

APA-
JEFF 1





1980 is a new year and the beginning of a new decade, so why can't we start fresh with a new Jeff Smith fanzine? I don't know how surprised you are, but I'm extremely surprised myself. I really thought I had kicked the habit when KHATRU finally wore me down. I had a lot of other external pressures in 1979, and the decision to drop KHATRU was a relief.

It wasn't the best kind of relief, though, because I was cutting myself off from one of the best parts of my life. I have a lot of friends in fandom, and the demise of KHATRU put me out of touch. It wasn't supposed to be that way. I had every intention of remaining as active as before, writing locs and articles and reviews for other people to publish, and just not doing the stenciling myself. But that didn't work out, somehow. I couldn't re-discipline myself, though I still intended to try.

Before that happened, however, this happened: APA-JEFF.

APA-JEFF is admittedly a stupid name for a fanzine, but it is appropriate and I've become quite fond of it. There apparently is an APA-DAVE, a real apa for people named Dave, and there was some non-productive talk once or twice about getting all the Jeffs in fandom to produce a glorious one-shot, but this particular APA-JEFF is just me. (What more do you need?)

Let me explain.

Of late most of what fanzine energies I had left were devoted to DAPA-EM, the mystery fiction apa of which I was a founding member in 1973. Therefore I have a bi-monthly apazine called RED HERRING which I've been sending to a few people.

Late last year I spent a

APA-JEFF ONE 4/30

Jeff Smith
1339 Weldon Avenue
Baltimore MD 21211



Artwork
cover/Alcoholic Anonymous
page 1/Bill Rotsler
pages 4 and 5/Grant Canfield
page 8/Jay Kinney & Grant Canfield

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lot of time reading heroic fantasy, and decided to take a fling at the heroic fantasy apa, REHUPA. (Soon after joining, I stopped reading heroic fantasy, but the urge may return at any moment.) So I have another bi-monthly apazine, THE NEO-PRERAPHEALITE REVUE.

When I finished the first TNPR I thought, why waste postage by sending this out to my friends now? Why don't I wait a couple weeks until I do a RED HERRING and send them out together?

That's when inspiration struck. If after each RED HERRING I did a few more pages of a general nature, I would have a new fanzine--and a fairly painless one at that.

I missed the next deadline for REHUPA, and did only a few unsatisfactory pages of APA-JEFF #1 for the proposed February mailing, so I'm starting over with an April mailing. The basic scheme is this: The next deadline for REHUPA is May 1 (or thereabouts--the OE forgot to say, tsk tsk). The next deadline for DAPA-EM is May 17. And therefore the next APA-JEFF should come out around the first of June.

A few words about the two apas:

DAPA-EM ("Elementary, My Dear Apa") is run by Art Scott/10365 Wunderlich Drive/Cupertino CA 95014. We have a full contingent of 35 members, a waitlist of 1, and the last mailing (#33) was 362 pages. Sample mailings are \$1.50.

REHUPA ("The Robert E. Howard United Press Association") is OE'd by Brian Earl Brown/16711 Burt Road #207/Detroit MI 48219. There are 29 members, and the last mailing (#44) was 135 pages. REHUPA consists mostly of young fantasy fans and there's a lot of amateur artwork and fiction, some of which is not bad at all. I've only been in REHUPA a few months and can't say too much about it. My first TNPR (the one at the back of this) did receive one long fuggheaded response (ending with: "Shit, you've failed to impress me with any of your commentary about anything concerning fantasy literature. Maybe you do (or did) know something about SF, as per your former zine. But you don't no jack shit about REH and Fantasy. If you stick around here you might pick up something, though, so there is some hope for you yet"), but for the most part the people seem nice. I think you can get one sample free if you're interested in joining.

The people in DAPA-EM, though, I can speak about safely from long experience--and they're great. A (very) few minor feuds in over six years, exceptional camaraderie--and ghod!, some of them are so witty! I chuckle my way through each mammoth mailing. Our interests are extremely diverse--many members discuss almost exclusively writers I've never read, and some almost exclusively writers I've never even heard of. This never seems to bother anyone, and the fans of little-old-ladies-with-cats mysteries keep their eyes open for books needed by hardboiled-detective fans, and vice versa. We're all having a wonderful time.

Hopefully this pleasure comes through in the attached apazines themselves. Incidentally, since much of the apazines will consist of mailing comments, I am trying very hard when I write them to make them comprehensible, to mention the original remark I'm responding to.

Back in 1976, Guy Townsend ran the following through DAPA-EM, and I've tried to make it a Rule to Live By:

A PLEA FOR SOME CONTINUITY IN MAILING COMMENTS

OOPS #13 Yes, you are right. I had not thought of it that way before, but now that you mention it I can see the logic of it. Re your other point, I'm not sure that I agree; you appear to be letting your personal prejudices cloud your judgment. McGee is not, after all, Mike Hammer!

OOPS #13 I am inclined to agree with you that the absence of a hereditary aristocracy in America was probably one reason why the classical school of detective novels soon gave way to the hard-boiled. I had not thought of it that way before, but now that you mention it I can see the logic of it. I'm not sure that I agree with your contention that women are treated solely as sex objects in the John D. MacDonald series; you appear to be letting your personal prejudices cloud your judgment. McGee is not, after all, Mike Hammer!

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I haven't made up the mailing list for this yet, but it should be fairly small--under 100, surely. I don't want a big circulation this time. Most of the copies of this will be going to people who had more than just a subscriber's interest in KHATRU. Many of you have been on my various mailing lists for many years and can expect to continue to receive my stuff in perpetuity. Some of you may be a little surprised to be getting this, and may wonder why. If you're among these, just drop me a line and let me know if you want to continue receiving it or not. If you're looking for a good sercon fanzine, this ain't it. If you like it for what it is, that's fine.

I don't want a big subscription list. (I'm not even offering subscriptions.) So I'm really not even interested in having APA-JEFF reviewed. But, at least once, I wouldn't mind having reviewers mention it, in case I've lost track of some people (like by using their address cards as bookmarks) who might want to reestablish contact.

I suspect APA-JEFF will be almost exclusively editor-written. A lettercolumn would be nice, and I suppose if anyone would like to write for this limited audience I would run articles, but we aren't going to reach many people. I was thinking that I might have run the Ursula Le Guin article I had for KHATRU 8, but I threw the typed stencils for that issue out to prove to myself that I was not going to continue with it. When I stop to think about it, though, starting a personalzine of hopefully limited circulation with articles by Le Guin and Tiptree might not have the desired effect.

At any rate, you're finally hearing from me, and I'd like to hear from you, too. The real purpose of APA-JEFF is to keep in touch, something I've been very lax about. But this is 1980, and we are starting fresh. (That's my opinion about 1980. All that's past is past. I basically figure that everything I didn't get done last year just didn't get done, and I'm not going to let it hang over my head. All is new. I'm not going to apologize for old lapses, and hopefully will avoid new lapses.)

My original plan called for a cover this issue that would accurately describe its contents. (You'll know what I mean by that when I do run the cover, in the near future.) But this time I'm using a drawing by an ex-friend, as a sort of memorial. I've used lots of drawings by him before, and have a few more unused still in the files.

I used to work with him--in fact, he got me the job I have now (science technician at Catonsville Community College outside Baltimore). But times have changed, as times are wont to do. I haven't seen him for months now, and with any luck this situation will continue.

We were friends once, obviously; I was even best man at his wedding. But things deteriorated pretty badly. Now I'm glad to be free of him, and he has a very low opinion of me.

His problems go way back, but they intensified with his marriage. He did not want to be married, I'm sure (in retrospect). I think that on Christmas Eve he sat in his room feeling lonely and sorry for himself, and so proposed to his old high school sweetheart. (They had been engaged once years before.) The marriage was a disaster from the beginning, as he did everything in his power to keep her from intruding into the parts of his life he was already happy with. She was supposed to fill in the gaps.

Doomed to failure, as they say.

His drinking got worse.

Things started going bad at work. I could only cover for him for so long before people realized that he was doing no work himself. Because the teachers were also his friends, he kept his job for years longer than he would have anywhere else. When one morning he could not come in because he was on the verge of a breakdown, the department head cancelled his own classes to go out to the house and try to help. None of this made any difference.



His paranoia got the better of him, and he started telling people elsewhere on campus how bad things were in our department and how I was out for his job. He soon had us convinced we despised him, and there was no return to normalcy from there.

After several incidents of poor performance, the decision was made to fire him--then we found out how hard it is to get rid of somebody. We knew that

three warnings had to be given, and they had been. Then we learned that personnel had to give the warnings, so he was started over with a first warning.

His drinking got worse.

By this time, of course, he was no longer socializing with anyone in the rest of the department. So no-one ever saw him drink. He denied

drinking at all. Claimed all he ever drank was ginger ale and coffee. One teacher confronted him once, asking him about the liquor on his breath, and he claimed it wasn't liquor, heaven forbid, but a bad chemical reaction from his new mouthwash. He's have to go back to his old brand.

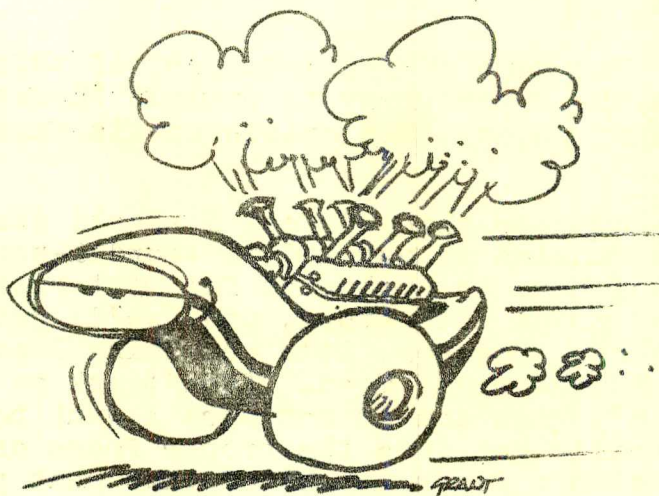
Now the department was at war, both with him and among itself. The tension brought on by the attempts to destroyed friendships and caused considerable interpersonal damage (in some cases apparently irreparable).

Finally, after a summer session in which he spent at most an hour actually working (I'm not exaggerating: a couple times during the summer someone would come in and ask him to do something he couldn't refuse to do; the rest of the time he wasn't there, or he sat at his desk and a) talked with friends who came by, b) read, or c) wrote--either a pornographic novel about a madman who killed prostitutes or detailed daydreams of the forthcoming triumphs in his life), he received a copy of the letter being sent to personnel requesting his dismissal. A couple hours later he resigned. (Much to our surprise and relief. We had expected a long and bitter appeal.)

And so it ended. I could beef this account up with tons of funny/sad anecdotes, but there'd be little point to it. I got promoted and everything is fine at work (though as I said, there has been severe damage and not all the pieces have been picked up). He still sits in his favorite bar badmouthing the college and all of us who contributed to his downfall. (I apparently have "a heart of ice.")

This situation has been difficult--and enervating--for years, and has probably contributed to the demise of KHATRU, as well. (Which is not to say that I could start it up again, by any means.)

Sometimes I wonder if I might have stuck by him longer, if maybe I gave up too soon. But what's a long time, or a short one? I gave up real fast when he turned on me, but on the other hand the last time I saw him he still refused to admit that even part of his problem might lie within himself, so I couldn't have made any difference anyway. And I can't say I really feel guilty.



HOTROD

But some of you knew part of this, and I thought I should take the opportunity to explain (however inadequately) what has been going on. The crisis now is passed.

Another thing I feel I should discuss is why a third of this fanzine is devoted to sword-&-sorcery stuff. (I don't feel like I have to apologize for mysteries.) S&S is not the material of great literature, and (we'll get to this) probably never will be. However, it's something I can get pleasure out of when I'm in the right mood. (Don't ask me what the right mood is; I don't know and am not sure I want to. I do know that I can generally get into the proper frame of mind when I'm laid up in bed with a fever. Make of that what you will.)

The s&s material will be relegated to its grey ghetto at the back of the book. You can walk in or skirt the border as you choose.

In her s&s anthology **AMAZONS!** (which I'll review next time), Jessica Salmonson makes some interesting predictions about this very limited field. Here are some quotes from the Introduction:

...heroic fantasy...has been escape fantasy for the least mature aspects of the male ego: escape into worlds where simpletons are rewarded for unprovoked violence and undisguised misogyny. Even die-hard aficionados of the genre are wont to say, "It's bloody awful, but it's fun." But for readers (men or women) who cannot revel in warped attitudes toward women, it isn't even fun....

No literary arena is of necessity so steeped in prejudice or so rooted in its own repetition and inexperience, and fortunately the exceptions are becoming more common. Many of us are fond of heroic fantasy not "in spite" of its lacking merit, but because the unrestrained magic and adventure provide a limitless potential that has yet to be sufficiently plumbed.

Now, my thinking may be too narrow, but I feel about sword-&-sorcery the same way that outsiders irritate us with their opinions about sf: If it's sword-&-sorcery, it's no good; if it's good, it's not sword-&-sorcery. Despite the fact that they use much of the same material, I don't think there's any way to equate Tolkien and Howard. **THE LORD OF THE RINGS** is not sword-&-sorcery. (The movie version might be.)

