolved.

The tide is rising, the sun is setting, and I must be off. I trust that these comments have been of some instructional volume to you.

Ollie Mantra
Cornish, Hen

-- Addressing your questions numerically:
#1 = no, only an editorial prohibition against droolers promenading in my shorts;
#2 = WE are not out there surveying unmarried wimmen! Speak for yourselves (oh, I guess you are); #3 = This is unfeasible as we can't possibly know when you don't have sufficient change in your pockets -- therefore, we must work all the time; #4 = Yes and in Heaven they make little dead babies; #5 = we don't lay any of our contributors; it's against our editorial policy and is generally viewed as unprofessional -- Spanish, garlic, or knot. does your keeper know you're out?!

CL: When shall we see Sonnets From The Portuguese... and Portuguese whom?

Dear Mythic Circlers,

Even though I profess to be a writer, I don't know how to express my ongoing delight in Mythic Circle. When I receive each issue, I sit down with a pleasurable excitement to see the degree of variety that has been appearing.

Anyway, on to commenting.

LETTERS first: I love the way Pat Reynolds begins her letters. And it's delightful that she makes such an effort to participate at that distance. Brava! Pat. And I thought it was just super that Jane Yolen took the time to write her wonderful letter of comment on MC#2. But dear me!

Knowing that someone of her stature is reading MC so carefully will put me on my toes when I submit something in the future!

THE STORIES:

THE GOOD FOLK: I found some of the sentences a bit awkward. For instance, shouldn't "third generation Irish" be "third generation Irish-American"? As written, the man's grandparents immigrated to Ireland not America. Also, Molly may ask "whose ways?" but the way the previous paragraph goes, "their ways" looks like it refers to American Indians. Anyway, the story does have charm, but I found it a little flat because it seems to lack a real tension.

ARCHIE'S GAME: This story has its own appeal, but I think the end would be more poignant if the last rabbit was presented as being (clearly) the ghost of the first rabbit, and also if in the middle section Archie grows to miss the first rabbit. Of course, that might make Archie a bit too anthropomorphic. But I enjoyed it.

THE MAN OF THE BILLION WORDS: The lynch-pin of the story, the fact that Jon talks (babbles) too much needs to be heightened. Also, in the giant's house section, it would be better if there was more indication that Jon can't talk again. Perhaps he can show frustration at this, but gradually he learns to cope, so that at the end he has learned his lesson and uses fewer words than of old. However, it is fun and I liked the idea.

THE MULBERRY: The matter-of-fact tone in this story is charming when it is

dealing with the girl's transformation into a tree. Because of that however, I felt I wanted more wonder on George's part as far as he regarded her. Surely five years as a tree gave her some touch of fey-ness that would have intrigued him. The ending thus seems a little flat, which is disappointing after the charming start.

THE LAST CARD: An interesting tale, but the telling of it is uneven. For so short a tale, I don't know if the elaborate explanation of the 2 sets of Tarot was needed. Also, since Angus has heard Bloddeuwedd plead with Naihar that he not kill (whomever), would Angus then suddenly think she's a traitor?

And lastly, TALES OF THE ATTONDAR: There's nothing like reading one's own material in print and seeing... let us call them minor flaws. Some typos got by me. But also I was chagrined to find the first paragraph overloaded with a particular word (or is it over-

"lighted"?).

THE POEMS:

