N O U S three

march
1968

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N O U S 3

Table of Contents

Sorry there aren't any editorials this time around. We don't feel very editorial.

The Wombat and the Wizard
by Jean Berman

His name was Alphrezo. The townsmen called him Crazy, and the children, begging for stories, called him Frezo. But he called himself Alphrezo the Magician, and he wanted to be one.

As magicians do, he dressed in darks and lived in a tower in a forest. It was a tall one, made of polished, pale, green stones. Alphrezo had worked hard on that tower. For years he had spent his mornings on the ocean-front sorting green stones from the other ones. For years he had spent his afternoons polishing the morning's finds, and building his tower. But he always spent the evenings studying the Art. He wove talismans, observed the stars, practiced $pells, and studied The Great and Secret Book of Necromancy.

In the new moon's darkness he called spirits from vast and terrible depths. They never came. Afterwards, he explained to the walls why it had all worked out for the best.

"I wouldn't have known what to do with the demon if he had come."

The walls didn't say anything. Alphrezo continued his defense. "The pentagram I drew had six points. The demon would have escaped like...like that," he said, snapping his fingers. "Better to have no demon than escaped one."

The walls didn't answer. They never did.

Alphrezo sighed and yawned and went to bed.

Someday he was going to cast a spell that worked. Someday he was going to weave a unicorn that didn't look like a rhinocerous. Someday Alphrezo the Magician was going to be one. Someday.

One day a spell almost worked. It was supposed to bring his Lady Love flying through the window on rose-colored wings. The spell had a fine talisman, a green serpent entwined about a silver star with black flecks in it. The ring accompanying the talisman was a twisted snake biting its tail. Alphrezo made good snakes.

Holding the ring behind his left ear, Alphrezo closed his eyes and said the words of power. The room seemed to consider trembling before the awesome words, but remained in its green stability. Alphrezo opened his eyes. An attractive pink garter

snake was slithering across the floor and slid under the door. Alphrezo brewed himself a cup of tea and took a walk.

Walking through the forest, Alphrezo listened to the silence (ignoring the rustling of his robes). Glancing up, he noticed a large section of orange-colored mushroom growing on a tree.

"They'll be good in a stew," he thought, as he strained to break pieces off of it. "Or possibly over toast," he added, dropping them into his sleeve.

Alphrezo walked on, his eyes alert for mushrooms, but he didn't see any others. The path he was following ran up a hill, so Alphrezo did, too, but carefully, so as not to spill the mushrooms. The Hill was higher than it looked, and Alphrezo was panting when he reached the top. He sat down on a convenient rock and looked over as much of the path he'd taken as he could see before the trees completely obscured it. Above the trees he saw the green spire of his tower, and Alphrezo smiled at the familiar sight.

"Familiar," he muttered to himself. "Familiar. That's it. That's it! I should have a familiar." He thought a moment and added, "If witches can have them, then I can, too. Magicians are just as good as witches."

Alphrezo began considering the sort of familiar he needed. "Dogs are too supid, and cats are witchy. Monkeys are too human, and rabbits have no courage. A bird might do, provided it was intelligent."

A popinjay landed on the rock Alphrezo was sitting on. It picked up a section of his mushroom and hopped to a rock a few feet away. Alphrezo did not notice the theft. He had closed his eyes and indulged in a slow swallow before making his porposition to the popinjay.

"My friend," Alphrezo began.

The popinjay eyed him while pecking at the mushroom.

Alphrezo opened his eyes and looked back reproachfully. "My friend," he said, "What thinkest thou..." Alphrezo stopped to smile at the excellent phrase. It sounded so official. The bird continued to eat the mushroom. "...of entering into service as Familiar to Alphrezo the Magician?"

The bird finished its piece of mushroom, paused, and flew off with a short caw.

Alphrezo looked at the moist, white patch the popinjay had left and sighed. He sighed again and went back to considering animals suitable for familiars.

Insects would die young, and ostriches were too delicate. Rodents have no imagination, and horses and such would be cumbersome. Fish were out of the question, and dodos were extinct.

A wombat came shuffling up the hill.

"A snake might work." Alphrezo paused. "But no, they are so earthbound." Alphrezo slapped himself gently. "I've got to stop talking out loud to myself."

"Why?" the wombat asked.

"Why? Why, because it's unhealthy, that's..." He stopped and looked down at the wombat who had seated itself on the rock opposite him and was cleaning its nails while waiting for Alphrezo to finish.

"Who are you?" Alphrezo asked.

"I'm Brunhilda. Who are you?" the wombat said.

"I'm Alphrezo the Magish.... But wait a moment! What are you?"

"I'm a wombat. What are you?"

"But wombats don't talk."

"I do."

"Are you magical?" Alphrezo asked hopefully.

"No," Brunhilda sighed, "just mysterious."

"How would you like to be my Familiar?"

Brunhilda pulled herself up to her full height. She still looked dumpy. "Please. I am a lady."

"No, no," Aslphrezo said quickly, "you've got it all wrong. You'd be a magician's familiar. Help me with spells, talk to spirits—the things all familiars do. You'd have your own room in my polished, pale green tower," he added with at attempt at salesmanship.

"The work sounds stimulating, but that title...Magician's Familiar. It does sound compromising. I'll tell you what. Change it to Magician's companion, and you've got yourself a familiar."

"It's done," Alphrezo said enthusiastically. "Companion to the Magician Alphrezo. Brunhilda, that has a good ring."

"I know," she said modestly, and went back to cleaning her nails.

When she had finished they got up, and Alphrezo led the way back to the tower. Brunhilda waddled along a few steps behind him. They got to the tower, and Alphrezo cooked the remaining mushrooms and served them over toast points to Brunhilda and himself. Brunhilda picked up a piece of toast with mushroom and took a small bite. "You, sir, are a superb cook," she announced, and took another bite. Alphrezo beamed.

Supper finished, Alphrezo took Brunhilda up to his study, explaining to her over his shoulder, "I thought I'd do the experiment I tried this morning. It didn't work then, but it might go—now that you're here."

"What was it supposed to do?" Brunhilda asked.

"It was supposed to bring my Lady Love flying through the window on rose-colored wings, but instead I got a pink garter snake."

"I'm sorry."

"It's okay. I'm used to it. If we have time we might try some shape-changing spells, too," Alphrezo said.

"That might be nice," Brunhilda commented as Alphrezo ushered her in.

He lit a black candle, and in the flickering light he prepared the ceremony again. Brunhilda sat in the deep chair and looked politely interested.

The chant came to a squeaky climax (Alphrezo's voice cracked), and the room was silent.

"Is it over?" the wombat asked.

"Did anything happen?" Alphrezo asked hopefully, opening his eyes.

"No."

"Oh, well. Should we try the shape-changing spell now?" he asked.

"Maybe we should wait until tomorrow," Brunhilda suggested.

"Oh, no... No time like the present. And, besides, this shape-changing spell goes quickly. If there is anything not in its right-and-natural form, this will put it into that form."

"It's an anti-spell spell, then?" Brunhilda asked.

"Precisely."

"Oh, dear," she murmured.

He lit another black candle and took a ring from the storage cabinet. Placing the two candles before him at eye-level, he chanted the spell in a low voice. His voice rose as he cried to the ceiling, "By the powers of heaven and below, in light and darkness, let everything that be unnaturally transformed be returned to its true and rightful shape." He blew out the candles.

In a few moments he had lit the ordinary lights, and he turned to the chair where Brunhilda had been sitting. The wombat wasn't there. He faced a willowy young woman.