S&S is, to me, very well described by its name. One character has a sword, another is a sorcerer, and they have at each other. Taking minor variations into account, this really does describe what Robert E. Howard did, and most s&s doesn't do too much more.

Stories that do much more than this move out of the realm of s&s. I don't expect anyone to do more in s&s than Leiber and Moorcock have done (and I don't know why anyone would want to). Why limit yourself to the conventions of s&s when fantasy can handle just about anything in its broader definition?

A number of stories in AMAZONS! (such as Josephine Saxton's typically excellent "Jane Saint's Travails") do not seem to me to be sword-&-sorcery at all. Jessica says in her introduction to the Saxton piece: "There will be zealot loyalists who'll condemn the piece as polluting heroic fantasy with higher ideals of breadth and experimentation...but the wise will realize that heroic fantasy, no less than the best of science fiction, is an area of limitless scope and potentiality."

Maybe so, but I would tend to think it's more trouble than it's worth. I like fantasy, and I like good fantasy (though I must admit I don't read too much of it). But s-&-s is not good fantasy--and even in cases like Leiber and Moorcock, who write very good s&s, their work in this area is not up to their best work elsewhere.

When I read something by Howard or his imitators, I expect nothing but a quick read, and that's what I get. I don't care too much that the stories are sexist and racist, that the characters are cardboard and the plots repetitious. There just isn't too much you can do with the raw materials at hand. To achieve anything, you have to keep adding raw materials.

It seems to me that if you want to write good fantasy, you should start somewhere else.

(But I never said why I read the stuff at all, did I? Why can I read this trash? I can only think that it comes from reading all that Edgar Rice Burroughs as a kid. I learned back then which receptors to open to be able to enjoy this type of material, and I can still get pleasure from it. Not as much as I can get from THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARP or THE DISPOSSESSED or "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side," but enough to make it worthwhile occasionally.)

There's another place in AMAZONS where Jessica really irritated me, in her introduction to Margaret St. Clair:

Two men are generally and erroneously credited with bringing the genre out of its prepubescence: Michael Moorcock with the early NEW WORLDS series, and Harlan Ellison with the DANGEROUS VISIONS collections. However, if we look at what was written before these landmark anthologies, we discover two women first breached the barriers: the late Miriam Allen deFord, and the author at hand, Margaret St. Clair. Each investigated human and alien sexuality before it was the mode, though neither received the fanfare allocated male mimics.

This is pure and total bullshit. I have nothing against deFord and St. Clair, and don't want my total disrespect for the rest of the paragraph to imply disrespect to these two writers. That clear, let's move on:

The "prepubescence" that Moorcock and Ellison are "generally" credited with removing is not the "prepubescence" that Jessica has in mind. Moorcock and Ellison were responsible for an attitudinal change in sf, without which there would probably be no AMAZONS! anthology today. They broke the field open to more and different kinds of fiction, and the writers responded with

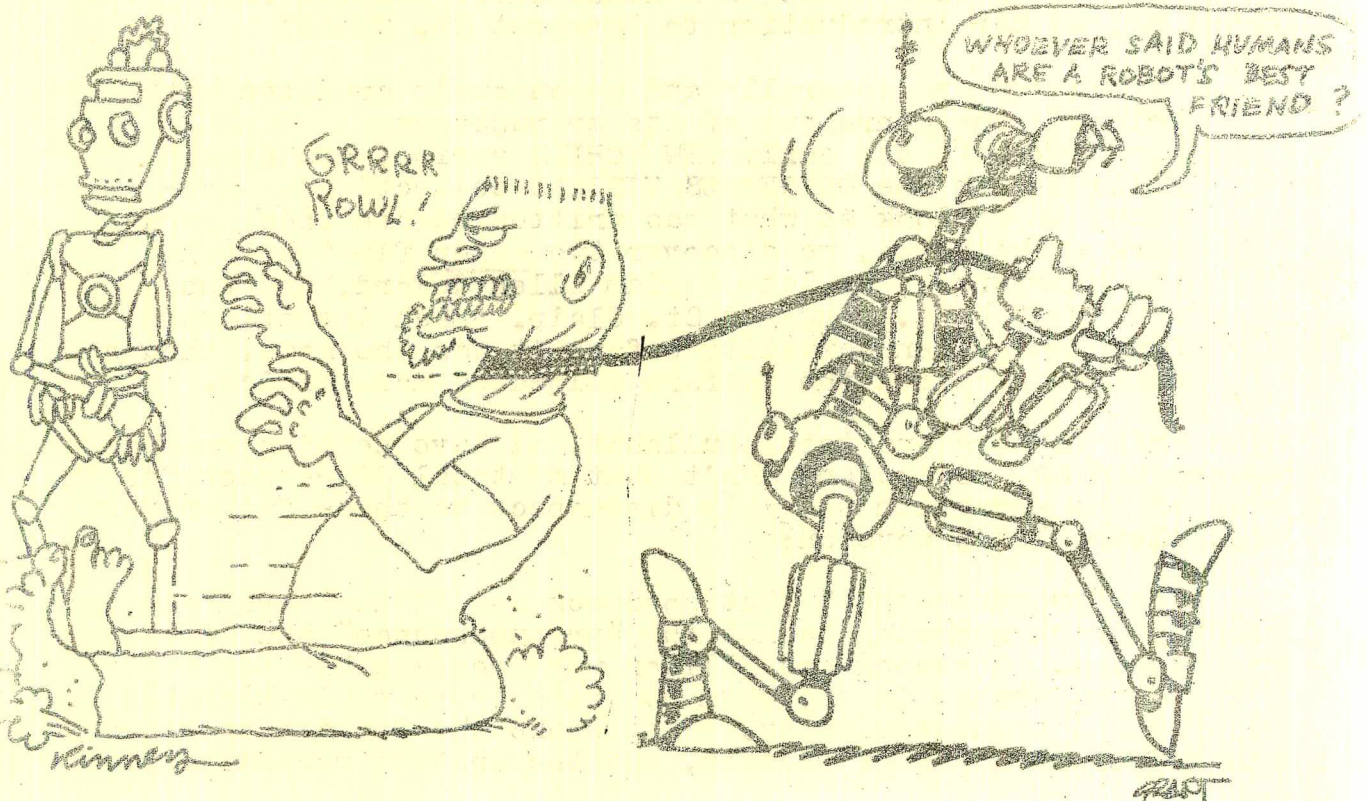
enthusiasm. (Judith Merrill was another important factor here, but she didn't fit in Jessica's theory.)

Sexuality in sf was of course not introduced by Moorcock and Ellison (though it was of course during the New Wave that sexual content became practically de rigueur). But I don't see how deFord and St. Clair can take the credit, either. They may have been among the early writers to deal with the subject, but Philip Jose Farmer and Theodore Sturgeon can hardly be classified among their "male mimics."

Jessica, I think you're overcompensating.

We saw THE BLACK STALLION last week, a very nicely-made film. Fantasy fans should like this, even though it is not really a fantasy story. The first part of the movie takes place on a desert island, inhabited by a young American boy and a wild black horse. (Many of you have probably read the book. I have never been interested in horses, so I missed this series as a kid. Lack of interest in horses kept me from trying Dick Francis for far too long, as well.) Filmed without dialogue, the slow bonding of horse and boy is superbly presented. The latter portion of the film, back home in America (actually filmed in Canada, but I think it was supposed to be America--my apologies to Canada if it was supposed to be set there) is not as good, though good enough to hold interest. The island sequence is so good, though, that it alone would be worth paying for even if the remainder were atrocious (which of course it isn't).

I'm very surprised that THE BLACK STALLION was not nominated for the Academy Award for cinematography. (I haven't seen a lot of the films like DAYS OF HEAVEN that have been highly praised for their cinematography, but the only film I've ever seen that



was more beautifully photographed than this was BARRY LYNDON.)

The other movies we've seen so far this year are:

STAR TREK--THE MOTION PICTURE. If I'd seen this when it first came out I'd have been very disappointed. By the time I got around to it, though, it wasn't near as bad as I expected. Except that the long special effects sequences bored me to tears, I had a pretty good time. There must have been just enough trekkie left in me to appreciate the "class reunion" at the beginning. (I only watched STAR TREK when it was on NBC, never in syndication.) The plot itself was negligible, but the film did not live down to its bad press.

GOING IN STYLE. An odd little film. George Burns, Art Carney and Lee Strasburg play three old men who are getting by okay but would like to have a little more money than their social security checks can provide. So they rob a bank. The film covers their decision, their planning, the execution, and its aftermath. It's not a Charming Little Caper, though, but a serious film about old age. Certainly not an exciting film, but a well-done and curiously satisfying one.

KRAMER VS. KRAMER. I felt the same way about this as I did about the previous film, which I saw at about the same time. Both are quiet films that rely upon the strength of their actors to get by. I liked KRAMER VS. KRAMER a lot, but have found my good feelings for it eroding under the overpraising it has been receiving (including the Oscar blitz: best picture? best screenplay? best director? no way). Like BREAKING AWAY, which was at least as good, KRAMER VS. KRAMER is an excellent little film with a fine blend of comedy and drama, a warm movie that leaves you with a pleasant feeling. That's certainly a fine accomplishment in itself, and all this business about it being a Great Film is embarrassingly overstated.

ALL THAT JAZZ. This is my favorite of recent films, full of energy and dancing and music and good acting and...just about everything I need to thoroughly enjoy myself at the movies. I think Roy Scheider was given the role of his life as Joe Gideon, and he delivered. I think Bob Fosse set a very high standard for himself, and he delivered. I think just about everybody delivered, and I loved it. I do realize that a lot of people won't like the film, but ALL THAT JAZZ does not attempt to be all things to all people by any means. (We usually go to the dollar-fifty matinees, and after ALL THAT JAZZ was over we heard someone behind us say, "That was a waste of money." It seemed to me that people who paid full price might have complained, but there was easily a dollar and a half's worth of outstanding choreography, so I felt no sympathy.)

COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER. I'm not fond of country music, and the occasional times when I do feel like listening to it I put on Waylon and Willie, not Loretta Lynn. But thanks to sheer integrity of effort, COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER is an excellent film. Like THE BLACK STALLION, it separates neatly in half, and the first half is the superior--in this case, Lynn's adolescence in Appalachia. Sissy Spacek is excellent as Loretta, and Levon Helm is also impressive as her father. The second half of the film, what it's like to be a Grand Ole Opry star, is also good but suffers in comparison to the first half and to Robert Altman's

NASHVILLE (one of my favorite films). On balance, a very good movie--and I like Spacek's singing better than Lynn's. (The lyrics for the title song--written by Lynn--are execrable. No wonder I never listen to country music.)

Well, this will be the last page of a rather undistinguished fanzine/letter-substitute. I hope it reads easier than it wrote, because my writing skills are extremely rusty and this was a real chore. It probably shows. I used to be able to write this kind of stuff effortlessly, and I'm hoping to be able to reach that stage again. All I need is some practice.

I've got a couple things to close with. One is a message from Alli Sheldon in New Zealand, written on a piece of glossy paper containing five tacky touristy photographs. Alli plastered a headline right across the middle of the first picture: "The Land of Abysmally Inadequate Postcards." She'd been wanting to go out there for as long as I've known her, and the trip seems to have been worth it: "To make it short, we stumbled into the closest approximation of Eden I expect to find. Not perfect, you understand; not Joy Unalloyed--no choir of seraphs, no thornless rose--but, well, just about perfect, that's all."

I have some book reviews and commentary, but this is going to be the last page so it seems silly to start them. Well, maybe one short one.

LIFE AND TIME

Isaac Asimov

Avon 1979/c 1978 273 pp

Avon is one of the publishers who still send me review copies (and you know how often Avon publishes something worthwhile), and every once in a while I get one of these collections of Asimov essays. Usually they're reprints of F&SF, which I already have, and so I ignore them. This one, though, comes from other sources, and I decided to read it.

There's some good stuff in here, too. My favorite is an essay on evolution (originally published in ASTOUNDING in 1960) that is the best survey of the material I've ever seen, tracing the path from the first single-celled organism to man and describing the circumstances that made each move attractive.

My next favorite is "A Choice of Catastrophes," which Asimov later expanded into a book. He covers twenty ways the world might end, from Ragnarok through black holes and supernovas to overpopulation, and discusses how likely or unlikely they are. Very entertaining.

The most disappointing was "Space and the Law," which was mostly about how ruling countries have handled their empires. The point was we should plan now for space colonies, and was interesting in its own way, but sure wasn't what I had expected.

All in all, the good essays far outweighed the mediocre ones, and this turned out to be a pretty good book.

RED HERRING 22

Published for DAPA-EM 32 by Jeff Smith/1339 Weldon Avenue/Baltimore MD 21211/(301) 889-1440.

Well. From all the questions in the last mailing, it appears it's time for another in-depth examination of the way the stats are kept. So, here's the latest batch, and then we'll discuss them in stultifying detail.