"The Vanilla Tree" is interesting. I believe I heard Pat read this at a Mythcon. What arouses my curiosity is what the significance of the Vanilla Tree is (since I love vanilla flavor - except in ice cream; not that that has anything to do with the poem). "The Storyteller": I wondered if storytellers are that obviously sinister. Still, I liked this poem. "Avalon" struck me as somehow being off-center. "Bound in the cavern of the womb/...Arthur, waits"? Given that the legend says Arthur waits for some distant age, it seems bizarre that he's waiting in the womb. What woman is going to put up with that indefinitely? The language is okay, but it just doesn't seem to take me anywhere specific. Sorry, Paul. "Departure of the Lordly Folk" is nicely handled. The language use reminds me of Irish poetry. The contrast between the ethereal Folk and the mundane mortals might be stronger, but the poem has its poignancy. In "Durindana" Paul creates a clear tableau, but it seems to me he could have fleshed it out a bit more (not much to be sure, but just a bit) to make it more powerful. "Gift" speaks of the uneasiness of creative power. I also found "Virgin" a wonderful picture of a dragon, and the speaker rather brave for venturing into its company. "Hild" I have heard Tim recite and in reading it again I admired his use of alliteration. "Visitation" has a nice eerie touch. In spite of the fact that I'm not up on clerihevs, I did like "Secret Vice." "Golden One" didn't strike me as being particularly evocative. "Phusis," however, is good, going from the image of a girl dancing to something more cosmic.

And lastly, THE ART: Bonnie Callahan's cover is beautiful. I loved it. Paul Rucker's illos for his story are very interesting. But my favorite is Tim Callahan's dragon on pg. 19. "Gossamer wings" indeed! Color me green.

Nice that you enjoy the 'zine so much, Sarah, and even nicer that you comment on the contents in such depth. I think you're taking words very literally, though, when it comes to the poems and in many cases the work is more Impressionist than Old Masters... know what I mean? Just wait until we start printing Dada verse -- take cover! However, I was very glad to see you mention the wonders of "Hild" read aloud (worth doing, Gentle Readers). But whatever made you think the speaker in "Virgin" had any intention of approaching the dragon? Venturing into a dragon's company is not something done willingly, however brave one might be, and the title gives away her relationship to the beast (as in "future dinner").

CL: Thanks for the support, Sarah! Though I would like to exhort you to be "on your toes" for all your readers -- that's how a writer stretches!

Mythic Circle keeps getting better, particularly the layout, typeface and illustrations. I found Mythic Circle #1 difficult to read, but #3 looks good.

I enjoy seeing the fiction and poetry of people I've met at Mythcons and between the covers of Mythlore and Mythprint.

Many thanks for the fantasy poetry! There's never enough around to read, and so much of what is published is (at least I think so) a coded monologue with the poet addressing himself, no outsiders welcome.

I like "The Vanilla Tree" and "Phusis" by Pat Reynolds and "Avalon" by Paul Edwin Zimmer. Barbara Proenza's "The Storyteller" is most atmospheric -- makes you want to start lecturing on stranger-danger. Angelee Sailer Anderson's "Visitation" has great lines, but could do with some editing, principally excising some of the adjectives which detract from the poem's momentum.

I won't mention others, since space is limited, except to say that I found no coded monologues and I shall re-read them all with pleasure.

Stories: Mindy Bergner's "The Man of the Billion Words" has potential. I think she has two stories going here, and the element with the most potential for humor and originality is the limitation of words bit. Escapes from the giant's/monster's/witch's/etc. castle have been done many times.

Paul Rucker's "The Last Card" is a goodie. Mr. Rucker, if you made up your two versions of the tarot, you've got the imagination to bring something fresh and original to your stories. But even if you didn't make that tarot up, you used it well; and I would like to see more stories about it.

I didn't find the Bloddeuwedd character very plausible. It seemed to me that she should have been both more peculiar as one of the sidhe and more passive, so that she would contrast more

with the tarot-reading witch, who really is the female lead in this piece. Also, you use the word doppelganger, which is German (I'm pretty sure), not Celtic, and therefore out of place in this very Celtic tale.

Such quibbles aside, I enjoyed the story. I'm looking forward to the next issue of Mythic Circle.

Melanie A. Rawls
Thomasville, Georgia

I have somewhat mixed feelings about Mythic Circle #3; on one hand I really liked the issue; I especially enjoyed the artwork (terrific cover and a wonderful series of drawings by Tim Callahan) and the poetry, but on the other hand there were several stories just seemed interminable to me. I can't understand why you would print Tales of the Attondar; I kept reading, hoping the story would redeem itself somewhere along the way and take an original turning, but much to my dismay it continued as a Silmarillion rip-off, and a cliff one at that. I guess I don't understand (first) why somebody would re-write Tolkien and (secondly) why you would print it.