"Surprise," the woman aaid. "The spell worked."

"Oh my god," Alphrezo murmured. "You mean you're... you're..." He looked at her long, red hair and pale, almost translucent skin.

"Yes, I'm Brunhilda," she finished for him.

"Oh," Alphrezo said weakly.

"I'm sorry I couldn't manage the rose-colored wing business. Your window's too small, and I can't abide pinks."

"I'm sorry," Alphrezo said. He noticed the graceful lines of her dark, velvet gown. "But I'm glad you came."

"You called me," she said softly.

"I did? You mean the spell worked? Hey, Brunhilda! I mean, my lady! Will you remain here as companion to the magician Alphrezo?"

Brunhilda smiled. "Yes, if I may bring along Demeter."

"Bring along who?"

"Demeter. The cat who lives with me. She's my familiar. Or perhaps I'm hers."

"Of course."

Brunhilda smiled and walked to the window. The bear-like waddle Brunhilda had had as a wombat was gone. She walked with an easy grace.

"But if you have a familiar, you're a witch. Right?" Alphrezo asked.

"That's right." Leaning out the window, Brunhilda gave a long whistle and turned back to Alphrezo.

"And you're my Lady Love? I didn't know that," Alphrezo said, not expecting an answer.

"Well, now you know, I suppose."

"And my spells—both of them worked today, and you're a witch, so if you're a witch, maybe I can be a magician, a real magician, isn't that so?" Alphrezo stopped and looked at Brunhilda.

She had seated herself in the windowsill. Without turning, she nodded agreement, then caught Demeter as the cat came leaping down from the drain-pipe. Brunhilda held the night-black cat in her arms as she rose to meet Alphrezo. Demeter's eyes seemed to flash blue flame, but she was quiet in Brunhilda's arms. Shifting the cat's weight to one arm, Brunhilda took Alphrezo's hand. "Alphrezo," Brunhilda said in a low voice, "together the three of us can do great things: Demeter, Brunhilda, and Alphrezo the Magician."

"Alphrezo the Magician," Alphrezo said softly. "I'm going to be Alphrezo the Magician," he shouted. Brunhilda smiled and stroked Demeter while she watched Alphrezo become a magician.

Living Chess and the KPFA Renaissance Pleasure Fair

by Jim Schumacher, Ruth Berman, and Len Bailes

[compiled from Mad is What Fans Be in Apa L 158, October 26, 1967, and Roquat 65 and Boris the Spider 2, in Apa L 157, October 19, 1967.]

JS

"The simulated medieval dust is very effective," coughed Len, as acloud of the gray, dry dirt rolled over us.

It was, too, as was everything else at the Marin County Pleasure Faire. When Bill Rotsler's van chugged back into LA Sunday night I was filthy, but satisfied.

Four cars carried the contingent of LA fans to the great north. About half of us went up in Rotsler's Ford Van, which has unbalanced wheels, slow leaking tires, and was loaded badly to boot. Thus over the weekend we cut a wavy line up and down the coast, leaving a wake of truckdrivers with nervous breakdowns behind us.

We left about 10:30 on the night of Friday the 13th of October. Naturally, everything that could possibly go wrong did, and then some. Most notable was Mitch Evans' badly severed left hand, which began spurting blood profusely sometime in the middle of the night past Bakersfield. A two-hour delay was involved while we dug up a hospital and put Mitch back in shape. Later (much later; for some reason no one knows we kept alternating between two different sets of directions) we arrived at the Berkeley home of Dave Thewlis.

Dave and his wife proved marvelous hosts, deluging us with more hot scones and pancakes than we could eat. Not too soon after, costumes were donned, and we were off for the Faire—prepared to defend the honor of the LASFS with little or not sleep and about the same amount of experience in combat.

RB

It was quite a tournament.

The LA pieces kept inviting people to come up and watch them lose. "I rate my chessic ability as C," said Len Bailes, "and the San Francisco chess master's as B...so we're going to have to win on our superior fighting skill...and the San Francisco team has been working at this a lot longer than we have, so...."

Friday evening Len came over to my place, and we had dinner and watched Star Trek, a dull episode called "The Apple," then went to a drugstore to get Len some cough medicine (it takes a fan to drive 400 miles with a cold), and swung onto Highway 101 and a fog that lasted as far as Santa Barbara. It took us twelve hours, altogether, to get to the Trimbles' house in Oakland. We couldn't go fast, because I kept pulling off the road to take quarter-hour naps when I felt myself getting too sleepy, and because, even with the help of napping, eventually I felt too tired to trust my reactions and didn't dare drive above fifty. Along about dawn I was in that halfway stage where a rambling thought turns into a voice speaking and the voice turns into a character in a dream. Since I wasn't letting myself sleep, I couldn't dream—but I couldn't stop the voices. In effect, I was having auditory hallucinations.

At last we reached the Trimbles', and I sat down in a big chair for a few minutes. A couple hours later they woke me, and we went to the Faire.

During the first few hours I was too tired to enjoy it. I dutifully wandered around the booths, admired the pottery, tarot cards, recorders, and incense, bought a gingerbread man, some large, soft pretzels (a sort of pretzel-flavored bagel), and some churros (a gypsy pastry), and became more and more upset, almost to hysteria, by the amount of dust and dirt accumulating on me. And then, in turn, I was further upset by realizing that it was ridiculous to be bothered by ordinary dirt.

Felice Rolfe (praise to her) brought a couple blankets and spread them on the ground...well, on the rocks...behind the Creative Anachronism Society's booth. After walking around the Faire once, I sat down on as rockless a bit of blanket as I could find, and just stayed there for hours, talking to the passers-by and my fellow collapsers. I came out occasionally to take photos.

Otherwise, I was quite still until the two sets of chess pieces drew up in a double line: heralds first, then kings (Don Simpson, the LA king, in a wonderful stag's-horn helmet, looking like a Wild Huntsman out of Welsh or Teutonic myth), then the lesser pieces on back to the pawns, and then their ladies cheering after. And, also, pretty quickly, nearly all the other fair-goers. The procession shoved its way up hill, down hill, out the gate, and down hill again into a large field which had been cleared and marked in squares.

LB

Against my better judgment I agreed to be the Chessmaster for our side.

"Let's see," I said to Owen Hannifen, King's Rook, "I'm the one who's going to direct the moves and determine who fights who, right?"

"Uh huh."

"Other things being equal, the outcome of the game will depend upon my skill in sizing up the strength of the men and maneuvering them to best advantage, right?"

"Uh huh."

"In other words, I'm the one you're going to beat up on when we lose."

"Uh hu—no, no, of course not!" Owen said as he flashed his winning smile.

But I agreed. I hadn't been up to the BArea in six months, and I figured I'd enjoy the trip even after the mace scars were healing.

Only we won. We started off badly when two pawns perished in an attempt to stop the advancing White King's Pawn, William the Silent (a two-time Tournament winner). Things really started looking bad when we lost Heinrich the Dane, our King's Knight, in a double-kill which also stopped William the Silent. In fact, we would have gone down to ignominious defeat if it hadn't been for our Warlod, Richard the Short (instead of "Queen," the term "Warlord" was used to denote the strongest piece on the board, for obvious reasons). Richard did the nearly impossible, by winning three battles in almost immediate succession, one of them (after losing the use of one leg in the previous battle) against Ken DeMaith, the White Warlod, and the Society of Creative Anachronism's most powerful fighter.