MAILING 31

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n
1	Walter Albert	12	143	8.94	16/16	1.000	16	9	3	3	15	1	--
2	Ellen Nehr	37	125	15.63	8/8	1.000	8	1	6	9	16	4	-3
3	Jeff Meyerson	4	112	6.59	17/17	1.000	17	16	1t	1t	18	2	--
4	Bill Crider	11	124	8.86	14/14	1.000	14	10	4	4	18	3	--
5	Dorothy Nathan	9	87	6.69	13/13	1.000	13	15	5	5	25	7	-2
6	Jim McCahery	12	80	11.43	7/7	1.000	7	8	7	10	25	6	+1
7	George Kelley	15	191	13.64	13/14	.929	12	4	16	6	26	5	+2
8	Bob Napier	13	43	14.33	3/3	1.000	3	3	10	16	29	10	-3
9	John Nieminski	18	30	15.00	2/2	1.000	2	2	11t	19t	32	13	-11
10	Stan Burns	5	46	2.71	17/17	1.000	17	31	1t	1t	33	9	+1
11	Terri Krause	6	38	6.33	6/6	1.000	6	19	8	11	38	11	--
12	Donna Balopole	8	179	5.77	28/31	.903	10	22	18	7	47	14	+1
13	Guy Townsend	6	274	12.45	19/22	.864	1	5	19	23	47	17	-4
14	Kathi Maio	6	13	6.50	2/2	1.000	2	17	11t	19t	47	18	-4
15	Frank Denton	16	141	5.64	23/25	.920	9	23	17	8	48	15	+1
16	Don Cole	6	26	5.20	5/5	1.000	5	25	9	14	48	16	--
17	David Rose	14	48	8.00	5/6	.833	2	11	21t	18	50	22	-11
18	David Doerrler	40	83	11.86	6/7	.857	1	6	20	25	51	26	-13
19	Leslie Schaecter	6	11	5.50	2/2	1.000	2	24	11t	19t	54	23	-7
20	MARY ANN GROWCHOWSKI	7	7	7.00	1/1	1.000	1	14	14t	26t	54	--	--
21	Art Scott	7	320	11.85	18/27	.667	1	7	28	22	57	20	-1
22	Jeff Smith	2	185	6.17	22/30	.733	5	21	26	12	59	19	+2
23	Ron Harris	1	85	7.08	8/12	.667	2	13	29	17	59	21	-2
24	Dick Moskowitz	--	44	7.33	5/6	.833	0	12	21t	31	64	8	+37
25	Dave Gorman	2	30	2.73	9/11	.818	5	30	23	13	66	25	+2
26	BRIAN KENKNIGHT	4	4	4.00	1/1	1.000	1	27	14t	26t	67	--	--
27	Steve Lewis	6	122	6.42	13/19	.684	1	18	27	24	69	28	-3
28	Hank Davis	10	125	4.31	16/29	.552	3	26	30	15	71	27	-1
29	Steve Stilwell	--	25	6.25	3/4	.750	0	20	25	32	77	12	+39
30	Andy Jaysnovitch	--	33	3.67	7/9	.778	0	28	24	30	82	24	+20
31	Martin Wooster	--	51	3.00	9/17	.529	0	29	31	28	88	29	+13
32	Liam O'Connor	--	37	2.47	7/15	.467	0	32	32	29	93	30	+13
	ELEMENTARY	12	154										
	ex-members (25)		673										
		295	3689										(119 average pages per mailing)

This really was a lot easier when we had around twenty members. Nowadays, about two-thirds of the way through the computations, I think about giving this nonsense up. But, as soon as a new mailing comes, one of the first things I do is drag out the calculator. I'm hooked.

Now let's see if I can explain the whole system here in a way that makes sense. Basically, we're making three quantitative measurements: the average

number of pages each person contributes to each mailing (and if every member contributed his or her average number of pages to the next mailing, it would run around 248.32 pages), the percentage of mailings appeared-in/not-appeared-in, and the number of consecutive mailings appeared in.

So, let's examine the stats for a particular member. Let's use Bob Napier, since he expressed confusion/interest.

Column b is a good place to start: that's the code I use to refer to each of you by. For Bob, I use the code-name "Bob Napier." Column c tells us that he contributed 13 pages to mailing 31. Column d is the cumulative total of all the pages he has contributed so far: 43. He has been a member for 3 mailings (a fact gleaned from column f), so we divide 43 by 3 and get 14.33 (column e). This is the average number of pages per mailing.

The second number in column f tells us, again, that Bob has been a member for three issues; the first number tells us that he has contributed to all three of them. This gives him a column g percentage of 1.000.

Column h gives us the (in this case superfluous) information that Bob has appeared in three consecutive mailings.

Columns i, j, k and l comprise the hairy section. I, j and k are numerical rankings of the three determined statistics. In i, Bob's number is three. This means that he has the third highest page average. Ellen has the highest (1), and Liam has the lowest (32). Column j says that Bob has the tenth highest "batting percentage." Okay, how does batting 1.000 get you in tenth place? Shouldn't everyone with 1.000 be tied for first? Whenever possible, I resolve ties in favor of the member with the most longevity (obviously a ploy for my own personal gain, as ghod knows how low I'd be without it). Thus Jeff M. and Stan have tied for first with 17 for 17 1.000s (marked as "1t"), Walter is third with a 16 for 16 1.000, and down to ~~eight~~^{tenth} place with Bob's 3 for 3 1.000.

Column j does the same thing with the consecutive mailing stat. This is the stat each individual has the most control over. For instance, Donna had a 5.70 page average after mailing 30, and a .900 percentage. She contributed 8 pages to mailing 31, bringing her figures up a little to 5.77 and .903. But Mary Ann comes in with a 7-page first issue, and is ahead of Donna in both of those two stats. Donna gets her edge in the third stat--she has 10 consecutive mailings, and she'll remain in seventh or better place (column k) until she misses a mailing. She can't be caught from behind in this one.

Getting back to Bob: his i, j and k are, respectively, 3, 10 and 16. Add those together and you get 29--the total in column l. The l totals are arranged in ascending order, and that's where column a comes from. Column m is a repeat of what column a was for each person last time, and column n demonstrates the upward (bad) or downward (good) movement of the total in column l since last mailing. Back to our example: Bob (b) is ranked number 8 (a). Last mailing he was number 10 (m). This time his score is 29 (l), which is 3 better than last time (n), so last time his score must have been 32 (it was).

Now, what's so difficult about that?

What I find really fascinating about the whole business is the fluidity of movement upward and downward. You can get caught in undertows that drag you down temporarily even while you're swimming strongly. A minor example occurred

this time to me. Last time I was four points ahead of Ron. I contributed two pages, he contributed one, and he caught up to me. Even stranger is what happened to George. He was in fifth, with Jim in sixth and Dorothy in seventh. George contributed fifteen pages, Jim twelve and Dorothy nine. Now Dorothy is in fifth, Jim still in sixth, and George has fallen to seventh.

How could that happen? Like this: George had been second in page count, but Ellen and John jumped over him, costing him two points. This didn't affect Dorothy, because she is so far behind them it doesn't matter to her what order they sort themselves out into. Dorothy, meanwhile, slipped ahead of a couple other people (like Jeff M.). So, even though George contributed more pages than Dorothy did, their places flip-flopped in her favor. Fascinating stuff.

Let me answer some people's questions about the stats here rather than in the mailing comments. George wanted to know why he went down "three places" between mailings 29 and 30. Similar to above. But you didn't go down three places--you were in fifth place in both 29 and 30. Your score went down three; one because Bob's page average went above yours, two because two new members came in with their automatic 1.000s, pushing those of us who have missed a mailing or eight down the comparable number of slots, while we wait for these smug perfect-scorers to drop their contributions into the trash can rather than the mailbox by mistake.

David D. asks "How do the point totals relate to one's position in the standings, or do they?" He wasn't listening.

Ellen says, "I love being in 4th place and still don't know how it happened but, there is no way short of outright cheating unless you are susceptible to bribery that I'll ever nudge Jeff, Walter or Bill from their elevated heights!!" Well, what do you consider the Bouchercon program, cheating or bribery? Reproducing that booklet (why did you collect your own autograph?) shot you into second. I must confess that I had to think twice about crediting it to you, but only because non-member material has never affected the upper echelon of the standings like that before. I'll be damned if I have to start looking at each contribution qualitatively to figure out its credit, and start cutting out xeroxes and setting up pica/elite and single-space/double-space ratios. I just hope we don't acquire some irrational people who get hung up on the stats somehow and pump the xerox machines dry building up their page copy. I don't anticipate this, but it's something I feel I have to watch for--anytime my publishing these stats becomes a hassle to somebody, for any reason, I'll drop them. They're for fun only, and the only way I want them to influence the actual workings of the apa is by maybe a little extra incentive to not miss a mailing. (Oh. Back to the program book. Art gave twenty pages credit for it, and I followed suit. He gave himself two pages credit for the Bouchercon photos, and Stan one. He gave Ron one page credit for the cover. I'm very unsure about the cover credits. Did Art write it and Ron design it? Did Ron write it? In any case, it was excellent, top to bottom. A sure high finisher in next year's Prestige Poll.)

David R comments: "I'm ashamed of my drop in the stats; from #10 to #22! Must get on the ball and start the climb back up." Definitely. When you miss an issue and tumble down the ladder ("the ladder" is what Joe Moudry, our original stats-keeper, called it), you (or at least I) don't want to repeat it. The first miss is the worst, because not only does your h column fall to zero, but you lose your 1.000. Later misses aren't as bad, but they do hurt. Look at me, mired around the two-thirds mark. It now takes me a lot of time to make up each miss.

David D., in his second zine in the mailing, says, "I must be reading something wrong. I count 15 columns in the stats, but explanations for only 13." I haven't gone back to look, but I think I know why. However, to try to explain it might only muddy this issue's waters. Ignore All Previous Explanations.

Also, "Donna's current issue--appearing in Mailing #30--is numbered 29 but the stats give her credit for only 26 out of 29. What gives?" Simple enough: she's twice had two issues in a single mailing, just as Dave has in 31. Also, of course, some of us have credit for appearing in more mailings than the issue number of our zine might indicate--that would be from contributing something other than a regular issue of our apazine. For instance, Hank and I have contributed fanzines usually sent elsewhere. Dave Gorman and Ron Harris have been represented in some mailings by just covers. Etc.

And that's all I can think of to talk about the stats this time, so let's get back to the good stuff.

BOOK REVIEWS

1980 has me trying to write real book reviews of the books I read. This is working fine so far--the one book I've read has an extensive review written and waiting to be stencilled. But first let's finish up 1979, for which the books are just sitting next to the typewriter, challenging me to remember something about them.

EVERY BET'S A SURE THING (Simon & Schuster, 1953) is the first book by Thomas B. Dewey that I've read, and I quite enjoyed it. Mac is a pretty appealing detective, and the story--in which Mac had to tail a woman and her son from Chicago to California--is more than serviceable. Ev'rything is handled very realistically.

I know I enjoyed the book, because as soon as I was done I dug around and found the only other Dewey book I have, HUNTER AT LARGE (Pocket Books, 1963-1961). I was disappointed when I picked it up and realized it wasn't a Mac story, but in the end I enjoyed it even more than the other. Mickey Phillips, a policeman, is at home when there's a knock at the door. Two men come in, dissect his wife into little pieces and leave Mickey for dead. For the rest of the book he tries to find out who and why. A good story, with an exciting conclusion.

Up to modern times with SMART MONEY DOESN'T SING OR DANCE by Joseph Mark Glazner (Warner 1979), the first in a new series about Billy Nevers, a financial expert. In this one he's hired to buy a Rembrandt at an auction. Of course, nothing goes right: he does get the painting, but he's almost killed trying to deliver it to a fake address, other people do get killed, etc. Nothing extraordinary, really, and not worth a buck ninety-five--not when so many similar books from years ago can be had used cheap. Warner seems pretty high on the series, and is packaging it accordingly. The SMART MONEY part of the title (#2 will be FAST MONEY..., #3 DIRTY MONEY...) is embossed in green, and each cover features a photograph of a woman's body. Warner is also putting some promotion into the series. Unfortunately, the product itself doesn't seem worth it. SMART MONEY... isn't a bad book, but I would have liked something a little more substantial myself.

Now, if you want me to really recommend something to you, let's move on to BURNING MOON by Aron Spilken and Ed O'Leary (Playboy

Press Paperbacks 1979-1978). This is a very nicely done adventure novel about three people who rob a bank in a mountain resort area, and then have to try and escape through the mountains. The book follows the standard plan--setup, execution, aftermath--but does it with a lot of style. The people are good and the plot is clever and exciting. The "surprise" ending is far from unpredictable--but is still very tense and well worked out.

One peculiarity is the way the authors try and keep the reader off balance by obvious and deliberate withholding of information. Many scenes start a bit askew, with the authors chattering merrily away about what's going on--but there's always something missing, a whole in the puzzle that leaves the reader wondering until all is revealed. This is disconcerting at first, but I soon learned to expect it and to wait patiently for any missing elements. It's a somewhat artificial method of maintaining suspense, but the technique is well integrated with the tone of the novel, and what could have been very irritating if handled poorly became an interesting change of pace.

I really did enjoy BURNING MOON. I'd have to classify it as a minor book rather than a major work, but as such it's highly recommended.

Okay now, 1980: Actually, I read two books early in the year before starting my New Year's Book Review Resolution. I woke up New Year's Day thinking about Donald Westlake's DANCING AZTECS, so I reread that. Amazingly, even on the third time through, when there were no surprises left, I laughed out loud. This really is one of my all-time favorite books.

Then I read THE LAUGH WAS ON LAZARUS, one of the Avengers TV tie-ins by John Garforth, from 1967. Hank Davis sent me this one, along with a letter in which he trashed the book completely. Not without just cause, its primary fault being that, as Hank indicated, in this story John Steed and Emma Peel don't seem to like each other at all. Which just isn't the case. Hank had some other complaints, too, which didn't bother me as much. In fact, if it weren't such a poor version of the series it was supposed to represent, I don't think it would have been a bad book at all. Several sections are extremely well done. But it isn't the Avengers.