I found The Good Folk simply unbelievable; would these folks really take a corner off their kitchen, even with McManus promising to pay for repair if it didn't work? Wouldn't somebody want a bond or guarantee of some sort? I realize this is fantasy but it's still got to be in the realm of comprehension!

As for The Last Card, I found it a rather long telling of a fairly simple tale which, nonetheless, required re-reading in parts because his meaning was unclear. On a purely personal basis (versus an objective critique) I was put off by the author's blatant anti-Christian slant; as for Holy Water having no power over the Sidhe, perhaps Mr. Rucker doesn't know that covers on baptismal fonts were instituted to keep folks from stealing Holy Water for use in black magic and pagan rituals... But as I indicated, that's a personal reaction.

Archie's Game reminded me, in a small way, of Aesop! A tasty little morsel. The Man Of The Billion Words was another story that required some careful re-reading: it escaped me the first time that Jon lost his language once more after his son re-appeared; I also had to search backward to learn just how old his son really was. The escape from the giant was confusing -- that sort of action can be difficult to describe in adequate detail without slowing the pacing. I guess I liked the idea but wasn't thrilled by the execution.

I do find the letters column insightful -- sometimes I think, "Right on!" and sometimes I wonder what planet the LOC'er came from but I suppose that's just humanity at work. Looking over this

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letter you'll probably think I've been too harsh. Still, I hope the various authors will listen to what's valuable for them and forget the rest. To Lynn and Christine I offer my thanks for doing a fine job (despite the typos) -- I'm sure it's a lot of work.

Frances Garland
Miles City, Montana

You say you liked the issue?! Boy, are you strict! As for "rewriting Tolkien," if you look at Sword of Shanara and Thomas Covenant (etc.) you'll see that there's some pretty tasty \$\$ to be made off of those sorts of "rewrites." As to why we printed Attondar, the story was submitted to us like any other and we decided it was sufficiently well-written that it deserved reader feedback, some of which you've just provided (thank you). You'll note that Attondar has been mentioned in every LOC thus far, so it certainly did elicit responses.

It seems that you criticize The Good Folk for being skimpy on explanations and The Last Card as being long -- you really are strict!

Well, you put out another fine issue! I loved the illo for my poem. I also really enjoyed the letter column -- I think it's a terrific way for writers to get feedback. I wish more magazines would do the same!

Much thanks to Jane Yolen and Joe R. Christopher for their help with my poetry. I've had no formal training in it --not even the stuff they teach you in high school!-- and I know I sometimes have problems with meter. Joe especially helped me to clear up quite a few metrical puzzles!

To Pat Reynolds: I was using the trees from Robert Graves' THE WHITE GODDESS in "Battle of the Trees." Holly-god (or king) was ascendant in the winter; Alder was the tree-symbol of Bran. The May Queen was either Olwen (Hawthorn) or Creiddylad, for whom the two tree-knights battle eternally every May Day. (P.S. I loved your poem, "The Vanilla Tree").

To Lee Beasley: Ilmenaur was the main character in the KING OF THE FOMORS GRANDSON. Baranek was the "cause" of the story rather than its principle character, though he has a large and important part.

To Gwyneth E. Hood: Interesting, that you thought KING/FOMORS deserved a longer treatment. This story actually comes from a long series of tales set in the land of Essarnadon. Three of these tales are novel-length; I'm working on the final draft of book #1 right now.

About the stories in #3: One small complaint -- not as many stories as in #2!

THE GOOD FOLK: Interesting, though I thought Molly and her husband a little too accepting about what was happening to them. Maybe the weird occurrences should

have been even weirder? I live in an old house, and it would not be that unusual for the plumbing to go wild or chunks of plaster to fall! I liked the author's clear writing style very much, though.

