

HPL

edition
of

helen's
Fantasia

Published by Helen V. Wesson at 68 Asahi-dai, Negishi, Yokohama, Japan No. 7 July 1957

"....This magazine will contain only material pleasing to the publisher. If he takes a notion to publish an issue so 'sophisticated' (overused word), as to be barred from the mails, he will do so even if he has to borrow a fliwver to distribute the small edition. If he chooses to fill an issue with Methodist hymns he will do so. And all the gamut between...."

--W. Paul Cook, The Recluse, 1927

THE MILLS OF THE GODS

grind slowly but inexorably -- and Helen even more so. The HPL cut printed above was resurrected from an era when I first discovered Lovecraft and the Fantasy APA, more than a decade ago. It is quite apparent that at that time I'd meant to write and publish some Lovecraftiana. This year seems to be my Year of Fruition. Not only have I just finished an afghan I started crocheting when I was eleven years old, but I finally used that HPL cut, here and in The Fossil. Mind you, however, I have not touched any Lovecraft tales in the intervening years, which demonstrates what a memorable addition he made to the Weird genre. In fact, I read few weird tales these days, probably because there are only few published and fewer still worth reading. If there is an M.R. James, a Machen or Lovecraft producing today, I should like to know about it. Meanwhile, John Dickson Carr (Carter Dickson) writes whodunits with backgrounds and techniques that appeal to a connoisseur of the macabre, and I keep a watchful eye on the Yacht Club library for such paperbacks. Japan, incidentally, has produced one volume of contemporary macabre tales which will be reviewed in this or a subsequent journal.

W. PAUL COOK

was one of Lovecraft's best friends, yet he is almost unknown to the Fantasy world. This is strange, because his printed magazine, The Recluse, introduced HPL's essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature," written for it at Cook's instigation. Also, Cook published five numbers of The Ghost, a substantial 8x11 printed amateur magazine. Although it was published for Amateur Journalism, it featured such FAPA-type material as bibliomania and the supernatural, and other mature material, and the works of the Lovecraft Circle to which Cook belonged. It was in The

Ghost that I ran across this anecdote, which tickles me. Not only does it illustrate the relationship of Amateur Journalists, but there is something revealed of the two characters which I can recognize in myself. HPL's biography was already re-typed and ready for mailing when I found this in a James F. Morton memorial issue. I wanted to work it in as a footnote, but I don't like to break up a mood or a train of thought with odd appendages. I don't think my dear "Cookie" (ghod, I was frivolous then!) will mind if I quote his copyrighted Ghost:

"There was a reorganization planned of the Paterson Municipal Museum and a Curator was needed. Friends told Morton (James Ferdinand Morton, Jr.) about it....He shut himself up in his room with a library. At the end of the three weeks...he underwent a stiff examination by experts, and was appointed Curator. In other words, in three weeks James had taken a several years' course in mineralogy. He at once became widely known in that science.

"It was in connection with his minerals that James told me a story that he said ~~was~~ such a series of coincidences it could never be used in fiction. There was one mineral the museum did not have and it was to be found only in one place in the East, a quarry located in Providence, Rhode Island. James knew but one person in Providence, that being Howard Lovecraft. The owner of the quarry was a 'foreigner,' not of a benign disposition and suspicious of everyone. There was one mortgage, and one only, held on the quarry. The mortgage was part of the small estate owned by Lovecraft. The owner thawed and aided Morton in securing what he wanted.

"As one result of this mineralizing expedition to Rhode Island there was piled in the corner of Lovecraft's room for over a year a ton or so of rocks left there by Morton. When I suggested that each chunk be carefully wrapped in tissue paper and the collection packed in boxes and shipped to Morton to get them out of the way, Lovecraft treated the suggestion with a snort. They were going to stay right there until Jim came for them. He eventually did." --W. Paul Cook

SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE

Perhaps one reason Lovecraft has always interested me is that we are so much alike in some ways (though as wholly different as our sexes in others). In most comparisons, HPL is the Substance and I but a faint Shadow. His people came from England to settle in Rhode Island in 1680; mine came from England to settle in R.I. --in Providence-- in 1630. Both of us have our lives inextricably entangled in the hobby of Amateur Journalism, even unto marriage, though his marriage was but a Shadow and mine is the Substance. Compared to today's youth, and I hope, my daughter's future, my childhood and adolescence

were spent in literary seclusion, under a domineering mother, but compared to HPL's seclusion it was Shadow, his seclusion the Substance. I even wrote a ghost story at age 8! He was and I am literary archeologists, digging away on some subject which will inevitably channel into weird fantasy, but whereas the Weird dominated his life, it is perhaps the smallest fraction of my many--and healthier--interests. I also collected press clippings--the exact same clippings HPL would clip and file, I'm sure. He used his for his writings, the Substance; I just stacked mine up in a carton which went in our fire, and I am trying to break this habit because I know my publishing output will never catch up with my intentions. Sometimes I regret my housewifery:

Recently there were three items which would have just fitted into this FANTASIA. One was about a family in England who had appealed to the Queen for legal action and exorcism. Seems the family didn't mind when they moved into a house inhabited by a ghost of a beautiful blonde Victorian. However, they were dismayed when in the course of events, nine ghostly suitors were attracted to pay court to their phantom fatale.