The game was played according to the standard rules of chess with these exceptions: when a team lost a combat, they moved immediately again; all captures save those made by the king were decided by a combat between attacker and defender; and all wounds incurred while fighting carried over as long as a square remained in dispute.

Jim Schumacher made a valiant attempt in the first battle of the game. Especially after I promised I wouldn't use him till he could watch some of the other fights and see how it worked—but the dictates of strategy demanded it.

JS

After trudging my way over a mile of dusty dirt road and dusty winding paths through trees, I was feeling medieval, and I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

Until the time for the Live Chess Game.

I hadn't been sure that I would be able to get off work to get to the Faire until the day we left, and I was totally unprepared to defend myself against some maniac with a wooden broadsword—when I had nothing but asmall shield, 10 inches in diameter and a tiny wooden short-sword, the only weapons a pawn was allowed to use.

I didn't really want to fight, but the LA team was short a lot of men, so I suddenly found myself a pawn. As it was explained to me, "Schu, we don't expect you to win. We expect you to get killed, but try and take an arm or leg off before you go so the next guy to fight him will have an advantage." Knowing you're expendable does wonders for your morale.

I didn't mind, though, because I'd been wanting to try out this tournament jazz for some time. And it's a helluva lot of fun to get bashed around and bruised, for some reason, I discovered.

I got killed, of course. Bopped soundly over the skull with a short-sword. I didn't manage to take any of him with me, either.

LB

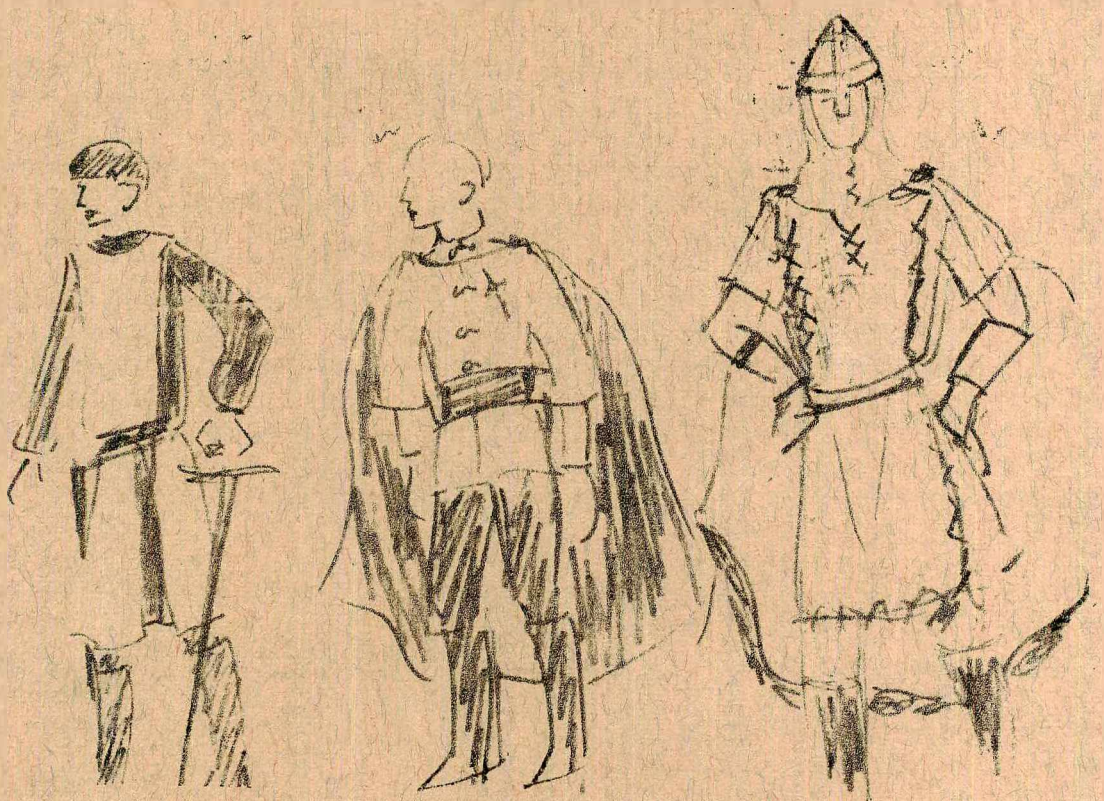
The next two combats would have resulted in an immediate loss for black, except that Owen Hannifen managed to wound Sir Caradoc (the White Bishop), and J. G. Newkom (Black Queen's Rook) finished him off.

The key to the game, however, was the valour of Richard the Short. I placed him in a position where he would have to fight three strong white warriors in rapid succession. We were down several pieces at the time, and it was the only way to put up a decent struggle. Richard won all three bouts, although the battle of the Warlords, Richard and Ken DeMaith, was a very closely contested fight. The whole thing was dramatic; we gave the crowd a good show.

JS

There was much more to the Faire. One of the highlights was a skit with Robin Hood robbing a wealthy Merchant (played by Jerry Jacks). Jerry hopped wildly about the stage in a panic, shouting that Help! he was being robbed! His purple robes f flailed about him, and he cried out in despair, "There's never a Sheriff of Nottingham around when you need one!"

The Faire progressed well into the night. We adjourned to a party thrown by Richard the Short and his Lady. Our group stumbled into the Thewlis' house by ones and twos throughout the night. Dawn found a motly collection of Angelenoes scattered thickly over Dave's living room floor.



The Fandoliers

or

The King of Barataria

(continued)

by Len Bailes

[In the huckster room at the Midwescon, Rhe Fandolieri brothers, Roneo and Rex Rotary, two faanish publishers and TAFF candidates, selected—at random—the articles written by femmefans Tessa and Fendetta. After the couples left to attend the program, the Duke and Duchess of Westwood Plaza and their daughter Obliterine arrived. The Duke and Duchess announced to Obliterine that at last she was going to get a chance to travel further than a mere regional con: they had had her secretly engaged to that year's TAFFwinner.]

(Enter the Grand Administrator of TAFF, the previous winner, furtively.)

Admin: They say that the Art show is the place where everyone congregates at a convention, so I should be safe here in the huckster... (sees Duke & Co. and shrugs) ...room...

Duke: My child, allow me to present to you His Distinction, The Grand Administer of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund. It is His Distinction who will announce the name of the next TAFFman at the business session, later today.

Oblit: (politely) How do you do?

Admin: (coldly) I don't believe we've met before. Where did you place on the Fan-poll last year?

Duke: (hastily) Ah...I don't think you understand. This is my daughter, Obliterine.

Admin: (to himself) The Daughter of the Duke of Westwood Plaza...then she's probably at least a WKF. (aloud to Oblit.) My dear, I've been looking forward to meeting you. No doubt you've read my TAFF report and have been waiting here all morning to compliment me, like all the rest of them.

Oblit: As a matter of fact, I've never heard of you before.

Admin: (hopefully) You haven't? (Obliterine shakes head) ...Then you don't want me to tell you witty stories, make trilingual puns and charm you with my cosmopolitan suavity and sophistication?

Oblit: (shakes head again)

Admin: (kicking off his shoes and sitting wearily on the florr) Thank God!

Duchess: Your Distinction, do you think you might drop a small hint as to which of the Fandolieri brothers is going to win tomorrow?

Admin: Why? Can you tell the difference between them?

Duchess: It's not that...it's just that Obliterine has a right to know who her husband-to-be —

Oblit: Now, wait a minute! We haven't settled —

Admin: Ladies, please! There's no sense in arguing. Right now your guess as to the identity of the winner is as good as mine.