ARCHIE'S GAME: A very pleasing little folktale. Well told!

THE MAN OF THE BILLION WORDS: I enjoyed this tale very much, as it used traditional folkloric material. However, I wondered what was the significance of the witch at the end; she threw a ball of fire at Jon then vanished. I couldn't quite figure out her purpose, as Jon was swiftly brought back to life.

THE MULBERRY was my favorite story this issue. I liked Charles' poem, "dog days gone," too. Keep up the excellent work, Charles!

I also enjoyed THE LAST CARD because of its Celtic subject matter (perfect for my own 'zine!!!). To be a nitpicker, though, there was one line I felt should have been clearer. It's in paragraph three. It compares the wail of women to the 'cursed Ban-Sidhe'. I think the author intends the wail to resemble the wailing of the Ban-Sidhe, not the faerie woman herself. (Like I said before, just a very minor quibble!) I liked your poems, too, Lynn; especially "Gift."

Well, I guess I'd best stop now, ere this letter becomes a novel!

Janet P. Reedman
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

I'm soooo glad that Mythic Circle is doing its job and you found the readers' critical comments HELPFUL!!! Nevermind the fact that these particular readers (and, in fact, quite a large portion of our readership) are professionals - authors, professors, editors. Perhaps that should be a selling point for Mythic Circle - "Get yer good kriteeks here!" As for your complaint about fewer stories, well, #3 was a poetry-intensive issue and we can't afford to go over 50 pgs (fiscal realities, don'cha know).

Brutally fired, savagely abused, painfully digging herself out of the slough of despair by her fingertips, yours truly finds herself up to her neck in a stack of UNFINISHED BUSINESS and INCOMING MAIL. Pouring a pot of coffee down her throat, and lighting the MIDNIGHT OIL LAMP, she heaves a GREAT SIGH, battles down the overwhelming desire to shove her head under a pillow and howl for a while, and dispatches of EVIL PAPERWORK one page at a time, beginning with the bills on the top.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the stack dwindles as the NIGHT WEARS ON. Weary, but insistent, yours truly persists, item by item, slowly, ever so slowly, not quite apace with the steady burning of oil and steady dimming of desire.

Then SUDDENLY----BUT WHAT'S THIS?? COULD IT BE??? A MYTHIC CIRCLE, TWO-THIRDS DOWN THE PILE !!! OH BLESSED RELIEF !!!! OH JOYOUS TIME-OUT !!!! AN UNINTERRUPTED EXCURSION INTO WONDERFUL WORLDS OF CREATIVE OBLIVION!!! SUDDENLY HERE I SIT CUDDLED IN A QUILT ON THE COUCH, HAVING TRADED BITTER COFFEE FOR A STEAMING MUG OF SPICED APPLE CIDER. AH, A BREAK, A BREAK. AH, RESCUED FROM MY WORK, RESCUED FROM MY DRUDGERY, RESCUED AT LAST FROM THE OBLIGATIONS AND UNANSWERED LETTERS, RESCUED TO CURL UP AND SIMPLY, SIT, NOTHING TO DO BUT INDULGE IN FICTIONAL FANTASIES AND--- AND ---

Oh *&# ! Rescue? Relief? A short-lived illusion. If I know these guys, THEY'LL NOT LET ME REST TIL I LOC ! ! ! !

Loved MC#3. "The Good Folk" reminded me of a "Moonlighting" episode, but was a nice simple story simply told. "Archie's Game" was memorable and clever but I'd edit out the framing device and tighten up the rest. As I enjoyed "Tales of the Attondar" for its people, its atmosphere, and its evocative syntax but found myself longing for a more engaging narrative. Okay, Joe, what's a "clerihew" ??? I enjoyed the fine illos for "The Last Card" as much as the story itself.

THERE.

My duty done, I'll sleep much better. But first it's back to the COFFEE and STIFF HIGH-BACK CHAIR and ONE FULL THIRD of a pile of UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UNANSWERED LETTERS and I HAVE PROMISES TO KEEP AND MILES TO GO BEFORE I SLEEP, AND MILES TO GO BEFORE I SLEEP.