ASSIGNMENT--AMAZON QUEEN

Edward S. Aarons

Fawcett 1974 191 pp

I was a bit worried when I went well past the one-thirds mark in this book--the first in this spy series that I've read--and Aarons was still flashing his narrative back and forth between the later stages of the mission and the earlier. Standard procedure when you have a lot of exposition in an adventure novel is to start with some action and then flash back to the explanation--in essence reversing the first two chapters.

That's what I assumed was happening when this one opened on a riverboat moving up the Amazon River, and secret agent Sam Durell trying to break into the ship's safe. Chapter One ends with the captain pointing a gun at Durell. The second chapter

goes back two weeks, and Durell is shown what he's up against: something (gas? disease? no-one knows) that has sterilized selected areas of the world. The owner of this new weapon has invited just about every rich country in the world to come to an auction and bid on the secret.

Chapter Three takes it back to the boat, so I assumed we were straight-ahead to the ending from there. But Chapter Four is another long flashback in which Durell's superiors explain the auction to him and he gets started on the paper chase that will eventually lead him to Brazil. I was concerned that because there were two flashbacks there was too much exposition for the story to comfortably handle--that Aarons was afraid if he hit the reader with it all at once the reader would get bored and give up. Actually, though, this chapter was the most interesting one so far, as Durell discusses options with his superiors and starts putting his team together.

Five is back to the boat, but Six is another flashback. At this point I really began to wonder if Aarons had any idea what he was doing. I held off on complaining, though, because Six is another excellent chapter, on the murder of one of Durell's men. And the last paragraph is a real stinger. I could see then why Aarons was moving the story in such a peculiar manner. I'm not convinced that he couldn't have achieved his effect in a more straight-forward fashion, but at least he did manage to achieve it. And then from page 90 to the end we follow a steady course.

I had mixed feelings about the book throughout. The dialogue is poor; I couldn't imagine anyone actually speaking it. Some of it is acutely embarrassing, like this bit from the first flashback. The first speaker is McFee, Durell's superior. The second is Durell, an experienced and hardened agent.

"...You're living in Deirdre Padgett's house for the time being, aren't you?"

"Yes. She's in Rome again."

"Miss her?"

"Yes, sir. Like my right arm."

"I'll have her back for you when this is finished."

"Is that a bribe, sir?"

"Of course," McFee admitted. His gray eyes permitted a little amusement to show.

We also have the hot-blooded Brazilian girl who spouts jealousy at the turn of an ankle, and an over-abundance of instantly-translated Portuguese phrases.

The descriptive writing, though, isn't bad at all; it maintains tension and holds interest. The story, also, is surprisingly well thought-out. (One character--Stepanic--seemed to disappear completely, but I don't know whether Aarons forgot about him or I had dozed off when he was disposed of.) There's a tiresome subplot about what happened between Durell's grandmother and the riverboat captain many years before that I could have easily done without, but everything fits into a nice, tight plot.

So I had initial misgivings that were mostly laid to rest, and ASSIGNMENT--AMAZON QUEEN turned out to be a better book than

I ever imagined it would be. For that matter, Sam Durell isn't the obnoxious James Bond clone I always figured he's be.

People familiar with the series are invited to recommend their favorites.

PUBLISHERS BI-MONTHLY

I missed doing this a couple times--even though once I had been through the two months of PUBLISHERS WEEKLY and made all my notes. I thought I'd give it another try, since many of you were quite receptive to it before. What I do is read through PW and make notes on the more interesting-sounding mystery books mentioned in the ads, columns and reviews. For the most part, any comments in quotes were pilfered from PW's review.

The best news from the recent issues concerns LOOKING FOR RACHEL WALLACE by Robert B. Parker (Delacorte \$8.95): Spenser is back! Rachel Wallace of the title is a kidnaped lesbian, and this case really takes Spenser out of his milieu.

Another of my favorites with a new one forthcoming is Donald E. Westlake. The publisher's ad for CASTLE IN THE AIR (Evans \$9.95) reads: "Westlake at his most inventive, with the story of a beautiful Latin revolutionary, a suave British master criminal, and their hand-picked team of Italians, Frenchmen and Germans who must steal an entire castle."

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's St. Germain is "the Robin Hood of vampires," according to PW. His third appearance is in BLOOD GAMES (St. Martin's \$11.95), set this time during the Roman Empire.

PW says KENNEDY FOR THE DEFENSE by George V. Higgins (Knopf \$10.95) is "his best novel since THE FRIENDS OF EDDIE COYLE.... Kennedy is tough. He makes a lot of money, he works hard, he talks dirty and gutsy and his clients are pretty scummy."

David Linzee has brought back Sarah Saber and Chris Rockwell of INqinc in BELGRAVIA (Seaview \$9.95). "Fast and witty, this is a smooth conspiracy caper and also biting satire on power-hungry businessmen." Linzee's first book, DISCRETION, was a little disappointing but showed promise.

William Kienzle's THE ROSARY MURDERS has apparently been rather successful, and his new one--DEATH WEARS A RED HAT--has been sold to Andrews and McMeel, the Literary Guild, the Mystery Guild and Bantam.

Susan Isaacs, whose COMPROMISING POSITIONS was so mixedly received here (I liked it), has written a second novel, CLOSE RELATIONS (Lippincott). This one is not a mystery, but is about a gubernatorial campaign and features a woman speech-writer.

William F. Buckley, Jr., has his third espionage novel in WHO'S ON FIRST (Doubleday \$9.95), about the race to launch the first satellite in 1957.

About THE MAN WHO LOST THE WAR by W.T. Tyler (Dial Press,

\$10.95), the publisher's ad reads: "The handful of great novels about espionage and the Cold War has now increased by one. It is the first by an American." It's been picked up by the Book-of-the-Month Club.

Frederick Forsyth has written another spy novel, THE DEVIL'S ALTERNATIVE (Viking \$12.95). I could barely follow PW's plot synopsis, much less try and boil it down further for here.

THE BREADFRUIT LOTTERIES by Richard Elman (Methuen \$9.95) is "an extremely cynical burlesque of espionage with someone to offend almost everyone." Maybe George will review it for us.

THE PHILOMEL FOUNDATION by James Gollin (St. Martin's \$10) is a first novel about a group of musicians (classical, not rock) trying to help a Russian musician defect. Well liked by PW.

Another one that looked interesting was THE BIG NIGHT by Ian Anderson (Simon & Schuster \$10). "Byron Kincaid, a master gambler who has been barred from the casinos" in Las Vegas trains five women and sets them loose with a plan for a million-dollar score. Tony Spivak is a suspicious security chief who tries to figure out what they're up to and how to stop them. This could be very good, or it could be very bad.

THE PARIS DROP by Alan Furst (Doubleday \$8.95) is a humorous novel. "Frantic efforts to recover /a 'worthless' 1934 City College class ring/ involve Levin in continual life and death battle with an incredible cast of villains, in fights as absurd as they are terrifying and explained only in the last words of an irresistible novel."

EDDIE MACON'S RUN by James McLendon (Viking \$10.95): "There are many novels of this ilk published every year: a convict on the lam is haunted and tracked by an increasingly obsessed cop. This, however, is one in the genre that is singularly gripping. ...the reader is mesmerized by it all."

IN A DARK TIME by Lawrence Watson (Scribners \$8.95) is a first novel about the effects of a mass murder series on a small midwestern town, highly recommended by PW. (The book, not the town.)

Another mass murderer novel that PW liked is PUBLIC MURDERS by Bill Granger (Jove \$1.95). (There seem to be so many mass murderers running around it's a wonder any of us are left alive.)

THE KING EDWARD PLOT by Robert Lee Hall (McGraw-Hill \$9.95) is about an attempt on the life of Edward VII. "An agonizingly tense drama with an unguessable result, /spiced/ with roistering wit, crackling dialogue and tidbits about regal personalities and common folk."

CALLANDER SQUARE by Anne Perry (St. Martin's \$10) is "another lively novel about Victorian London, spiraling from the discovery of infant corpses buried in London's upper-class Callander Square."

ARISTOTLE DETECTIVE by Margaret Doody (Harper & Row \$10.95).

(continued on page 14)

MAILING COMMENTS

I've got four mailings (28-31) to cover--and I know it won't be possible. But I can promise this: I'll get as far as I'll get.

Walter Albert

THE FRENCH CONNECTION 12-15

I'd rather forgotten your interest in things French (despite your zine's title), or I might have mentioned this long ago. Are you familiar with the book MOTS D'HEURES: GOUSSES, RAMES by Luis d'Antin van Rooten? This is an incredible combination of French and English. It takes Mother Goose rhymes, in English, and puts them (still in English) into the French words with the closest sounds. Then, the French is translated back into English. This was a bizarre idea that's a lot of fun for anyone who enjoys word play (and a tiny bit of French is all that's necessary--though of course the more you know the more enjoyable the book can be). Here's a brief sample:

Et qui rit des curés d'Oc?
De Meuse raines, houp! de cloques.
De quelles loques ce turque coin.
Et ne d'ânes ni rennes,
Écuries des curés d'Oc.

(For those who know absolutely nothing about French, this when read aloud is a very close approximation of "Hickory Dickory Dock.")

The commentary on the first two lines is as follows:

Oc (or Languedoc), ancient region of France, with its capital at Toulouse. Its monks and curates were, it seems, a singularly humble and holy group. This little poem is a graceful tribute to their virtues.

Meuse, or Maas, River, 560 miles long, traversing France, Belgium, and the Netherlands; Raines, old French word for frogs (from the L., rana). Here is a beautiful example of Gothic imagery: He who laughs at the curés of Oc will have frogs leap at him from the Meuse river and infect him with a scrofulous disease! This is particularly interesting when we consider the widespread superstition in America that frogs and toads cause warts.

Audacious and wonderful stuff!

I enjoyed your coverage of the question/answer period with Robert B. Parker, but I wish I knew how he reconciles a couple of his remarks. On one hand he says, "I think that Ross MacDonald has weakened his series in his recent books by getting too far away from the conventions, into territory where the genre should not go." But then he says he has no subject restrictions: "I feel that I can write on any subject I want to." Does that mean that if he wanted to write about some things that he'd have to do non-genre books? (I guess he did when he wanted to write about mastectomies--and I suppose it would be difficult to write a mystery novel about breast cancer.)

If you haven't been a Batman fan since you were twelve, then you probably haven't read Steve Englehart's great Batman

stories in DETECTIVE COMICS 469-476, most with stunning artwork by Marshall Rogers. That's great stuff, the best Batman I've ever seen.

OGILVIE, TALLANT AND MOON was Quinn Yarbro's first mystery novel--at least I think it was. I don't have OT&M to check. TIME OF THE FOURTH HORSEMAN was listed as her third book, which would make OT&M her first or second. I have no idea what the other early book would be--and I suspect TIME was her second, not third.

I heartily agree with your dismissal of John Badham's DRACULA, which evoked a very strong negative reaction from me. I'm not as familiar with Dracula movies as you are, and was interested in the parallels you drew. I guess my major complaint was that some very good material and a good star were wasted in the hands of people who had no feeling for what could have been accomplished.

I too was disappointed with JDM's CONDOMINIUM--and somewhat appalled to see Fritz Leiber praising it in the February FANTASY NEWSLETTER.

Donna Balopole
OH MY FUR AND WHISKERS 27-30

I haven't read any of Kemelman's Rabbi books for years, but I do remember enjoying the early ones way back when. I have no real interest in Judaism (or Catholicism) but enjoyed the religious discussions in these books.

I read THE LAZLO PAPERS some time ago, and did not like it. It's hard to explain my feelings, but I did not like the business of badgering real people with fake crank letters. The people "Lazlo Toth" wrote to had no idea they were responding to a put-on. The friend who lent me the book felt that the subjects all deserved the minor hassling they got. I guess I just dislike being hassled myself and don't respond positively to deliberate harassment (however mild) of others. I don't know, it doesn't make a lot of sense to me, either, but the book did make me uncomfortable.

You must be doing something wrong--none of the covers on my apa mailings have ever fallen off. One thing I try to do (though I've fallen way behind) is tape the books when they come in. A nice heavy clear bookbinding tape on the spine might solve your problem.

My work? I'm a Biology Department lab technician at Catonsville Community College outside Baltimore. I make sure the materials needed by the students for their lab exercises are on hand. This involves carting equipment from room to room, mixing solutions, inventorying and ordering supplies, etc.

Stan Burns
WHO WAS THAT MASKED PREGNANT DONUT LADY? 16-17

I'm glad you can say that receiving DAPA-EM 30 cheered you up--considering that it contained that intemperate grump of mine at you. Forgive my bad temper.

The courts have wisely decided that off-air videotaping is legal--whether because they actually feel that way or just realize that enforcement would be practically impossible, I don't know.

Don Cole
THE MYSTERIOUS MIKE 3-5

This is a totally non-thought-out comment, but when I read Hammond Innes's comment (in #3) that England is more receptive than America to High Adventure novels because of its

Empire, I wondered if maybe the Western--which is of course peculiarly American--might be our substitute. Maybe, maybe not.