Duke: What? You mean there's a doubt as to which of those clods got more votes?

Admin: A doubt? Oh dear, no—no doubt at all. It's just that all the ballots are missing. Listen and I'll tell you all about it:

Song—Grand Administrator

I won the crown and left it here
To cache for this year's winner
With a highly respected conventioneer,
Who promised to hold the trophy dear,
And yield it up only when there'd appear
A trufan—and no beginner!

Everyone knew he'd bear this out,
And that no one could use a lever —
Of that there is no manner of doubt —
No probable, possible shadow of doubt —
No possible doubt whatever.

But owing, I'm much disposed to fear,
To his terrible love for feuding,
That highly respectec conventioneer
Got deeply involved with the Great Ghod Bheer
When all of thc fans made it very clear,
That they did not like excluding!

For, they said, he too often would flout
Their trufannish endeavour.
Of that there is no manner of doubt —
No probable, possible shadow of doubt —
No possible doubt whatever.

Time sped, and when at the end of the year
I hinted most discreetly,
That maybe that able conventioneer
Should soon be announcing the fannish peer,
I found he'd qui t his fannish career —
Gone gafia completely!

The outraged cries put him to rout;
From fandom he's gone forever.
Of that there is no manner of doubt —
No probable, possible shadow of doubt —
No possible doubt whatever.

So now we're faced with decision grave
(I swear I've not been drinking),
For each candidate swears that the other knave
Is only a beatnik who thought to shave,
And he is the only one who'll save
The fannish world from sinking!

As Solomon I'm not cut out;
I'm ne'er one-half so clever.
Of that there is no manner of doubt —
No probable, possible shadow of doubt —
No possible doubt whatever!

Oblit: Then, do you mean to say that I must marry one of these faanish idiots, but that it is impossible to say which?

Admin: You betchum' Red Ryder!

Oblit: I may vomit!

Admin: Be reassured...I have a hoard of neofans out searching the bars at this very moment. As soon as we find the convention fan I so unwisely appointed as teller we can establish the winner's identity beyond all question.

Recitative—Oblit & Admin

Oblit: But bless my heart, consider my position!
I am betrothed to one, that's very clear;
And yet I'd rather die of malnutrition,
Than be the wife of some dull Fandolier!

Admin: Submit to Ghu without unseemly wrangle:
Such situations frequently arise —
Fandom's one closely complicated tangle:
Nothing's to wild to catch us by surprise!

Quartet—Duke, Duchess, Oblit & Admin

All: Try we life-long, we can never
Delve the roots of fandom's will.
Why should we, in vain endeavour,
Audience with talking kill?

Admin: Fandom's just a goddamn fad!

Duchess: Or a way of life that's mad!

All: Fandom's just a goddamn fad,
Or a way of life that's mad.
Wherefore waste our erudition
Damning neos to perdition?
Fandom's just an intermission,
Let us take what's to be had!

Set aside the puzzling question,
And you'll find it brings no shame;
If you take this small suggestion:
Shelve your cares and join the game!

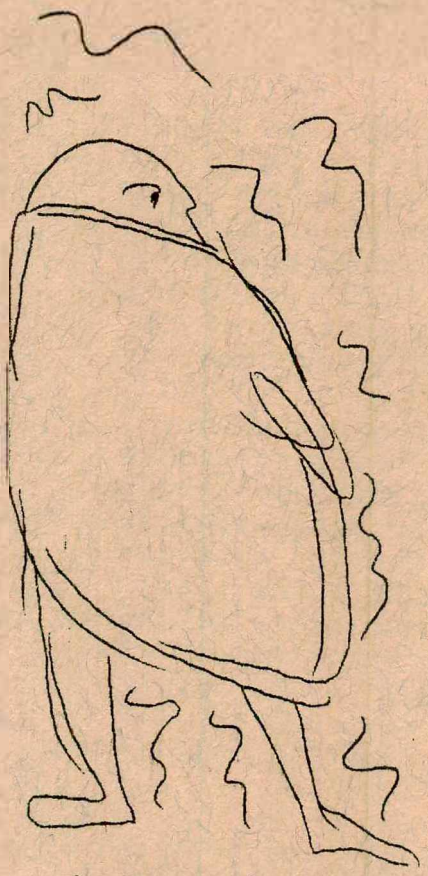
Admin: Pub the zines and drink the brew

Duchess: Everyone likes egoboo!

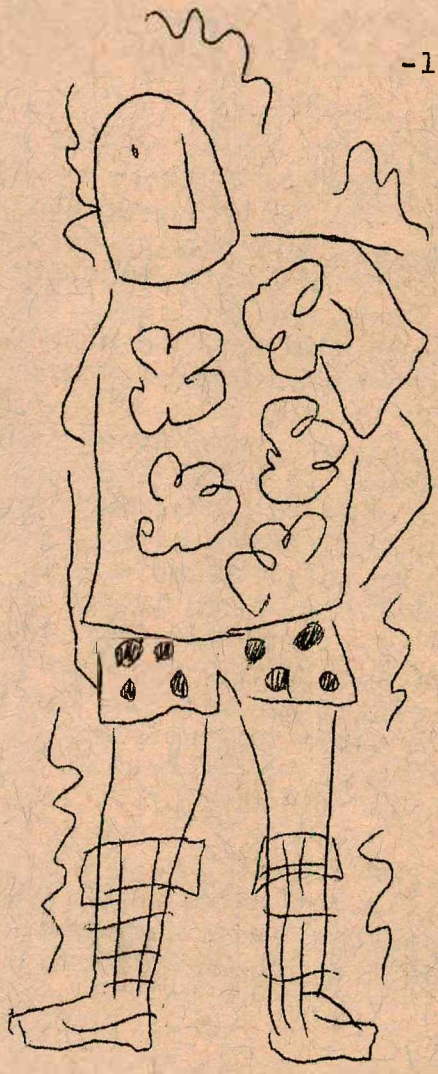
All: Pub the zines and drink the brew,
Everyone likes egoboo!
Fandom's fancies flit unceasing,
Complications keep increasing,
Gafia will bring surceasing,
Though it's often overdue!

(exeunt all)

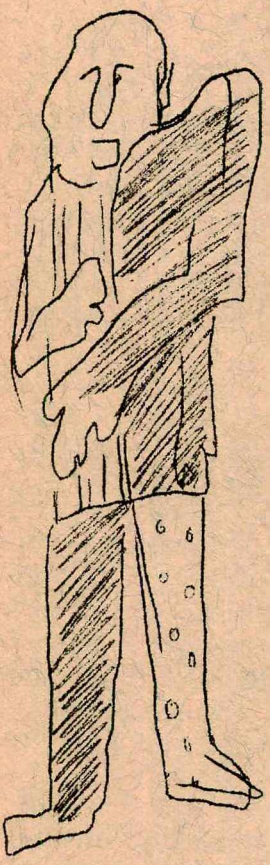
(to be continued)



