
FAIR PLAY #47

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in which Dave Van Arnam indicates he is trying to get himself into the Real Groove and do other incomprehensible things for silly reasons

Actually, I'm just trying to get a few new habit patterns and all, for several reasons. I'm going, for instance, to be testing a slightly new way of going at this weekly fanning. I'm going to try to publish a little earlier in the week, like I uster before Apa L came along. There is also the question of trying to get back into the habit of writing 8 pages of fiction a day, minimum. I've got this novel with Ted first-drafted about halfway through now, and if I get down to it I can do the rest before Apa L reaches voting age.

Theoretically, doing FIRST DRAFT before that last minute deadline will make it easier for me to do more of what I'd like to do. But I can tell right now I'm going to have limited success at this. Maybe Dan Goodman is right about my writing ("Why is your political material inferior in style to your other writings?" is about what he said, tho he cast doubt on the validity of this insight by suggesting it might be due to the side I'm arguing on); at any rate, I feel an urge to talk about politics now, but I can tell I'm not thinking too clearly on the matter. For instance, I'd like to bring up the question of whether Johnson's testing American opinion on Viet Nam, by way of several recent actions and speeches made by various people. I am sure he wd pull out without a moment's hesitation if he thought the people here would stand up for it (hi, Dave Hulan! I did it again!), tho to be fair I am also sure he wd prosecute the war vigorously if he were forced to.

But, you see, I can tell that I'm not really on the vibration tonite. My typing fingers are a bit numb, I'm feeling guilty because I know I'm going to Slack Off and not do my 8 pages tonite (alas, the well-laid plans..."Plots have I laid, inductions devious..."), Eney's cultzine arrived, the first of the 13th Cycle -- and that's depressing enough right there, what with Walter being Booted and what with its being surprisingly thin for an Eney Cultzine. This follows the recent trend of brief Cultzines, I suppose. Reaction from the Recent Viciousness. But thin Cultzines are hardly inspiring, and some of the lack of enthusiasm I felt after going thru FR 147 has sort of slopped over here.

Another thing depressing me might be the shattered shambles the electricians have made of my apartment. The whole building is being rewired, and this has resulted in about half a dozen holes having been knocked in various walls and ceilings around the place. Plaster dust has settled everywhere. It is all pretty Depressing. (A notice was put up in various strategic places in the blgs, announcing the project; the printed part of the letterhead informed us that they were "Aqun and Forla: Adequate Wiring"; and lemme put it this way, baby, if it's only gonna be adequate after they're done, what was it like before? Talk about depressing...)

There are a few things that shd operate to cheer me up, however. For one thing, I'm rereading THE WAR OF THE RING again. That is to say, I am now reading it for the third time, not counting extensive dippings-in at

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Undecided Publication #88 (hey, that's pretty!)

various times in between. I first read it at the Uoff just after it came out, and enjoyed much of it tremendously. I'm not sure if I have read it once or twice since then; if twice, then reading no. two must have been in those rich autumnal days in NYC, the heyday of Toad Hall and the Nunnery, before I was drafted. The third time must have been just after I got back to NYC after Korea, about four years ago.

At any rate, each time I read it before I was delighted with great portions, and rather a bit bored by others. Certain characters have never much interested me, certain locales never much intrigued me, and while the story was going on about these things I was usually having to force myself thru.

Until a couple of weeks ago when I started on my reading no. three, or possibly four. "As some of you may know," I'm something of a compulsive Annotator these days, and for more than one reason than may immediately come to your mind. In the case of ERB, there was the simple pleasure and gratification of providing a fairly solid reference work to a fairly large group of people who I felt sure wd probably enjoy such a thing a good deal; I also regard my ERB indices and what-not as something of a tribute to a man who, whatever you may think of his writing ability, has given many millions of people a very great deal of satisfying delight. I had, myself, of course, outgrown Burroughs, as most of us do...or so I said to myself.

But I found that in combing thru ERB practically word-by-word, I was reading the books themselves in a different manner than I ever had before. By necessity, I was going extremely slow (I might cover up to 100 pages in perhaps three hours), in order to catch everything that might conceivably be relevant; and so I was forced to notice many things about ERB's writing that I had never noticed before -- the quiet wittiness that comes through time and again in ordinary descriptive passages, for instance.

I am not going to go further into ERB, however, because, after all, I'm already writing a book again about him, and his writing. The reason I bring it up is to indicate vaguely why I have gotten the annotating habit. I have found that it illuminates wonderfully; so I have done about half of EESmith's books -- uselessly from a publishing sense, as the job's already been done, but a totally delightful task just the same; for years I have been testing Doc's Lensmen Series for flaws, errors, contradictions, and even in this close analysis I have not yet found anything I cannot explain.

Adn then I started in on FELLOWSHIP again a couple of weeks ago. As I have actually seen Halevy's work (in Meskys' and Felice's ever-better NIEKAS, and that's Fanzine Reviews for this issue), I found the compulsion to underline everything in #1 lead was considerably easier to master than I had, in fact, expected. Instead of having to underscore everything, then, all character names, all place names, etc., I found I passed my testing easily; I limited my Annotating to lore, or "Lore." And in the so-doing, I have found that my interest and pleasure and appreciation in and of Tolkien's work has vastly increased. I have just finished the first book, and have done a preliminary Skim over the Appendices to check out some things; and I can honestly say that tho I appreciated the complexity of the work before, I now realize what an incredibly vast creation of the intellect and imagination the Ring Trilogy really is. I wish it had appeared when Cabell was younger; I wd very much like to read him at length on the subject...but I suppose that was all part of the intricate cream of the jest the universe always was playing on Cabell... Hoping you are the sane...