I'm not exactly sure what constitutes High Adventure, but I assume I don't read much of it--which is sort of odd, because I imagine I'd enjoy it. (Haven't had much luck with Alastair MacLean, though.) I do like stories of survival--Hank Searls' OVERBOARD is a favorite novel of mine (the tv movie made from it was terrible), and I read a non-fiction book a few years ago called STAYING ALIVE, about two people who lived on a life-raft for four months (!) after their boat sank. During that period they saw seven ships whose attention they could not get. Finally number eight picked them up. The book was by the participants, Maurice and Maralyn Bailey, and it was published by Ballantine around 1976. Highly recommended.

Bill Crider The ventriloquist episode of MRS. COLUMBO is
MACAVITY 11-14 the one episode of that series (under any
 title) that I ever watched. Not very impres-
sive, and I've never felt the desire to watch another.

There were Travis McGee tee shirts ages ago--shirts, any-
way. I think this was before the tee shirt era, and they were
probably sports shirts. I don't remember what they looked like.
The tie-in with McGee came in what the colors were called:
good-by blue, nightmare pink, fearful yellow and such. Since
this was long before THE GREEN RIPPER, they went outside the
McGee stories and the green shirt was "flash green."

I used to play handball instead of racquetball--I really
liked the freedom of ambidextrous play. But one of the people I
played with hurt a finger so badly that the three of us had to
switch to racquets. We played at work on slow afternoons (one
of the many advantages of working at a college), but now we've
all been promoted and can't get free much anymore. I liked
handball, but I can't say it bothers me that my hand doesn't
hurt after an hour of racquetball.

HOT STUFF was a pleasant movie, worth the \$1.50 bargain
matinee price, with a few very funny bits, but no IN-LAWS. (The
premise of the police setting up pawn shops that buy stolen
merchandise is of course based on fact, and a "serious" movie
based on the real material could probably have been almost as
funny.) Don Deluise did show considerably more promise as a
director than Mel Brooks' other proteges, Gene Wilder and Marty
Feldman, neither of whom has directed a good film on his own.
(THE IN-LAWS is already available on videocassette. So far I've
resisted temptation.)

I've read JDM's THE HOUSE GUESTS, and I'm not a cat person.
It's an interesting book: it is full of all the cute things the
cats did today, but it also by JDM--so when something violent
happens, MacDonald relishes that reportage.

Is anybody a fan of the Philadelphia police? I've never
been treated civilly by them, and hate having to ask directions
or such of them, because they are far from gracious.

Actually, I myself quite enjoyed the Monday Night Football
broadcasts without Cosell. I thought Gifford, Meredith and
Tarkenton did a good job. I always liked Meredith when he was
on NBC and left alone to do a serious job--he handled it well.
And he's more relaxed on the Monday nights when Howard is gone.

Hank Davis
AS THE ACTRESS SAID TO THE BISHOP 11-13

My ghod, Hank, three
mailings in a row!
Who's your ghost-writer?

And so many comment hooks, too!

I agree with you about JDM's attitude toward science fiction. It seems to be less what he actually feels than what he thinks it might be expedient to express. I don't think he could write good sf today. The thing I didn't like about OTHER TIMES, OTHER WORLDS was that it duplicated "The Annex" from SEVEN.

I refuse on principle to buy coverless paperbacks--for the reasons you quote Ted White. I sometimes wonder how much difference there is between buying a stripped book and a used one, as the author and publisher don't participate in the profits either way, but at least with a used book someone bought it originally.

When I worked for a bookstore that was closing, we stripped all the paperbacks to send the covers back for credit, and the books were thrown out. However, each employee took several boxes home, and last summer Ann and I dredged those boxes up from the basement and looked through them. We must have had a complete library of the classics. A lot of them are still down the basement, but three boxes or so went to the library of the apartment building where my grandmother and scores of other old people live.

Some comics dealer hit upon a similar scheme. Comics are sold at two discounts, one to regular distributors and one to comics dealers. (I'm not sure, but I think comics stores get a good discount but no return allowance.) Somebody who for some reason was buying for two places, one at each discount, decided to buy everything through his comics store and return them through the regular outlet, thus managing a profit on each unsold book. So now Marvel prints two versions of each comic, one for each market. (They're identical except that where the retail version has the universal computer price-code symbol, the comics store version has a picture of Spider-man.)

We saw Mario Brava's PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES (under the title THE DEMON PLANET) on tv recently, and the similarities to ALIEN were staggering, even down to mood. Like you, I liked ALIEN when I saw it, and no-one since has been able to convince me I shouldn't like it, so I still like it. (Freff tried, though; he spent what seemed to be hours documenting what he considered the film's flaws to me, while I sat there saying, "I don't care, I liked it.") I gather the sequel is supposed to be very different, not a monster movie. That's okay by me, but I agree they'd be better off saying "enough is enough." (Bill Rotsler, in LOCUS, said that the original ending of ALIEN had the creature tagging along outside Ripley's shuttle, and said he thought it best they didn't go with that, because "after all, weren't you glad it was all over?")

I certainly don't mind stylistic tricks like Zelazny's "three asterisk pause"--hey, I'm a child of the New Wave. I have no objection to the author taking an active voice in the story. But most writers do not write that way; they present the story with themselves far in the background. What I was objecting to was these writers thinking of something clever and injecting it actively into a story in which they were otherwise passive.

As for my criticism of the Tucker novel being nit-picking--maybe so, but it was my honest reaction. I wasn't looking for flaws; that line did disturb me (minorly, of course) when I was reading the book, because I thought it disturbed the flow of the story. The piece I wrote about it was designed to try and analyze why.

Actually, the way I read is pretty peculiar--while one part of my brain is reading, another is adapting the book into a movie. So, the whole time I'm reading, I'm redoing scenes, cleaning up dialogue, and despairing over impossible special

effects. I really don't know why I do this, as I prefer books to movies, but there it is.

I agree with you also about John Williams' music for DRACULA. That was very nice. My money would have been better spent buying the soundtrack album than tickets to the movie.

Dare I tell you this? (Ah well, you've already decided that my tastes are too bizarre for words.) I loved ZARDOZ when I finally got to see it last year.

The current Saint books have a series chronology different from the one the older books listed. The books appear to be listed in the order of publication, though the one you published in the apa way back when had them more in an internal order, right? But the new list does maintain a couple out-of-order sections, like ENTER THE SAINT (1931) before THE LAST HERO (1930) and THANKS TO THE SAINT (1957) before THE SAINT AROUND THE WORLD (1956). (Could I maybe have the dates on the last two wrong?) Also, where you had WANTED FOR MURDER, the new books list two entries: FEATURING THE SAINT and ALIAS THE SAINT.

I think it's legitimate to consider Mary Shelley a neglected writer. I don't think FRANKENSTEIN is that popular a novel, and lots of people who've read it probably couldn't tell you the author's name. And who outside of the sf field could tell you anything else she'd ever done? And who inside sf could get beyond THE LAST MAN and maybe "The Mortal Immortal"?

Frank Denton

THE MAN FROM THE NORLANDS 20-23

I feel badly that I always say to you, "I really enjoyed your zines but have little to comment on." (This goes for SERGEANT CHOUGH as well.) Especially since you're such an excellent mailing commentator yourself, seemingly able to talk about anything that anyone else is interested in. I envy you that ability, and wish I could do it myself.

So, I've just reread the 29 pages you had in mailings 28-31 and had a good time indeed--very smooth and interesting writing. (Would it make you feel any better about your novel if I told you that Alli Sheldon/James Tiptree has often expressed to me the same doubting feelings about her work that you mention of page 7 of TMFTN 23? Good luck on that novel--20,000 words is an impressive amount. I don't think I ever got over 12,000 on any project.)

Very frustrating about Keith Roberts' inability to sell his thriller. The same thing happened to Roger Zelazny, who years ago wrote one called APOSTATE'S GOLD. He had a contract with Putnam that called for "three science fiction or mystery" novels --but after he submitted AG they made it clear that they were really only interested in seeing sf from him. AG started the rounds of the different publishers, but became dated during the process and Roger retired it.

I suppose I kind of hope that both Keith's and Roger's suspense novels were unexceptional. I'd rather believe that was the real reason they were rejected, not because of typesetting of the authors. (I know the typesetting happens, but hopefully not to the point that good books don't get published.)

David Doerr

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY 79-4 - 80-1

That Oxford English Dictionary got a lot of people into the Book-of-the-Month Club, didn't it? It would be nice if the Club's prices were lower, but at least the book quality is pretty good--not only in selections,

RED HERRING 23

As a progressive-minded procrastinator, I feel it is my duty to continue to search out new and more unsettling ways to push "the last possible moment" further and further into a corner. Consequently, for a deadline of Saturday, March 15, I'm rolling this first stencil into the typewriter at 10 PM, Wednesday, March 12. This assures you of quality, well-worked-out thoughts, completely formulated in the mind before the current attempt at conceptual realization. So, let's go, kids. It's showtime!

I cut DAPA-EM-32 out of its envelope with a mixture of pleasure, awe and dread. The three volumes, the virtually full roster....we've reached an incredible stage in our evolution.

I'm not real familiar with apas; I've dabbled in a couple, but DAPA-EM is my primary exposure to the world of the amateur press associations. So maybe what I have to say isn't completely informed. But I've been in fandom for twelve years or so, so hopefully I won't blather like a total idiot.

The first thing that comes to my mind when I look at a Waiting List (and I've been on Waiting Lists before) is that immediately divide a group into the Insiders and the Outsiders. I think it's safe to say that in the past there were three possible reactions to DAPA-EM from anyone who came in contact with it: a) I want to participate, b) I want to read it without going to the trouble of participating, and c) who cares? Now we have d) I want to participate but they won't let me. They may get in eventually, but at the time of their greatest potential enthusiasm they're stuck Outside.

Some OEs like to have extensive waitlists; I think this is because they like to feel that they are on the Inside--someplace so desirable that people are lining up Outside to get into. Myself, I was very happy when our membership held around thirty --there was always room that way.

At last one apa supports a shadow apa. The waiting list for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance is so active that there is a Shadow-SFPA--the waitlisters distribute zines among themselves while waiting for an opening in the Big One. The logistics of this must be incredible, seeing as how the waiting list roster would be more fluid than the apa roster, and I'm impressed by their energy. (Obviously, you need a fairly large waitlist for this to work--five people would be kind of silly.) (Though we started DAPA-EM with six.)

What I suppose I really am concerned about the Waiting List is this: hypothetically, I make the acquaintance of Jim Mystery. I tell him about DAPA-EM and he loves the idea. He signs up

RED HERRING 23 is written, typed and mimeographed by Jeff Smith of 1339 Weldon Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland. Go, Orioles!

immediately and sits on the waitlist. I know he'll make a great member, but he's on the Outside because Chuck Minac is on the Inside. So what happens? I start resenting Chuck Minac's mere existence. I wish Chuck Minac would spill corflu all over himself and disappear so Jim Mystery can move In.

This is not a healthy situation. Chuck is following the rules, is presumably enjoying himself, and has every right to his spot on the roster. He shouldn't be pressured out. But those feelings will arise.

If any of you are waiting for me to make some point about this, I'm afraid you've just seen it. There's no "solution" to the problem except awareness of the problem itself.

The full roster is liable to make some subtle changes in the apa, but I think we shouldn't run into anything we can't handle. We have a couple elements working very much in our favor.

One is the relative maturity of mystery fandom and DAPA-EM, as discussed by Art and Ron in FELONIUS FARRAGO last time. Sf and comics fandoms often fall prey to errors brought on by the physical and emotional immaturity of their constituencies. We may be able to avoid some of this.

Also, we care about DAPA-EM. I find it remarkable how important DAPA-EM seems to so many of us. There is so much warmth and friendship permeating each mailing that I can't imagine we'll let anything go drastically wrong. We all hold stock in the DAPA-EM "corporation," and I think we'll take care of it.

I'm very glad that Art is our current OE. He's probably had more experience in apas than any of the rest of us, and I have complete faith in his ability to keep us from straying off the most productive path. I can sit here and imagine that maybe things could go wrong, but I don't know if I could fix them if they did, or better yet see them coming and fend them off. I think Art has done an exemplary job so far, and I think he's just the man we want in charge at this point.

(And lest this sound like some sort of slur tossed at Donna, none such is intended--or even possible. Anyone who was around back when Art took over the OEship from Donna will of course recall that the mailings immediately looked much better, and as time went by and Art tinkered with the apa until it fit his way of doing things rather than Donna's, I'm afraid Donna has fallen into the role of She Who Started the Apa and Somehow Managed to Keep It Going Until Art Could Take Over. Donna deserves a lot of credit for nurturing DAPA-EM through its formative years. It couldn't have been easy. She had to start from scratch--there was no great obvious need for a mystery apa, no hordes of people waiting to join. Donna had no real experience with apas and had to learn as she went along. And she did learn. I was in another new apa a couple years ago, APA-LP. Lots of good people in it, each mailing was fun and stimulating, the OE was a very nice guy and I enjoyed his company when he showed up at Balticon one year. He was a terrible OE, did nothing about getting the mailings out when they should be, and eventually disappeared with one mailing, which no-one has ever seen. APA-LP died. DAPA-EM, with its miniscule original roster and slow initial growth, survived. This survival can be credited to Donna's hard work and perserverance,

and doon't you fergit it! The time did eventually come when Art's experience and energy seemed a worthwhile and welcome alternative, but we might easily have never gotten that far.)