An Inner (or Introverted) Trembling

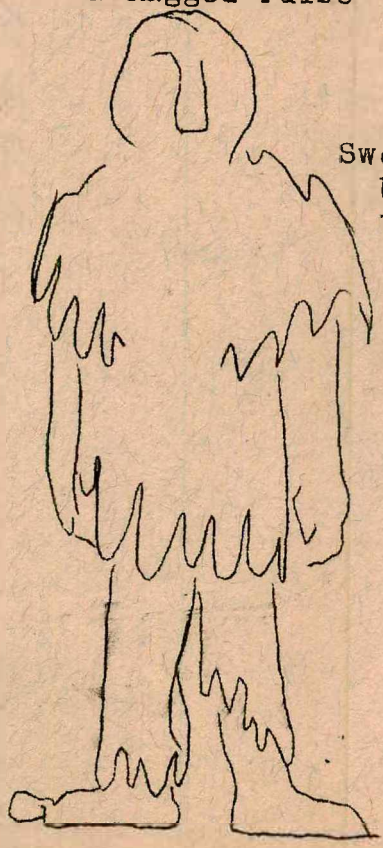


an Outer (or extroverted) Trembling

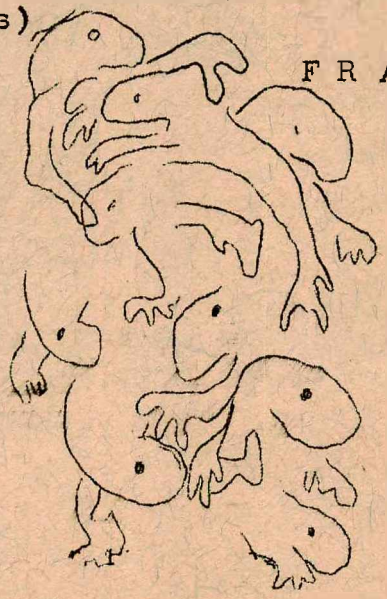


an Uneven Breathing

a Ragged Pulse



Sweating of Palms (supposed in ancient times to be formed from the moisture dropped by palm trees)



HOMAGE TO
F R A N K H E R B E R T
by E. A. Arnason

"She fought down
the inner trembling,
the outer trembling,
the uneven breathing,
the ragged pulse,
the sweating of the
palms.

-- Dune
p. 30

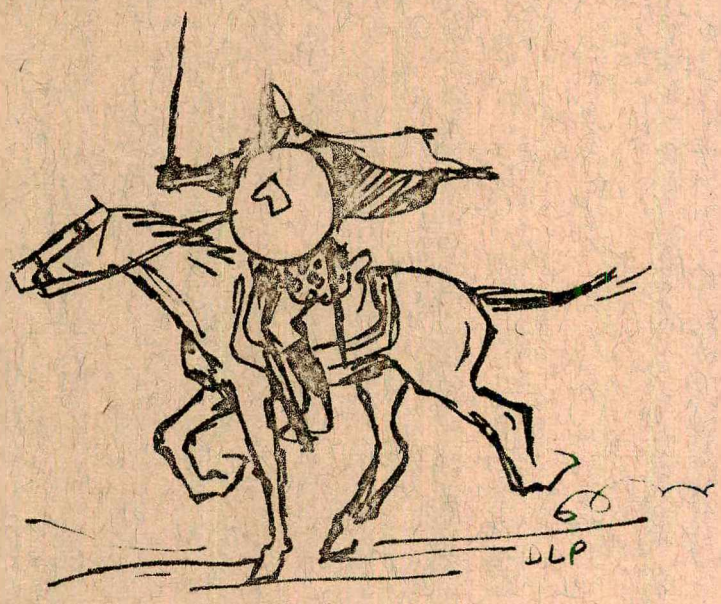
The Hero in Twentieth Century Literature

by Dave Hulan

The Hero is, as far as we know, as old as fiction itself. Certainly it is hard to think of a piece of fiction older than, say, the Gilgamesh epic. In fact, one school of thought holds that the gods themselves are but highly-colored memories of ancient heroes--perhaps the ultimate accolade which can be bestowed upon the breed. But, in any case, the Hero was an essential part of the epic, and the epic is usually considered the first literary form which is produced by a rising culture.

Heroes abound in ancient and medieval epics: Achilles, Oddysseus, Ajax, Agamemnon, Theseus, Oedipus, Romulus, Aeneas, Beowulf, Arthur, Roland, the Cid, Barbarossa, Coeur de Lion (the literary hero, not the rotten king), Robin Hood--the list could be extended indefinitely, without even getting outside the western European tradition. In fact, up until the 19th century, it was almost de rigeur for any serious piece of imaginative literature to have a Hero. Serious works of literature were not, after all, written to show it The Way It Is. Any idiot could look at the world and see how it was, and if he couldn't then he could hardly be expected to from reading a book that was only a mirror of the world.

So it was the obligation of authors to select certain outstanding characteristics that certain individuals might have, magnify them to such heights that they were beyond the reach of the normal man, and use the character possessing them to illustrate the good or evil which might result. Retribution follows evil and reward good--inevitably and usually rapidly.



Shakespeare was a great writer with great insight into human character, but Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Othello, or Caesar are not ordinary humans. If they Hold "the mirror up to nature," it is a curved mirror, designed to emphasize and minimize selectively.

The novel without a hero came into vogue in the 19th century. The Russians pioneered in that form, and writers in various other countries picked it up until by the early 20th century the Hero was practically dead in modern serious literature, although the old examples were admired as much as ever.

Now, I yield to none in my admiration of many Hero-less novels. Dostoevsky is great, or, to pick a more recent and homely example, I dig Kingsley Amis quite a lot, and his characters are about as unheroic as you can get, but yet—I still prefer a novel with a Hero.

Heroes are <u>interesting</u>. They make things happen, rather than having things happen to them. Even when they are making bad things happen to thselves, at least they being passively pushed around by fate. "Invictus" may be a corny poem, but the attitude of "I am the master of my fate" is the only one that I can see a worthwhile person having.

John Carter put it, "I still live"—and by God if it took 43 simultaneous coincidences for Burroughs to pull him out of his current scrape, there'd be 43 simultaneous coincidences for John Carter to turn to his advantages. Now, Burroughs was a naive writer. He had more strengths than his detractors seem to realize, but naive he certainly was. The 43 coincidences don't come off too well as a justification for the Heroic attitude. Shakespeare's Macbeth is a better example. He would not submit to the fate which made Malcolm king. He would "not yield to kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet, and to be baited with the rabble's curse." He got killed for his pains, but he died a Hero. So did Roland. So did Beowulf. A Hero is unconquerable, because he will notlet himself be conquered, though he may be killed.

Heroes are not common in the serious literature of the cynical 20th century. Most modern writers are of the "better [you name it] than dead" school, and their characters reflect the belief. Hemmingway was a noble exception; I'm not a great fan of his for other reasons (mostly I'm not interested in most of the backgrounds he wrote about, and I read as much for background as anything else—maybe more), but several of his characters were real bigod Heroes...like the old man in <u>The Old Man and the Sea</u>. But if heroes are not plentiful in the serious literature, they abound in the pulps.

Among the heroes there are three distinct types. I don't say that the classification couldn't be extended and broken down more closely, but these three stand out to me: the simple hero, the thinking hero, and the doubting hero. The last is not to be con-

fused with non-heroes—while he may have his doubts about his own virtues, he is never impelled by these doubts to act in a cowardly or unheroic manner. In fact, the essence of the doubting hero, and the factor which makes him superior (when done well) to all other types is the contrast between the internal doubts and the external heroism which he exhibits.

First, however, we should discuss the simple hero, because he has the heroic traits in their most basic form. This type is common in pulp fiction, because it is relatively easy to write bad fiction about a simple hero. Of course, it is also possible to write good fiction about simple heroes. Achilles, in the Iliad, is essentially a simple hero.