The second tale is also about a house in England--on which the taxes were lowered, since the local authorities agreed that the "haunt" served to lower the real estate value somewhat.

The third was about a haunted castle in Italy which has become quite a tourist attraction, bringing tourist dollars to the town. Seems the town fathers make use of the ghost by hiring a man full-time to haunt the castle!

I just adore the tale of the blonde Victorian. Shades of Thorne Smith!!

Tonight there is this headline in Asahi Evening News: TOKYO RESTAURANT COOK HAUNTED BY CAT'S GHOST

This story broke a few days ago when an Austrian Embassy secretary, eating in the Grill Rossini of the exclusive Tokyo Kaikan, saw the cook shove a live cat into the roaring oven. Her outraged Letters to the Editor resulted in the dismissal of the cook (the restaurant manager offered her her money back for the meal she'd been eating--as if that would help the cat!), and the cook was fined ¥1,000 (\$2.78). The followup story tonight states:

"The restaurant cook who hurled a tomcat into a roaring oven in a fiery rage told police today the animal's ghost has begun to haunt him.

"The cook, Koji Hayama, said every night since Saturday when the ~~cat~~ was cooked to death in the oven..he has been suffering pains in his legs and hips and has been sleeping fitfully.

"According to Japanese superstition, anyone killing a cat will be haunted by the animal's spirit."

I have noticed in my reading that what our consciences do for us, (or to us) ghosts do for the Japanese!

This is the least of the cat tales of Japan. There are many weird legends involving cats. HPL would have revelled in them. As for cats, he can have them. We have a calico cat at Akamon, but he is just a squatter, and in Japan, squatters' rights prevail. Heph. He squats on Cook-san's roof.

For sale to some fortunate collector who
can indulge himself:

The Acolyte — Fan-Dango

• 3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14

No. 10-13-20-21-24-25-26-27

This last set, in fine condition, is offered at the price I paid Lancy for them: \$1 each, preference to go to purchaser of complete set.

Will swap one-for-one for the FANDANGOS I want: No. 3-7-9-17-beyond if any. Otherwise, will buy/sell @ 50¢ each.

The ACOLYTE is a Collector's Item. (Note Ac's cover art in The FOSSIL encl.)

Frankly, this FANTASIA is being published because the editor of the FOSSIL (one Sheldon Wesson) won't let me add any postscriptual footnotes to my biography of H. P. Lovecraft. Now that he has other copy on hand, he implies strongly that "it's too damned long anyway" --although that wasn't the song he sang when he first discovered what Ed Cole has long known: that it takes 1,500 words to fill ONE page of The FOSSIL! Anyway...

The day after I mailed off my entry to the Fossils' Literary Award Chairman, two Arkham House books arrived via a loan from H. C. Koenig. I was able to corroborate as not only correct but conservatively correct, my two conjectures about HPL's mother. (Perhaps my evenings spent with whodunits are teaching me to deduce like Dr. Fell.)

First, the deduction about the "sMother-love" which I think (and I believe he came to realize it himself later as his horizons broadened) was a blight on his childhood, subconsciously motivated by egocentricity rather than selfless_solicitude, an oppression which continued until her death, which, Secondly, did occur within the dates mentioned in my biography. I don't mean to imply that the woman consciously treated her son cruelly--probably far from it. But, to paraphrase, "Motherhood is as Motherhood does," and some women just should never become mothers. Had HPL normal parents, it is quite possible that connoisseurs of the Weird genre would have no reason to know of his name.

THE SURVIVOR AND OTHERS

was reviewed by Anthony Boucher in the New York Times Book Section: "'Among the papers of the late Howard Phillips Lovecraft..were various notes and/or outlines for stories which he did not live to write.' Now August Derlet, his friend, disciple, biographer and executor, offers completed versions of seven of these stories 'as a final collaboration, post-mortem.' ...one sees no reason to query H.P.L.'s judgment. These are notions better left undeveloped--ideas inherently feeble..or better treated in other Lovecraft narratives.

"These strictures apply to the first six stories. The seventh, 'The Lamp of Alhazred,' is surely pure Derleth, and most attractive. This is no attempt at a story 'by' Lovecraft, but is a fantasy about him, warmly and lovingly depicting the man and his alienation from his times. This intimate tribute of literary friendship is enough to make memorable an otherwise indifferent volume."

LAST WORD DEPT.: Akamon is haunted! Two sources, old Japan-hands who do not know of my hobby, tell me there was a murder and.... I'm glad I can't hear The Rats in the Walls!