So, I think things are looking good, so long as we pay attention to what we're doing.

Let me look through the jam-packed "Elementary" from last time and see what else there is to comment on. I guess the first thing is the loss of Ron from our ranks. This is quite regrettable. Ron was never a particularly active member, but he turned in great covers and his "Gat Fever"s were generally of high quality, and I was always pleased to see them. I hope he will return. There have been lots of second winds in DAPA-EM (I'm currently on my own third wind)--several people have dropped out or near-gaffiated and then come back with strong performances. I hope Ron will be back.

Art, I enjoyed "The DAPA-EM Growth Curve." It looks like as much a pain in the ass as the stats.

The Wantlist Project is one of the things I love about this group of people. It's a great idea that I hope is very successful. I decided not to participate right now, because I've got more books than I know what to do with already, and buy more and more all the time myself. I don't know what I'd do if packages started arriving from all over the country. After making that decision, though, I thought of a couple things I should have jotted down and sent in that I really want. (The rest of my want list is stuff I'll buy if I see, but am not actively looking for.) I assume most people have best access to paperbacks, but I do need a few hardcovers, if any of you want to scrawl these on your lists (which I hope Art doesn't intend to bind into the mailings):

Maj Sjowall & Per Wahloo (1st eds of reasonable quality):

THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN
THE MAN WHO WENT UP IN SMOKE
ROSEANNA

Dick Francis (any hardcover, including book club):

FLYING FINISH
FOR KICKS
FORFEIT
THE SPORT OF QUEENS (non-fiction)

Richard Stark (any edition whatsoever, hard or paper):

BUTCHER'S MOON
DEADLY EDGE

My apologies for not doing this in the prescribed manner, but what can I say except to repeat the explanation above?

Art's Waitlist Policy does indeed sound complicated, but I think I've got it pegged after the forth reading. We could have fifteen people on the mailing list all contributing zines (though I would assume anybody in a low slot would not contribute, realiz-

ing there's little chance he'd get a copy of the mailing.) But really, inviting waitlisters to contribute is as close as you can get to letting them in. I'm really torn about this--why have a ceiling of 35 members if 50 people can contribute? On the other hand, as I've said before, this is when their interest and energy are high, and maybe we should take advantage of it. So what if the mailings would have to be shipped by UPS? I really don't know what would be best here, and am interested in your opinions.

Okay, on to some regular mailing comments. I haven't finished with mailing 28 yet, and refuse to give up until I do. These mcs will cover anything between 28 and 32.

Hank Davis

AS THE ACTRESS SAID TO THE BISHOP 14

It was nice to see that

Steve Stiles drawing from QUO DAVIS again. No matter

how glad you were to escape from New York (and you're right, chocolate milk shakes made with chocolate ice cream are nowhere near as good as those made with vanilla), the existence of QUO DAVIS indicates to me that you took a lot of nice memories with you.

About your repro problems: do you use filmed stencils. Especially in conjunction with manual typewriters, film makes a lot of difference. The current Gestetner film is terrible--so thick my carriage doesn't work properly--but I have a supply of old stuff (beginning to pick up a somewhat unpleasant aroma) that I'm continuing to reuse until it crumbles.

I also liked the Asimov article from F&SF on Three Mile Island that you quoted. We seem to be in a period of nuclear power plant problem proliferation, but Asimov is correct in that we have yet to have a "catastrophe." I'd feel better if we had less problems, though. (I've just picked up Asimov's A CHOICE OF CATASTROPHES from the library, which looks like the most interesting book he's turned out in some time. I read the original magazine article, and look forward to reading the book.)

Years ago, I saw--on some late-night comedy show--a chapter of (I think) RADAR MEN FROM THE MOON in which (a la Woody Allen's WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY?) the soundtrack had been wiped and all new, humorous dialogue inserted. I liked it better than WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY? actually, and would like to see it again (or at least know who had done it). Some friends and I have talked about doing the same thing with my video tape deck, and maybe we will some day.

I enjoyed Leiber's TARZAN AND THE VALLEY OF GOLD back when I read it. It wasn't Burroughs by any means, but very nicely done on its own terms.

Dale Goble

THE FIRST DEADLY ZINE

You realize, of course, that you have to live up to the high expectations we have for you, based on how Frank has been

touting you of late. I can't speak for anyone else, but I thoroughly enjoyed your first zine (and your title and numbering system--very clever).

I'm a definite Sean Connery fan. I saw ROBIN AND MARION because Richard Lester directed it, and very much liked it. That and THE WIND AND THE LION were what really turned me on to Connery. I've yet to see THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING, and CUBA was only in town for about three hours so I missed that too. I liked ZARDOZ, and THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, and undoubtedly others which have slipped my mind. I liked THE ANDERSON TAPES, too, perhaps because I haven't read the book.

I agree--a 1980 book is a 1980 book and a 1950 book is a 1950 book. They can't be anything else. I'm bothered by books that are written in 1950 and then "revised" for a 1980 readership. Merely changing details doesn't affect the whole attitude of the time-frame, and the book "feels" wrong. Things that are a few years old seem dated; things older than that seem historical.

Dave Gorman

INTO BATTLE, MURDER, AND SUDDEN DEATH... 6-9

You mentioned that
due to the gas
shortage it's now

more difficult to get emergency help if your car breaks down on the highway, since that's one of the services gas stations have found they can do without. (A friend of mine owns a no-frill gas station, and he is making a ton of money. No economic hardship there.) Back to the subject--I read where AAA is having some problems now because of this; they don't have the number of contracted garages they need, and their services have suffered. I belong to AAA (a car klutz like me needs it desperately), and I have to wait at least an hour now for service, often much longer. I keep my membership, though, because I eventually do get help--and free help at that (discounting the membership fee).

Anybody can subscribe to PUBLISHERS WEEKLY--anybody with a healthy checkbook. It's not cheap. I wish I could afford to, because I really enjoy reading it. (BILLBOARD, too.) I got hooked on PW when I worked in a bookstore years ago, and now read the school library copies. These copies float among the librarians for a while and often take a month or more to actually be put out for the rest of us, but when I want to make notes for RED HERRING they very accomadatingly send a runner through all the offices to dig them out for me.

The scenes you mentioned in 'SALEM'S LOT were among my favorites, too--though I'm in a distinct minority here because I enjoyed the film. (Again, I might not have if I'd read the book.) I liked it, despite its flaws and inconsistencies, because I found it genuinely unsettling. Much of this was doubtless King's doing with the story, but many of the visuals were effective as well. I know that Barlowe was not a Nosferatu-like vampire in the book, but I liked him being presented that way in the movie. (By the way, the Frank Langella DRACULA is being shown on campus this spring, and the posters bill it as DRACULA--THE LOVE STORY.)

Bubbles Grochowski
THE MUMMY SPEAKS 1-2

Nice to have you in the apa. I very
much enjoyed your verbal portraits of the
different writers at Bouchercon.

I'd be interested in hearing the tape you have of Ellison's speech. (I love Harlan's gentle little talks.) I have one on tape myself, from around 1970. Hank Davis had taped it and he sent me a copy. I very much wanted it, you see, because Harlan had a little grudge against me at the time, and he looked at me from the podium and cut me into teeny tiny little pieces. A remarkable performance. I haven't looked, but I probably still have the scars.

I meant to drop you a line, but naturally never got around to it. Could you send me a copy of your video catalog? I love to look at video catalogs, though I don't buy much. I mostly buy blank tape and record stuff myself, which is expensive enough. My library consists now of: 13 BBC Shakespeare tapes, 11 tapes of M*A*S*H episodes, 5 of SOAP, 2 of THE AVENGERS, and 1 of LOU GRANT (the episode done up like the thirties mystery).

Also THE LATHE OF HEAVEN, the PBS sf movie based on the novel by Ursula Le Guin, Richard Lester's THE THREE MUSKETEERS (edited for tv, unfortunately), and a tape of Baltimore Colts highlights (mostly blank). Then I have four tapes that we use and reuse to pick up certain things which we watch and erase.

I have 5 prerecorded tapes. One is a sex film--if you buy a video deck you pretty much have to have one sex film. Then I joined the Time-Life Video Club. You get two selections when you join, and we got LIFE GOES TO THE MOVIES (because Ann loves old movies) and CASINO DE PARIS (which turned out to be terrible; I expected some really nice dance routines, and there was only one). Since then I've bought two selections: Neil Young's RUST NEVER SLEEPS and Nicholas Roeg's THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH. (I wrote and asked them if there was any way they could obtain the British version, which is about twenty minutes longer, but they never wrote back.)

Andy Jaysnovitch

THE CITY NEVER SLEEPS 6-9

Sorry to hear you've had so much trouble with your fanzine. You're right to give it up when it has become too much trouble. Fanzines should be fun--and they can be. But when they aren't, they aren't worth the effort. I suppose it's more difficult to get a mystery fanzine off the ground, as the field is small and the potential audience limited. Doing a fanzine in the more established and informal world of sf fandom is easier.

It's a shame you had no luck with your VEGA\$ script--though I think you got remarkably far for an "outsider." I have to wonder why you chose television to try and break into "print" with--surely all that energy might have been better expended on a novel, with which you'd have probably had a better chance of success. But then, tv is what you're most interested in, so maybe you were wise to go with your strength. Have you considered, now that you've worked the story out, "novelizing" it with different character names?

Again, I tend to think in terms of the sf field, and in sf most publishable material gets published. It may not be that way with mysteries, but I would think it's worth a try.

George Kelley
MAZES 12-14

I bought those Farmer books (IMAGE OF THE BEAST and BLOWN) back in the sixties and got quite a kick out of them--they were so bizarre and so different from everything else on the market. Plotting wasn't the best, and in some fanzine (SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, I think) there was a months-long debate between Farmer and a critic over whether one scene was possible or not that became quite tiresome. Of course, Farmer's ability to make people like his bad books gives him less incentive to write good ones.

While I agree that Stanley Ellin is better at short stories than novels, I have enjoyed several of his novels--HOUSE OF CARDS and THE BIND in particular. I haven't read too many of them, but I expect I will, in time.

I too very much enjoy Ebert and Siskel's SNEAK PREVIEWS on PBS, and was pleased when they made it weekly. I tend to agree with them about as often as they agree with each other, I suppose, which isn't bad. Their recent show on science fiction films was excellent. The problem is the way the local PBS station shuffles it around, from Thursday to Saturday to (currently) Wednesday (when I'm not home, so I have to tape it). Today I watched this week's show on THE BLACK MARBLE.

I think it would be nice if you would review the McBain/Hunter corpus for us. I enjoy him a lot. LAST SUMMER meant a lot to me when I first read it, and I've read quite a few of his books under several names. Plus, of course, I'm always interested in your ~~zine~~ opinions.

Unlike you, I'm a big fan of John Varley's TITAN--one of the books I've most enjoyed in the last couple years. Varley's strongest point is surprise--you never know what's going to be on the next page. He does this so successfully that it takes care of a number of minor sins. Also, I like his people. A novel in which interesting people explore an interesting world in which surprising things always happen seems to me a pretty good way to write a book. I've seen a lot of reviews, many of them negative, that make valid points against the book, but also some that just didn't seem to understand. (Of course it's THE WIZARD OF OZ at the end.)

You say nice things about Peter Nicholls' SCIENCE FICTION ENCYCLOPEDIA. Everybody says nice things about Peter Nicholls' SCIENCE FICTION ENCYCLOPEDIA. I agree. And it must be complete --I'm mentioned in it. (Though well hidden. Can anybody find me?)

Brian KenKnight I very much enjoyed your first zine, SMALL WORLD OF MURDER 1 and missed you last issue. Hope you're back this time. Your reviews are nicely done.

Now that you mention it, I remember hearing about the "Watts Tower." In one sense that lessens my appreciation of STAR WITNESS, since the author didn't invent the material. But what matters, I guess, is how the material is used, not where it came from. And I liked the way it was used.

I like Vintage's packaging, which I think creates a compelling mood of its own. The (usually) black covers, the stark photos, and the appropriate "cool" typography inside combine very much to my taste. I like them a lot, and have been tempted to buy books I already have in other editions just because Vintage has done such a nice job.

Judy Koutek Welcome also to you. Your spelling, THE WOMAN IN WHITE 1 punctuation and sentence structure seem fine to me. But you should have appended some comments to your "favorite books" list, so we know why you like them. It's an interesting and varied list, and I'd like to know what you see in all of them. So write more next time.

Terri Krause You say AGATHA was a good book? Interesting to hear that. I avoided it THE DISTAFF DISPATCH 3-6 (and the movie) on principle, out of respect for Christie, but I'm glad to hear it wasn't all bad. Christie's family was upset about it, and I sort of draw the line between fiction and non-fiction here. Public figures are fair game for non-fiction, but I really dislike exploitation, especially in undisguised fiction.

I imagine Robert Parker might be pleased to hear that you prefer the later Spenser novels to THE GODWULF MANUSCRIPT, as he's indicated that he thinks he's improved since that first novel. He probably has, but I must admit that while I've enjoyed them all, I got the most pleasure out of GODWULF. It may have something to do with having read that one first--with none of the others could I get that feeling of "discovery."