The simple hero is characte ized by being braver, stronger, and quite possibly more intelligent and/or cunning than anyone he comes up against. Tarzan, John Carter, Fafhrd, King Kull, Brad —all of these are simple heroes. Possibly the best simple hero in 20th century literature is Conan, the great Cimmerian swordsman of Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age.

Conan, like virtually every simple hero, has great physical prowess. He can handle a sword better than anyone in the world, and, in fact, can fight off several armed men without shield, helmet, or armor—just his sword, or perhaps an axe. It is fairly typical of simple heroes to have some advantage of early upbringing that makes them better able than anyone else to master the necessary weapons. Conan was a barbarian, born and raised in a harsh wilderness, as were Fafhrd, Kull, and Bradk; Tarzan was raised by apes in the jungle; John Carter had Earthly muscles to use in the lesser Martian gravity.

For some reason never clearly explained by any author I have seen, this mysterious barbarian vigor was never met in even slightly similar degree in other, equally barbarous characters in the same stories. But one supposes that, after all, there has to be a best among the barbatians, too—and it would be silly to write stories about a perfectly ordinary barbarian who could just barely hold his own with the city-dwellers (though it might be fun).

Conan also has great physical courage, which is another essential characteristic of the simple hero—and of all heroes, for that matter. He cannot be intimidated; he is, in fact, more likely to go in if he knows it is dangerous.

This is not, however, to say that he is stupid. The simple hero has been much maligned by many literary types who expect something more from the writing than it has any obligation to


STATON

present. Simple heroic fiction is told primarily from the point of view of an external observer who does not get into the mind of the hero. There is ample evidence in the Conan series that he possessed a first-class strategic and tactical sense, an excellent understanding of human psychology, the knowledge of several languages, and a certain amount of administrative talent. Actually, this is to be expected--the challenging environment of his native hills should sharpen wits as well as strenghen bodies.

However, although he was certainly capable of thought, it is not recorded that he ever spent any significant time doing it, except for the purpose of coping with his environment. He was not introspective. And neither are any other simple heroes—as much as anything else, it is the mark that distinguishes them from other types. A simple hero never thinks about the nature of things or any abstract question; his attention is strictly upon the concrete, the here-and-now, the immediate problems facing him. Of course, this means a lack of philosophical content in the stories about them, unless the writer is very skillful indeed. Normally it is necessary for an author to be more explicit than is possible within the limitations of the simple hero.

But a story need not have a great deal of philosophical content to be a good story, and the Conan stories <u>are</u> good stories. Conan is the kind of character you could imagine yourself liking, even though he <u>is</u> a hero—he has a rough-and-ready sense of humor, an appreciation for the pleasures of the senses, and a strong sense of honor. Honor, not honesty: he is quite capable of theft or robbery, but from those who are helpless, and he would never betray one who had trusted him. Few simple heroes appear likeable to me. Most of them are rather too ascetic, and almost all of them lack a sense of humor. Conan suffers from neither fault.

Although the Conan stories are good stories about a simple hero, they do not have any significant depth. Greater depth in heroic fiction is usually added by allowing the hero to think and by making his thoughts known to the reader: the "thinking hero."

The thinking hero is less common in bad fiction simply because bad fiction about thinking heroes is not even amusing (as bad fiction about simple heroes often is), but rather boring. Bad fiction can sell, for various reasons, but boring fiction cannot. Oh, a piece sneaks through occasionally—the Gc series by "John Norman" is a beautiful example of bad fiction about a thinking hero—but it's by no means as common as is bad fiction about simple heroes.

The thinking hero normally tends to conquer by his wits as much as his strong right arm, in contrast to the simple heroes, who brilltheir way through their predicaments. However, clever actions are not the distinguishing chracteristic of a thinking hero. Oddysseus, although renowned for his cleverness, is basically a simple hero in a complex tale, where most of the philosophy is put in directly by Homer (whether Homer is the name of a man or the pseudonym of a whole clutch of writers). A thinking hero must think out loud for the reader, not just make [illegible] the fact that he had been thinking by his intelligent actions.

Thinking heroes are less common in fiction than simple heroes are, by perhaps an order of magnitude. Nevertheless, there are plenty to choose from (heroic fiction being a rather large class of literature). Harold Shea and Mardin Padway from the works of L. Sprague de Camp, Khlit the Cossack from the series by Harold Lamb, Salvor Hardin from Isaac Asimov's Foundation series—all these are thinking heroes. It is more difficult to pick an outstanding example of a thinking hero, because, in general, the level of published stories about thinking heroes is higher, but, in order to keep within the bounds of similar levels of culture, let Tros of Samothrace, Talbot Mundy's great character, be the example.

Tros of Samothrace (which should by rights be pronounced "Samothrahkee," not "Samothrayss"—I can cite evidence in The Purple Pirate to prove it, if anyone really cares) was the hero of a series of stories which Gnome Press gathered into one gigantic volume and one smaller one. The large volume has just been reprinted in a more manageable four-volume edition by Avon, and I highly recommend it to lovers of heroic fiction.

Tros is the son of an adept of Samothrace, an Aegean island which was in fact the home of a mystic cult in the Hellenistic age. Tros himself, however, lacks the patience and restraint necessary to becoming an adept (they have to lead a monastic, ascentic life, and, while Tros is ascetic by our standards, we are given to understand that he is a virtual heddonist compared to the true adepts). The Samothracian religion (which seems related in some ways to Druidism and also to Judaism—an odd combination made possible only by the scarcity of information on the Druidic religion, leaving the writer free to make it as close to a srot of pantheistic Christianity as he likes) is the source of the bulk of Tros's philosophy, most of the rest of it coming from his experience as a sea-captain.

His one ambition in life is to sail around the world, thus proving that it is round, as his religion states. However, before