Diana Lynne Pavlac
Chicago, Illinois

P.S. -- the editorial is my favorite part of Mythic Circle

((Okay, gentle readers, here you see an example of blatant EDITOR STROKING (especially that post script; that's the real kicker). But does it make us cynical or suspicious of her motives? Noooo. It gets her printed in the letterCol. Just watch, next she'll be wanting us to print her thesis...))

Gee, thanks for the LOC, Diana. Never knew we provided such blessed relief (AND HIGH DRAMA !!!) but hey, we try to oblige...

Thank you for publishing my poem, "Hild", in Mythic Circle #3. It was nice to see it in print. Unfortunately, the last three quatrains of the central section got somewhat garbled and reduced to one quatrain - combining the first two lines of the first and the last two lines of the second - and a three line stanza. What was printed read:

Men hacked and hewed as beasts that rend.
Father and Lover brought death to each other,
Against their hate her anguish strove,
But vengeance stood in reason's stead.

At dawn, again the sword did rend.
Ax bit bone. Spear drank blood.
Hedin and Hogni fell in spear-storm flood.

It should have read:

Men hacked and hewed as beasts that rend.
Father and Lover brought death to each other,
As at World's Doom brother slays brother.
All lay silent at the day's end.

Grieving Hild life-spells wove,
Hedin and Hogni raised from the dead.
Against their hate her anguish strove,
But vengeance stood in reason's stead.

At dawn again the sword did rend.
Ax bit bone. Spear drank blood.
Hedin and Hogni fell in spear-storm flood.
...Hild raised corpses at the day's end.

This should clarify the poem's meaning for anyone who couldn't make sense of those stanzas as printed.

Tim Callahan
Pasadena, California

Well, gosh darn it! This is embarrassing as all get out. I pulled up the computer file and, sure enough, I'd condensed two quatrains into one. But it also served as a learning experience, as the printer driver I've been using deleted every line that started with a period (or series of periods) -- the driver reads that as a "dot command!" Neither Christine nor I caught that condensation and, as one can't really expect folks to go and correct their copies of MC3, we are running the poem again in its entirety (and I'll make sure the printer-driver doesn't go bonkers!).

Herewith find three dollars for Issue Four. Perhaps next year I will break down and subscribe for a full year; I hesitate because, as I said in my initial inquiry, I'm tired of zines that take my money and fold after the next issue.

So, Issue Three was late only a month or so. In fandom circles, that's not considered a bad record. The quality of this one equaled the last--artwise, it surpassed Number Two. The cover was gorgeous! A feel of primavera in autumn, and I liked your choice of cover-color.

Best of the contents were the poems and the illos to those poems. It's so hard to find fantasy poetry printed anywhere! What amazes me is the talent you've got here! I was drooling over Tim Callahan's art, and then I came across his poem "Hild." Wow! Now I'm wondering if Angelee Anderson, whose work is something I'm beginning to look forward to when I get your magazine, draws as well? "Hild"

and "Visitation" were my favorites, but I liked all the poetry. The clean, archaic and deceptively simple feel to Zimmer's pieces; the breathtaking lilt of Reynolds' "Phusis" (wherefrom that name?) and both the pieces by Lynn, though "Gift" was the one that appealed strongest.

For the fiction: my favorite was "Archie's Game." It resonated very strongly indeed. I could have wished for more careful word choice, but the impact was good. Bergner's "Man of the Billion Words" grabbed me next. Great premise -- lots of humor and action. The end was a bit breakneck, I thought, but it left me wanting to see more by this author. I was glad to see another off-beat, charming yet puzzling piece by Rampp. I can imagine that he has a tough time finding homes for his stories -- what a shame when editors of bigger magazines won't take a risk. It's stories like his that give fantasy its intrigue.