I've never been able to think of an answer to your question about which woman out of mysteries I'd like a "date" with. Actually, I can't think of anybody at all I'd like a "date" with. I'm willing to meet most anybody, but I can't think of anyone that I particularly want to spend an evening with. I think that, as a non-dater (my social life, such as it was, was more geared to large groups and parties than one-on-one dates), maybe I just don't understand the question.

Steve Lewis Zola's "MAMA" is a "mom-mystery"? I love it!
 FATAL KISS 10-12 The whole paragraph about your typewriter troubles was funny, and that was the perfect punch line. And I enjoyed all the clever letters your clever readers sent. Once, in an issue of KYBEN (one of several defunct Jeff Smith fanzines), while listing some records I typoed MEET THE NEATLES. I thought this was a great typo and looked forward to some great letters from Neatles fans, but my readers really let me down. No-one even mentioned it.

I find it hard to think of ten tv mystery shows that I really liked. Let's see, I was very fond of the NBC Mystery Movie when it was in its prime, with COLUMBO, MACMILLAN AND WIFE (the seasons when it had its original supporting cast), McCLOUD (especially when Teri Garr was on) and the western HEC RAMSEY (very underrated, very good). (I'd also liked the Mystery Movie's predecessor, THE NAME OF THE GAME.) I think McCOY was later part of this umbrella--I really enjoyed that (unfortunately short-lived) caper series. Tony Curtis (whom I don't really like) had one of his best roles, and I love Roscoe Lee Browne. I hope SOAP utilizes his potential. I also liked Quincy when it was 90 minutes on Sunday, but I've never liked the weekly series.

I've liked some of the better "committed lawyer" series, like DELVECCHIO with Judd Hirsch (also his mini-series THE LAW), KAZ with Ron Liebman (a great show), and whatever Anne Meara's series was called. I thought POLICE STORY was one of the best tv series ever (and liked MEDICAL STORY at least as much, though I knew a "doctors aren't gods" show had no chance at ratings survival); my other favorite police show is BARNEY MILLER.

Currently I'm getting a big kick out of TENSPEED AND BROWNSHOE, and am enjoying the PBS umbrella series MYSTERY! (except for the presence of Gene Shalit). Then there were the fine Peter Wimsey adaptations on MASTERPIECE THEATRE--also a good MOONSTONE.

And, of course, THE AVENGERS.

No way I'm going to try and figure out a 1-10 ranking from all this stuff. Surprisingly, I did manage to come up with ten (more, even). But it was a lot of work.

Kathi Maio I've read and enjoyed your zines, but have
 HOMICIDE HUSSY 1-3 little to comment on. I think if we were able to write up complete lists of everything we've each read, we'd find little in common. Most of the writers whose works you review are people whose names I've never even heard before. I have read Sayers, about half of her mysteries. Probably not much else.

Small presses and fanzines have a lot in common. Fanzines involve less money and thus can be better run by one person than a small press can--though many successful small presses have been virtually one-man operations. Fanzines are much easier fiscally, too, thank ghod.

Jim McCahery
 MYSTERY LOVES COMPANY 4-8

Speaking of books "by" their main characters, there's a science fiction series of pseudo-Edgar Rice Burroughs novels that at first were credited to Alan Burt Akers (a pseudonym for Kenneth Bulmer) but are now credited to Dray Prescott, the name of the hero. Also, a fascinating conceit, Lin Carter, in one of his pseudo-ERB series--wrote one called LANKAR OF CALLISTO in which Carter himself traveled to Callisto and, his name "translated" to Lankar, had lots of adventures.

If you can remember back to a brief-lived tv show that you discussed last year, we only watched the first episode of WHODUNNIT?, and Ann figured out the solution very quickly--and much more completely than anyone on the show had when they all talked about it at the end. The show could have been better done.

A couple months ago I saw a copy of the Dale pb of Stanley Ellin's KINDLY DIG YOUR GRAVE, which I was really pleased to see because I had not bought the original. (It must have come out in the brief period when I was not interested in mysteries--in fact I gave away parts of my collection to friends.) I was very disappointed, though, in that the introduction says there should be eleven stories, and there are only nine. An abridged edition. Oh well. I've ordered the Mysterious Press edition of his complete short stories, which should have the "missing" two.

I flipped through THE BEDSIDE, BATHTUB AND ARMCHAIR COMPANION TO AGATHA CHRISTIE in the store one day and was singularly unimpressed. There seemed to be no substance to it at all. (Maybe they say you can read it in the bathtub because if you drop it it will float away rather than fall into the water.) Nancy Blue Wynne's Ace paperback of a few years ago, AN AGATHA CHRISTIE CHRONOLOGY, has a lot more useful information on Christie's books.

It's very rare for a tv show to accept an unsolicited script--in fact, I think they never accept unsolicited scripts. Andy's VEGA\$ script wasn't, technically, "unsolicited"--he wrote them and asked if he could send one, and they said yes. Scripts that just show up in the mail are returned unopened. One very good reason for this is that they want to forestall lawsuits from people who might write a script about Dan Tanna being kidnaped and then suing the show when their writers come up a script about Dan Tanna being kidnaped. Tv shows just don't want to hear from people they've never heard from--but will complain about the poor quality of the writers they already have anyway.

I was interested in your comment that you weren't all that fond of William Kienzle's THE ROSARY MURDERS but that you "have a strong feeling (and hope) that his next one will be a great over-all improvement now that he has got the first one out of his system." I pretty much believe in the sophomore jinx, myself, and figure that by the third book a writer is usually on track. I've heard the theory put forth about both writers and musicians--they prepare all their lives for their first book or record, and nine months for their second. (I haven't read THE ROSARY MURDERS yet, but Ann did, and she recommended it to me.)

I read somewhere that Peter Falk decided he'd like to make some more COLUMNBOs, but now the studio doesn't seem interested.

I haven't read Robert F. Baylus's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S MURDER because I haven't heard much good about it. I do have an interest in the Baltimore setting, so I suppose I might read it someday. Baylus works for the City of Baltimore, in the same building Ann does.

Sayers' "The Learned Adventure of the Dragon's Head" shows

up on a lot of people's "favorites" list--it's a very charming and amusing story, and I loved it.

Seeing Jay Anson's name mentioned, in conjunction with his forthcoming book 666--I read his obituary in yesterday's paper. I don't have it here, and can't remember the cause, but he was a relatively young man. I never read THE AMITYVILLE HORROR (we're into my fiction/non-fiction prejudice again) but he must have been a fairly effective writer to so upset people the way AMITYVILLE upset them.

And that's it for mailing comments this go-round. Unfortunately, I have fallen even further behind than I was before, only getting around to about a third of you. With any luck I'll get an earlier start next time.

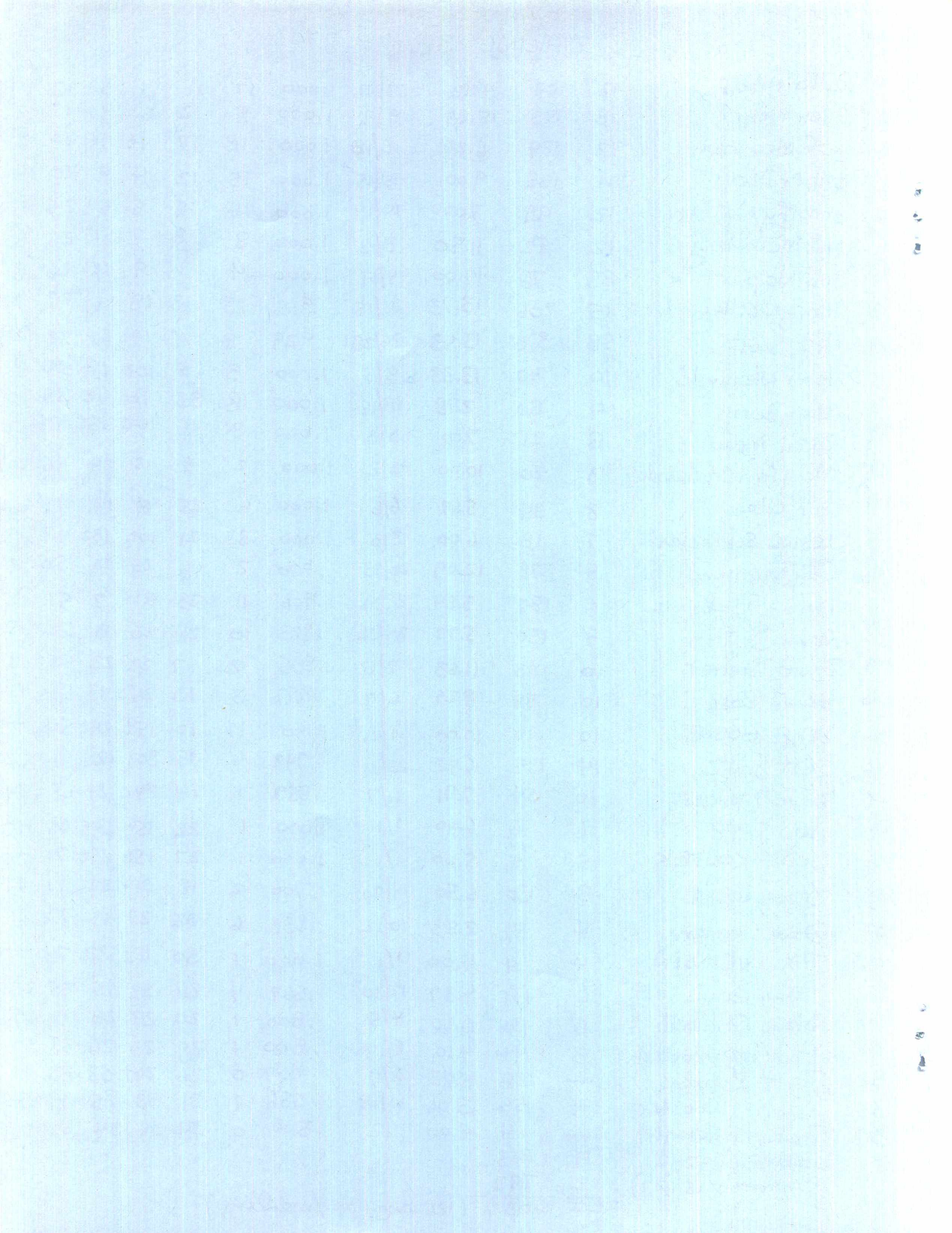
There will be no book reviews this time--because I haven't read any mysteries. (Well, I borrowed two of Thomas Dewey's Mac novels from the library and gave them quick reads, but I'm not even sure of the titles right now. Whatever they were, one I quite enjoyed and the other was so boring I didn't finish it. They were both sixties novels, and I've liked Dewey's fifties books better.) I'm currently reading THE 13 CRIMES OF SCIENCE FICTION, but still have four stories to go and so can't really review it yet. Most stories have been good but unexceptional.

There's also no "Publishers Bi-Monthly." I'd arranged with the school librarians to have the PWS available for me on Thursday, but we got hit with a snow and ice storm and I spent the day at home (or this might have been a four-page zine, perhaps). Friday I was the only person in the office and couldn't get to the library until quarter to five--to find out they close at five on Fridays. So.

The stats are on the next page, handwritten. Why, you wonder? Well, it's like this.... I have to use an elite typewriter, because the line is too long for my pica machine. So I took a stencil into work Friday. (Yes, today is Saturday, deadline day. Watch my fingers fly!) But I forgot a bottle of corflu. V e r y c a r e f u l l y , I typed the stats. I was doing a beautiful job, too--the first time I've ever typed them without making at least a dozen errors. And about two-thirds of the way through I found a mistake--a mistake that changed things up as high as the seventh and eighth places. So I had to redo everything. I didn't have another stencil, so I was going to have to xerox the page. It was getting late (after six pm) so I decided to handwrite them--a much faster operation, if not as neat.

There's been another change in the way the stats are kept--Art suggested he be given credit for all the covers he's contributed over the years, which he never had been before. (I had just considered them part of the OE's job and lumped them in with ELEMENTARY.) So that moved Art way up in the standings, pushing a lot of others down a notch. Otherwise things are as before. (Donna also got credits for her two covers for mailings 4 and 12.) My condolences to Terri Krause and Liam O'Connor, this month's post office victims, but I can only measure what actually appeared in the mailing. As this was Terri's first miss, she takes the Big Fall. She'll be back.

No room for an explanation of the stats. See last mailing. And I'll see you next mailing. Ta-ta.



so I was somewhat intrigued in it. But when Wollheim described it as "Howard's only interplanetary" (or something) I lost interest. I was used to Burroughs imitators like Otis Adelbert Kline, who wrote series of novels set on other planets. What good was somebody who wrote only one interplanetary romance? So I didn't buy ALMURIC, and it was years before I read it. A shame, too, because I would have liked it.

Thanks to THE SPELL OF SEVEN and a few other mentions, I was a little more knowledgeable about Howard when CONAN THE ADVENTURER came out. In fact, while I don't remember how I knew the book was coming out, I know that I was looking forward to it, because I remember a friend telling me he saw a copy and I ran right out and picked one up.

So I read each Conan book as it came out (though losing considerable interest when Lin Carter signed on--I didn't know much about Carter when CONAN came out, but CONAN was so inferior to the first four volumes it seemed obvious where the fault rested). And a few other sword and sorcery books here and there along the way.

What really kept my interest up in sword and sorcery, though, were the Conan comics from Marvel. I love those, and given the choice of keeping my heroic fantasy paperback collection or my heroic fantasy comic collection, I wouldn't even have to think about it. Marvel's CONAN THE BARBARIAN and especially THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN are it for me.