STATON

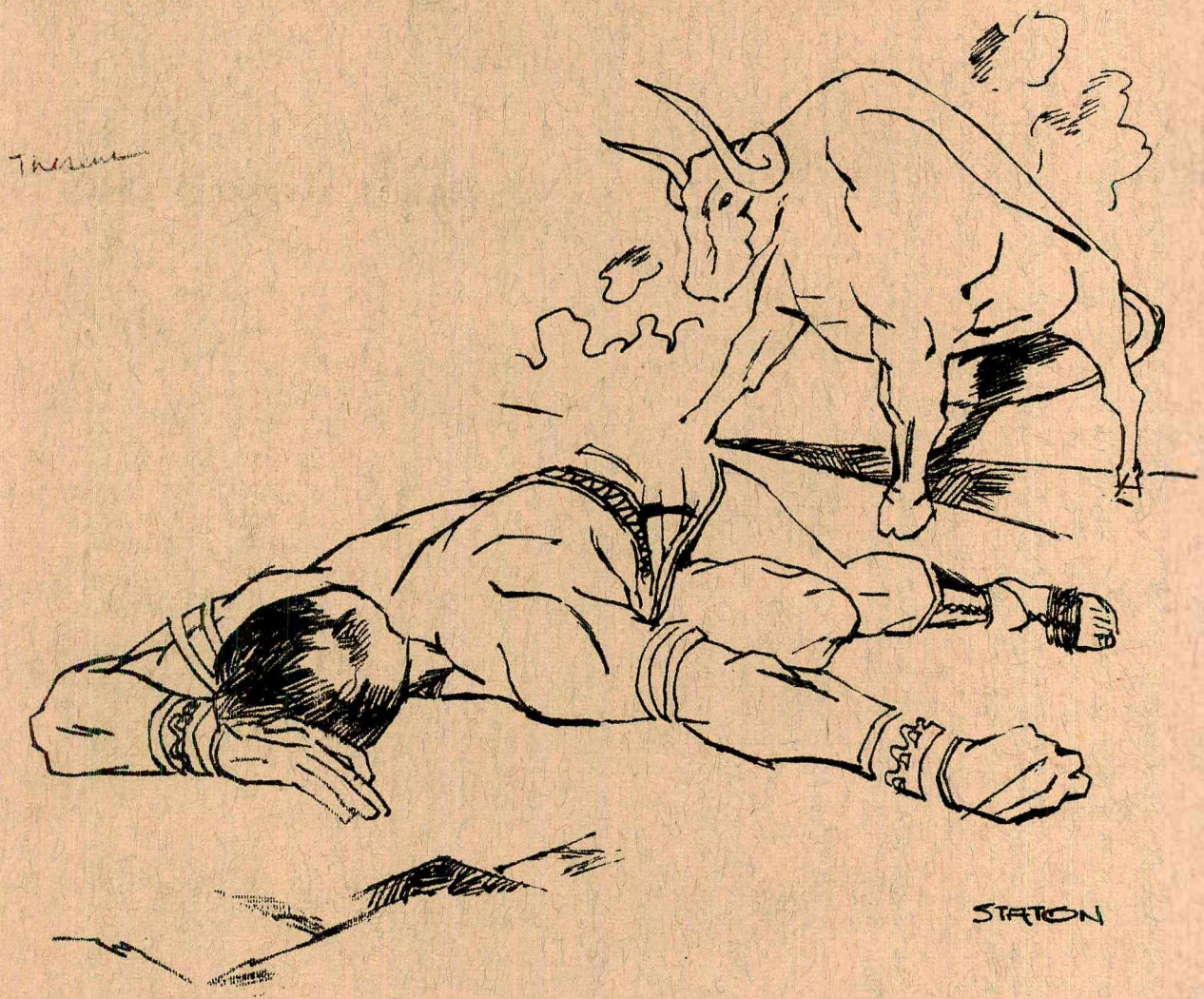
he can do that, he has to get a ship and a crew worthy of the voyage. Meanwhile, he and his father are involved with Julius Caesar and his invasions of Britain, in the course of which his father dies of maltreatment while Caesar's captive, and Tros makes firm friends (and some bitter enemies) in Britain. So Tros gets British help in building his ship and manning it, and, in turns, he spends the rest of the novel preventing Caesar's invasion—or aborting it.

This novel dumps philosophy on you with a shovel; every chapter is headed either with a Profound Saying of the Archdruid Taliesan or a Perceptive Note from the Log of Tros. In addition, Tros is always using his philosophy to justify his actions, and he leaves nothing in obscurity. In fact, such writing is what we today generally consider a bit heavy-handed—it makes the book harder reading than most heroic fiction. Overall, however, it is quite an effective book; Tros is convincingly portrayed as just the sort of chracter who in fact would sit about thinking about the whichness of why, and who would write about it in his ship's log. For this reason it doesn't seem nearly as bad as most philosophizing in works of fiction. You get interested in the character of Tros, and the rest of it then also becomes interesting.

But the thinking Hero is basically a sugar-coated way for the author to cram some of his ideas down the reader's throat: everything is pretty explicit. More subtle and more challenging is the creation of what I term the "doubting Hero." These heroes almost always occur in works of fairly high quality; offhand, I can't remember ever having run across one in a poorly written story. This may be because the doubting Hero isn't published unless he's done well, or it may be because the line between the thinking and the doubting Hero is so thin that if a doubting Hero is done poorly he simply looks like a thinking Hero.

There are a number of excellent examples of doubting heroes in 20th century literature—Horatio Hornblower, Airar, and Travis McGee are examples. But one of the most striking is a revival of a chracter who was known from the most ancient times, put into a novel so fine that it ranks with the best treatments of his chracter: Mary Renault's Theseus.

Theseus was a king of Attica in the Mycenaean age, according to the legends. He was born in Troizen, on the Peloponnesus, the son of the daughter of the local king and the travelling king, Aegeus of Attica. When he had grown to manhood he went to seek his father, and, after many adventures with the bandits who infested the Isthmus of Corinth in those days, he eventually reached Athens. At about this time, however, the annual tribute-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ship from Crete came to Athens to pick up the seven youths and seven maidens who were to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull creature said to be the offspring of the Queen of Crete and a bull from the sea.

Theseus volunteered to go as one of the youths and, after winning the heart of Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, succeeded in killing the Minotaur and escaping. On his return he forgot to change the sails of the ship in which he returned, as he had promised his father he would if he returned victorious, and so Aegeus cast himself into the sea in his sorrow (which sea was thereafter called the Aegean). Theseus ruled Athens for many years. He took part in many heroic ventures, including the capture of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, who fell in love with him and bore him a son, Hippolytos, before she fell in a battle against her own subjects, who had come to avenge her capture.

After her death Theseus married Phaedra, another daughter of King Minos. Phaedra conceived an intolerable passion for her stepson Hippolytos, and, when her attempts to seduce him failed, she hanged herself, accusing him of having raped her. Theseus, believing her dying message, called down the curse of Poseidon on Hippolytos, causing Hippolytos' death, and learned only afterwards that Hippolytos was innocent. This seemed to end Theseus' luck, and it was not long after that he was driven from Athens and murdered on the isle of Skyros.

Now, there is enough in such a legend for many stories, and the Greeks were not remiss in mining it. Plutarch and others retold the story; Theseus is a central chracter in Euripides' Hippolytos and a peripheral chracter in Sophocles's Oedipus at Colonnus: the story of Theseus is tied in with the legends of Bellerophon, Medea, and Herakles.

Among later authors, Chaucer, in the "Knight's Tale" from The Canterbury Tales, and Shakespeare, in A Midsummer Night's Dream, used "Duke Theseus" as a major chracter.

Now Mary Renault has used this Hero in The King Must Die and The Bull from the Sea (the two novels form a connected work, since one builds on the other, although they were published separately, and together they relate the complete story of Theseus). Not content with simply retelling the traditional legend with enough embellishments to pad out a novel, Miss Renault has dug deeply into what is known and guessed about conditions in the Greece of Mycenaean times and has fitted the legend into the facts so smoothly that I, at least, am convinced that this is ineed the way it really was.

Central to the theme of the novel is the conflict between the Mother-Goddess religion of the Minoans, who were the original dwellers in the land, and the Olympian religion of the Achaeans, who were in the process of conquering it. For many years after this time the Olympians were in the ascendant. For many years before the Mother had been supreme (as she was again in the days of the Roman Empire and after, when first Isis and then Mary took over the role, leaving the male God a remote and untouchable figure of little influence on daily life), but in the Mycenaean Age the two forces were very nearly balanced.

Theseus, as might be expected of an energetic male, was a follower of the Olympians and opposed to the religion of the Mother. However, he was the son of a priestess of the Mother, and his first great victory placed him on the throne of Eleusis, a city-state where the worship of the Mother was probably as strong as anywhere on the mainland. The result was that he tended to believe in the Mother while opposing her worship—an uncomfortable position which in many ways led to his downfall.

The King Must Die is, in my opinion, the better of the two books, simply because the descriptions of life in the Cretan bull-ring are so exceptionally well done that they lift the book too high for anything short of a miracle to equal them. Miss Renault, although possessed of great talent, is not a miracle-worker, and, although it is an excellent book, The Bull from the Sea somehow lacks the spark that made its prededessor so superb.