Rucker is either very young, or a one-draft author. His story was fast-paced and fun, and I loved what he did with the tarot, but there was muddiness in character motivations and in background detail. Paul, don't fall into the all-too-common cliché of some of today's neo-pagan writers: "Plain-wrap Celts!" You've got too much talent.

Though, at least Rucker told his own story. The Sarah Beach piece read like a pleasantly pasteurized version of THE SILMARILLION. What feeling (or depth) the story might have had was so overshadowed by the original that this never got beyond a somewhat shallow echo. I wonder if Beach was told by some well-meaning creative writing teacher: "Model yourself on the masters!" Side question: is this the same Sarah Beach who -- I just double-checked to make sure the names are the same -- wrote a grand-slam against Dennis McKiernan's IRON TOWER trilogy in the sample issue of MYTHPRINT I was sent last winter? If so, I sense a case of pot and kettle here! Beach's use of language, despite awkward constructions in the archaic forms and some over-used descriptive phrases, is adept enough that I'd like to exhort her to try her hand at her own vision.

"The Good Folk" also had problems, the main one being it didn't quite tell a complete story. Nice start, but my interest flagged in the long time it took for the couple figure out what seemed really obvious. The pace picked up in McManus' history but then the whole thing became improbable and flattened out. I would have had the couple enter into a spirited bargain with McManus, and taken it from there. Connelly had lots of promising elements, but didn't make use of them.

A good issue, all told; I also enjoyed the Letters of Comment. I might wish, though, that a writer would not use the excuse of having published professionally for not standing behind any words that she or he has written. A salute to Jane Yolen for her upfront

response, pro-status notwithstanding.
Looking forward to Number Four!

Mary-Edith Bridges
Seattle, WA

We have every intention of continuing with this project for some time yet to come (years, I hope). STILL, your observation of disappearing 'zines is accurate enough and very understandable: Christine & I aren't getting paid for this puppy; this is time we could apply to other endeavors (many of them PAYING endeavors) and, just like the rest of humanity ('zine editors included), we can't see around the corner ahead of us. A time may come when one or the other of us might have to drop out for any number of reasons and --hopefully-- Mythic Circle would continue, but (to quote Safeway Goya of The Nobody's) "No guarantees in the western world." So, if you have a history of subscribing to 'zines just before they fold, maybe you should continue to purchase MC on a single-issue basis?!

Yeah, Tim Callahan's a great talent and I think MC will prove to be a future-collector's item based on the generous number of illos, poems, and/or stories he provides for us. I believe that Paul Rucker is young (under 20) and I trust your comments (and Pat Reynolds') re: generic celtic will be received in the right light; he is definitely talented, with both art and language skills, and I too would like to see those abilities

CLEO

by
Judith B. Jones

Cleo, the cat, was dying of the mange. She signaled her distress by making forlorn mews. She curled her limber whiteness into a half moon atop an old chenille bathrobe, in a box by the downside of the cellar steps. Cleo was Em's cat. Em was a twelve year old child-woman betwixt both. She was still a girl and yet womanhood whispered and beckoned her into the future.

Cleo was many times a mother, a veteran guardian of numerous litters of kittens gone now into good homes.

Em squatted beside the ailing cat and stroked her head and neck. The cat's eyes, usually green, wore an opaque shield of illness. Her nose was dry. Her mouth sagged open ever so slightly. She panted. In the dark basement her sounds filled the damp corners and Em's heart.

Em's voice was barely audible. She said, "I know you're hurting in your body, just like me once when I had the Nephritis. I don't have any medicine to make it stop. I will tell you a story. Listen good now."

"Once there was a beautiful cat. Her body was covered with downy fur and her eyes

developed further. You listening, Paul? Give us more submissions!

As for Sarah Beach, yes, she is one and the same. In her defense, though, I can acknowledge that it's very hard to maintain perspective on your own work. We tend to be either too harsh or too indulgent and balance, like all growth, takes time.

THANKS TO ALL OUR LETTER WRITERS!
YOU'RE ALL STARS IN OUR BOOK!