I was very disappointed when CONAN THE BARBARIAN #1 came out--Roy Thomas's story was not up to the original standards at all, and I didn't like Barry Smith's artwork, either. But I continued to buy issues when I found them (missing quite a few of the early numbers, which I had to pick up later) and gradually became won over. Smith's artwork became the ideal comic art in my mind, and the storylines improved rapidly. The Smith-Thomas sequence of CONAN THE BARBARIAN is great stuff, and I reread it fairly often. Their last story together in that title, the seven-or-so-issue-long "War of the Tarim" series, remains one of my favorite Conan stories by any author. With the cleaning up of a few comic-bookisms (like the awkward foreshadowing of "Amra") I think that would make a great novel or movie.

It took me a long time to get used to John Buscema's artwork after Smith left the book, but even that's been taken care of now. I very much liked Alfredo Alcalá's inking in SAVAGE SWORD in its early days, and have missed him tremendously (though not of course as much as I miss Smith). But the style of inking that Tony deZuniga discovered halfway through "The Flame-Knife" is very exciting, and I'd be very happy looking at that for the next few years.

So, that's what I really like in heroic fantasy: Conan comics. But I read paperbacks occasionally, too, and try and keep up with what's happening in the field.

My science fiction/mystery/fantasy library is about 2500 volumes strong--no record-breaker, but it contains most everything I want to read. (I've read a depressingly small percent of the books in this room, but there's always hope.) So, when I decided

I wanted to read Howard and Howard-related fiction some months ago, I was able to get my hands on every Howard paperback (in some edition or other) and a lot of sword&6&6sorcery anthologies.

Here are some reviews of ones I've read recently:

SWORDS AGAINST DARKNESS II
 edited by Andrew J. Offutt
 Zebra 1977 284 pp

While not as good as the first volume, this still is an entertaining collection. Mostly solid stories.

The highlight, easily, is Tanith Lee's "Odds Against the Gods"--from the first line to the last a truly exceptional story. It has a lot of the qualities I enjoy in Fritz Leiber's Nehwen stories. The character Truth is incredibly audacious, the plot is clever, the whole thing's great.

My second favorite is Dennis More's "On Skellig Michael," mostly because the control with which the story is told makes it a real pleasure to read. Heroic fantasy stories are generally pretty wide-open in the telling, "broad canvas" stuff. This change of pace was quite refreshing.

The three series continued from the first book, Ryre by Ramsey Campbell, Kardios by Manly Wade Wellman and Simon by Richard L. Tierney, are all represented by solid and enjoyable stories. This time I guess I enjoyed Tierney's "Scroll of Thoth" the most, though I still couldn't quite reconcile Tierney's Caligula with John Hurt's masterful portrayal on I, CLAUDIUS.

As for the other three, David M. Harris's "Coming of Age in Zamora" has some definite problems (and could use still another rewrite) but is basically an interesting piece. Unfortunately, it's a little flabby (like its hero?). Andre Norton's "Sword of Unbelief" is also okay, but it doesn't evoke any more comment than that.

And Andy Offutt's "Last Quest" is...just awful. I mean, it's...just awful. What I'm trying to say is...forget it; it's too bad to talk about. Yechh.

On the whole, though, a good book. I look forward to getting around to the rest of the series someday.

THIEVES' WORLD
 edited by Robert Asprin
 Ace 1979 308 pp

This is a peculiar and often interesting anthology. Robert Asprin coordinated a group of writers who devised a fantasy world and a cast of characters to go in it, and then wrote stories integrating each others' concepts and people into a hopefully-unified whole.

In some ways this worked out rather nicely. The book does accomplish its initial modest aim of making all the peripheral characters in each story old friends when they pop up. Asprin.

was right--it is pleasant to have familiar characters running throughout.

So, while I first want to say that I really enjoyed the book, I must also point out that it is not very successful by any critical standards. The big problem is that most of the contributors got involved in the project as a lark, seeing it as the opportunity to have a little fun. This gives the anthology a peculiar tone--probably due to the fact that the writers were not working with 100% commitment. These are stories that were dashed out in between their authors' "real work."

The book begins with a couple maps and then an Introduction, presumably written by Asprin, that introduces the basic background and situation: Sanctuary, a town in the far corner of the Empire and thus relatively ignored by the Empire, needs a new governor and gets young Prince Kadakithis, the brother of the Emperor. Kadakithis takes the job very seriously, and plans a campaign to clean up Sanctuary. (One failing in the book, to me, anyway, is the lack of any real fantasy elements in the background. A little magic would have been nice.)

The first story is John Brunner's "Sentences of Death," an unexceptional but nicely done piece about magic, featuring as characters the linguist Jarvonna and the wizard Enas Yorl, and as plot mechanism an enchanted scroll.

Next is "The Face of Chaos" by Lynn Abbey. Abbey is a new writer and a serious one, and her story stands out as the least frivolous of the whole lot. Whereas most of the other writers were not concerned with turning out their best work, Abbey was out to make a good impression. "The Face of Chaos" is about Illyra, a fortune-teller, and an attempt to avoid a foreseen future. It's a very good story, but it seems a little out of place in this book--while many of the other writers' characters are tragic (Enas Yorl constantly and uncontrollably changes his shape, never looking the same twice; Jarvonna was mutilated as a child and is seeking revenge), none of the other stories is infused with the constant feeling of foreboding and tragedy that this one is. (And while I'm not advocating books without story variety, I do like a little more consistency. I'd have liked in this case to have seen the inclusion of at least one other totally serious piece. --Or maybe all I needed was another successful serious piece.)

Next is Poul Anderson's "The Gate of the Flying Knives." It's been said that Anderson puts more into his fantasies than into his science fiction--THE MERMAN'S CHILDREN being a good example. But he too took the opportunity to just dash off a little adventure story for this book. I imagine the whole piece was constructed around the ending, which is very clever. A good story, though nothing special.

Andy Offutt's "Shadowspawn" features Prince Kadakithis, as well as Offutt's own character of Hanso (who also appeared in Anderson's story). Offutt does very neatly by tying his story in with the main background, and his is one of the more entertaining minor pieces. (There is also a two-page introduction to this story that is uncredited. It's hard to place a short piece like this stylistically, but to me it reads more like Offutt than Asprin. I could well be wrong.)

Editor Asprin is next with "The Price of Doing Business." This is a very minor story of intrigue, not badly done but too slight. Again, the concept of the book helps here: the resonances of the series lend pleasure to a story that would have trouble standing alone. Outside this book, "The Price of Doing Business" would be immediately forgettable. Inside it, it's not bad.

Joe Haldeman's "Blood Brothers" is, again, a minor story, closer to Haldeman's Star Trek and Attar the Merman (or whatever) than THE FOREVER WAR. Again, though, Haldeman's smooth professionalism and the old familiar characters make the story work. Also, "Blood Brothers" features some excellent magic use. One of my favorite stories in the book.

"Myrtis" is Christine DeWees's first published story. I expected, therefore, for her to be taking herself as seriously as Lynn Abbey did. DeWees, though, is very relaxed and self-assured. I can only assume that her maturity as a human being (Asprin describes her as a "kindly, white-haired grandmother") has compensated for what should have been her lack of maturity as a writer. I'm not trying to make any great claims for "Myrtis"--a nice little story that is one of the better in the book. I'm also not going to make any grandiose predictions about Christine DeWees and her future writing career. But it was a great pleasure to read a story so professional and so neatly done by a new writer.

On the other hand, there's Marion Zimmer Bradley. Bradley, I hate to say, is not a good writer. Yet, I've read about half of the Darkover novels and enjoyed them thoroughly. She has managed to create a fascinating basis for a series, and write the stories well enough to get by. (In fact, the reason I first decided to read the series was the fact that the first page of DARKOVER LANDFALL is very well written, and I was deluded into thinking she always wrote that well.) Bradley's problem isn't that she writes so badly it hurts, or that she isn't paying enough attention and thus gets too sloppy. She just isn't any sort of stylist, and is too unfocused--she writes a scene when she thinks it might be interesting, without too much regard for how the whole story is shaping up. (The worst I've experienced in Darkover is THE FORBIDDEN TOWER--the storyline is one of my favorites in the series, but so much is repeated and the book meanders about purposelessly so much that its length could have been reduced by a third or more without hurting what Bradley was trying to do.)

All of these failings get sort of lost in the shuffle when Bradley is dealing in long novels that are part of an even longer series--but none of the few short stories of hers I've read have been any good at all. Her story here is "The Secret of the Blue Star," a secret that doesn't get revealed until the end. Unfortunately, the "secret" is so obvious from the beginning that the whole story suffers for it, and the anthology ends with one of its least successful stories.

But, hey, I had a good time with it, I thought the characters were good, most of the stories entertaining, the whole concept fun, and I look forward to THIEVES' WORLD II. So despite any negative comments here and there, the bottom line seems to be that I had a very positive response to the book.

THE ROAD OF KINGS
Karl Edward Wagner
Bantam 1979 209 pp

This was a disappointing book. I hadn't read anything by Wagner before but had gotten the impression that I would like his stuff once I got around to it. Hopefully I still will, but it will have to be better than THE ROAD OF KINGS.

All is not bad. The Prologue and first chapter come closer to Howard than any pastiche I've read yet. Also, Chapter VIII, in which Conan is taken out to see the underwater statues--this too is real Conan. There are some other nice passages scattered about, enough to make me feel that I had not wasted my time in reading it. The parts that were good were very good.

Too much of it, though, is very lackluster. Conan doesn't seem to have a whole lot to do. The many (far too many) philosophical discussions seemed not only tiresome but distinctly non-Hyborian.

Oh well.

(The other disappointment is that Glenn Lord seems to think that this one is better than the next one--Poul Anderson's CONAN THE REBEL--will be. I hope he's wrong.)

THE HILLS OF THE DEAD
Robert E. Howard (and J. Ramsey Campbell)
Bantam 1979 141 pp

When I look at the two skinny volumes of Solomon Kane stories Bantam has brought out, I find it rather incredulous that the original paperbacks, with less material, was split into three. That was a little ridiculous.

Of the two Bantam books, I think the first had most of the best stories. "The Hills of the Dead" itself was never one of my favorites, but on the other hand "Wings in the Night"--which I had not read before--really impressed me. I guess I've always been fond of stories in which the hero, when outclassed, comes out victorious but totally beaten and battered.

I have also very much enjoyed Ramsey Campbell's completions of the fragments--while they read more like Campbell than Howard the tone is easily close enough to pass, and Campbell is a very good horror writer. I particularly liked the way he finished "Hawk of Basti."

As for the poetry, "The Return of Sir Richard Grenville" didn't grab me, but I've always had a fondness for "Solomon Kane's Homcoming." I think that and some of Howard's other, similar work would make great lyrics for a rock album of the type Alan Parsons does.

The Solomon Kane stories were interesting; I enjoyed them. I think I most enjoyed the fact that Howard himself considered Kane crazy. It makes for an interesting perspective.

It occurs to me that one thing that may cause me a few problems here is that I in no way regard Howard's manuscripts as gospel and sacrosanct.. I thought the Berkley Conan series got pretty silly at times, like when they "skipped" the chapter in THE HOUR OF THE DRAGON.

In fact, I get irritated at the way a lot of the books are currently being published. For instance, the Bantam editions of the Kull and Solomon Kane stories: The previous edition of KULL had completed fragments; the Bantam edition dropped the completions. The earlier Kane books printed fragments; Bantam had them finished. This seems rather inconsistent.

I do not believe that Howard would have been terribly enthusiastic about the wholesale publication of his fragments. After all, one of the phrases most often used to describe him is "natural storyteller"--and what storyteller likes to leave unfinished business?

So I feel that--in mass market editions, not necessarily in the specialized small press publications--stories should be published either complete or not at all. I think that that is the only fair practice to the reader--who after all is picking up the book as an adventure novel.

To take this even further--and make myself even more unpopular--if I were in control (and this will insure that I never will be) I would doctor every story I possibly could into a Conan story. (I can hear the screams of anguish already, and no-one's read this yet but me.)

So tell me what's wrong with that. Howard rewrote his stories all the time until they sold, and it's rather obvious that it's as Conan stories that they'll sell today. The other Howard paperbacks probably sell okay--but surely not as well as the Conans. In fact, I would imagine that the Conan pastiches far outsell the non-Conan Howards. It would seem to me quite advantageous for all concerned to turn these stories to Conans, sell tons of them, and give Conan readers the good stuff.

Who could possibly disagree? (Besides you and you and....)

How many of you know that you can play sword-&-sorcery games on computers, even the little computers like the Apple and the Radio Shack TRS-80 that are sold for use in the home? We got a TRS-80 in at work (Level II, 32 K) and a friend and I bought the program called Adventureland to play during slow periods. The Adventureland program sets up a fantasy world for you, and you move around and perform actions by giving the computer two-word commands ("go north," "drink water," etc.). The object of the game is to find thirteen treasures hidden in Adventureland and move them all to the treasure-storage place.

The game opens with you in a forest. The computer tells you you can move north, south, east or west, but three of these directions just keep you in the forest. If you say "climb tree" the computer will tell you that from the top of the tree you can see a meadow and a lake to the east. If you "go east" (first remembering to "go down") you will be in the meadow. The computer always tells you what the "visible items" are (in the forest