However, without the the second book, the evolution of Theseus as a doubting hero would be incomplete. For it is only in the second book, in the inter-relationships of Theseus, Hippolyta, Hippolytos, and Phaedra, that the reader realizes that Theseus is not another Tros, supremely confident of his own rightness and infalliability, but a human being tormented with many self-doubts, who yet can rise above them to perform deeds so notable that they are still remembered, 3,000 years after his death.

Conan, Tros, and Theseus, each in his own way a representation of a type of Hero, show what can be done, on various levels, with the Heroic chracter to produce good, or even great stories. Each has attracted a coterie of devoted fans. Can a non-hero do more?

We also Get Letters

from Buck Coulson
Route 3 Hartford City Indiana 47348

Never having been a girl in fandom I can't compare experiences with you, and I suppose I can't provide much of a solution, either. Except that maybe you should built up lots of fannish acquaintances by mail, and then they won't be so overwhelmed by you in person. Or, come to think of it, maybe they would, anyway. Whether fans prefer girls with brains depends on the fans. I do, but I have known fans to marry girls who seemed to me to be utterly witless. (No names; sorry.) Either they preferred witlessness or they were awfully careless—I never inquire which.

Part of the trouble of trying to read someone's writing during a short family--or friendly--visit is that while it is certainly rude to ask to see it and then not read it, it also seems rude to devote one's entire attention to a piece of paper instead of paying attention to what the host is saying. (This is usually never thought of until after the visitor has the written material in hishand and is trying desperately to read and listen at the same time.)

Thanks, Ruth, for mentioning Thomas Stratton and John Barth in the same paragraph.

"Fandoliers" was enjoyable. Glad to see Atkins' column. I always wondered what my taxes were paying for.

I have a cousin who once flew a kite off the back end of a train going across the Great Salt Lake. How's that for your sense of wonder? He was an officer in the Marine Corps at the time.

from Juanita Coulson

Jean's comments on the trials of single femmefandom even rang bells in this never-beautiful breast. I think the ratio was even more unbalanced when I first entered fandom back in '52. At that time I was several stone lighter, but this was canceled out by the hairstyle I wore, very similar to what Kaye Ballard wears now and so avant at that time that people stared at me and asked

impertinent questions. (Very easy to care for, tho, that hairstyle.) And I spent a surprising amount of time at conventions surrounded by and occasionally even beating off eager male fans. This was very much a shock to me, because until I entered fandom I had had very little to do with male contemporaries, with the possible exception of the boys and young men in the honor societies we both belonged to. Being "popular" was a new phenomenon, and I found it a mingling of egoboosting and disconcerting, partially because some of the admirers were males whose personalities and egos repelled me. It was pleasant to be the center of attention, and became even more pleasart when my entourage narrowed down to a couple of guys who plainly admired my personality and brains and had attractive combinations of those factors themselves (I eventually married one of them).

And, as you point out, they had the edge because a) they thought of me as a person as well as just a "girrrl" and b) the geography was in their favor—We all lived in Indiana.

I also found Ruth's problem painfully familiar. In my case the relatives are even more pointed because I actually did teach a year and haven't taught since, though I worked in a factory for some time. Fortunately my personality is considered so far out even by my relatives and family-friends that most of them hesitated to ask me why I wasn't teaching and what was I going to do? I gather from several passing comments that my mother has been hard put for explanations over the years, though. My mother doesn't quite understand me either, but, inversely of Mr. Spock, she approves.

The G&S parody was very enjoyable, and this is strange because I don't like G&S.

Atkins' misadventures are familiar to anyone who has ever worked not only for the government but for a large, badly managed factory. Nevertheless, he makes a familiar debacle very entertaining. I like his writing. And Ken Fletcher's cartoons were quite good.

I meant to comment on the Tarot article in the previous article, but I'll do so a bit late. Mystic sources and whatever for the Tarot cards don't interest me much, but I have more than a passing interest in running the cards, and that can be done with an ordinary deck of 52 playing cards. Marion Bradley taught me how to run the cards some years ago, and in that method (with an ordinary deck) it is interpretation which counts. Both reader and cutter know the values assigned to the suits and numbers, and one still gets some rather eerie feelings at the sequence of turn-ups. Marion and I used the cards mostly to crystallize plot

ideas in writings-in-progress. At that time we were both intrigued by a rough draft of mine which Marion hoped to rewrite into commercial form (for various reasons it's still not written), a novel concerning homosexual males in outer space (one of the runs, for the bad gay boy, contained all four queens and no male court cards at all). We ran the cards back and forth, discussing the layout in terms of the story and the characters. It is an excellent device for drawing collaboration into fine tuning. The chance element and the physical actions of of shuffling, cutting and running the cards sharpen the wits, or seem to (physical action is very useful because neither Marion nor I smoke). And the alternating interpretations enable each participant to gently grasp the perhaps slightly differing approach to plot and characters of his potential collaborator.

from Harry Warner
423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740
December 17, 1967

Jean's dissertation on pursuit at conventions is a demonstration of how fandom has changed. For many years, such essays had a different starting point: what to do about the attention that the fellows gave the boys. If it's not longer a case of trying to separate the men from the boys, we're making progress. Laney did not live in vain.

I feel sympathy for the torture you've endured from those polite questions. But I can't promise that this particular form of inquisition will ever come to an end, even after you've found some sort of niche in adult life and have settled in come vocation or other. It seems to derive from some sort of subconscious fear of the rebel dimly manifesting itself in the collective mind of the great general public. The person who doesn't behave in the accepted manner is endlessly queried about the details of this behavior, even after he becomes asold as I am, and he can either think up lies to use as answers, or he can alienate people by telling the truth: that those are questions too personal to be answered when asked by anyone except close friends. I live a reasonably non-eccentric life here in Hagerstown, except for the fact that I occupy alone a rather large house, but I still qualify as a rebel on other grounds: my regular job, which is somewhat exotic because of its nearness to real creativity; the fact that I wear a hat; my preference for walking to and from the downtown section instead of using the car; the large amount of mail that the postman brings, for instance. I'm sure that the unwarranted questions that such things cause are really inspired by a half-conscious fear that I'm preparing to throw poison in the

reservoir or broadcasting military secrets to the Viet Cong, a fear that could be relieved if I somehow answered with some kind of reassuring explanations for this unHagerstonian behavior.

The Gondoliers parody is amusing and even more ingenious than most scripts of its type. I heard the music most of the time I was reading through it, and this should be some kind of evidence that there is the genuine Gilbertian spirit in these verses, in addition to the actual reminders of the original words. It is a pity that there is still no reliable way of obtaining copies of tapes when such things are performed. I have such rarities as the legendary March of Slime on tape, through the courtesy of British friends, but none of its equivalents from American Worldcons.

Lon Atkins also provided me with amusement. Even if there should be a soupcon of exaggeration in his essay, I think it contains a great deal of fundamental truth. There are too many people working too many hours to accomplish most things nowadays, and the superior workers are those who discover w ys to keep busy and sane in this situation.

It isn't just Santa Claus who goes ho ho ho at this time of year. I made identical noises when I read Gordon Eklund's letter about his game to pass away bus-waiting time.

from Fred Hollander
January, 1968

About Gordon Eklund's comments on the LA writing style, because no one could really call out "What do you want to do with this carton full of the over-runs you made of Quip 1 that we found in the back of the closet?" It could, and it was. The real change that comes with emigration to Los Angeles is not that one starts writing those strange, improbable conversations, but that one begins speaking them.