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## The Phenomenon of HPL

By Helen V. Wesson

Under Pseudonym "The Outsider"

"We speak of you and what you felt or thought;

"We quote you as we might some friend away,"

—"H.P.L." by Rheinhart Kleiner  
in *Olympian* 35

WHEN a man's personality so overshadows his work to his friends as to make them think of the man instead of his writings, they are quite unfit to utter a judgment," wrote W. Paul Cook, *In Memoriam Howard Phillips Lovecraft*. "Not from Howard's personal friends will come the final dictum. Nor from his generation... In our generation he cannot be rightly evaluated. But I think he will live."

Howard Phillips Lovecraft died in 1937, and 20 years—just a generation—later, it is possible for one uninfluenced by personal friendship to draw a picture of him, from many sources, that is of even greater stature than his contemporaries had fully foreseen. Today, no comprehensive professional anthology of weird fantasy is complete without one or more of Lovecraft's tales. More significantly, he introduced the most important innovations to the field of weird fantasy since Edgar Allan Poe, and his influence extended far beyond his own writings. A realistic critic, Cook opined, "Since his advent weird fiction has owed more to Lovecraft than Lovecraft owed to all the body of preceding writers."

One may counter, "A large frog in a small pond," to which HPL himself would agree (though this gentleman of elegant letters would deplore the plebian wording). For he admitted that the dignity of the weird tale does not attain a wide appeal, but only to "minds of the requisite sensitiveness... The appeal of the spectrally macabre is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree

of imagination and the capacity for detachment from everyday life," he stated in his book-essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (in *Recluse*). To deny his statement that the readership of weird fantasy is "very important, though not numerically great" is to imply that *Reader's Digest*, with its tremendous circulation, must on the contrary represent the ultimate of greatness in contemporary literature!

In the morass of words written about HPL, one salient fact has been overlooked. There have been many amateur journalists who have achieved success—but only Lovecraft achieved his fame by *being* an amateur journalist. Thomas Edison is famous—as an inventor. Josephus Daniels is famous—as a professional newspaperman who rose to ambassador. Lovecraft, however, remained an amateur in fact and at heart throughout his life—"Better to write honestly for a non-remunerative magazine than to concoct worthless tinsel and be paid for it"—and his devotion to the craft he *lived* has brought him a post-humous following in a later generation unprejudiced by the charm of this unique character.

Amateur Journalism was less a window through which Lovecraft watched his fellow-humans, than it was a door opening outward through which he passed to join them and become human with them. His is not a biography of events or action,



He was his own most fantastic creation.  
—Vincent Starrett

(Continued on Page 9)

# The Phenomenon of H. P. L.

(Continued From Page 1)

but one of quiet background and passive seclusion. Yet, "upon few other authors do we find the influence of surroundings, of environment more fully apparent," wrote Robert Butman in Fossil H. C. Koenig's *Reader and Collector*.

Howard P. Lovecraft, Esq., was born at 454 Angell Street, Providence, R.I., on August 20, 1890. An Anglo-American (and he was such an Anglophile he decried the American Revolution—"I am a Tory, sir!"), on the paternal side he was a descendant of the Lovecrafts of Devonshire, a family which had furnished a great many clergymen to the Church of England (HPL supported extreme materialism); and the Allgoods of Northumberland, a military line of which several members had been knighted. (Physically 4-F in any man's army, HPL was militant with a most devastating weapon, his pen, as we shall see.)

Therefore, though he was a United States citizen by birth under U.S. law, under British law he could have claimed British citizenship since he was a grandson in direct male line of a British subject not naturalized in the United States. However, despite his Anglophilic tendencies, he was stubbornly a Yankee, his maternal family having settled in Rhode Island in 1680—stubbornly because the climate of New England and his abnormal susceptibility to cold were obviously at odds.

Lovecraft died without issue, and that name died with him in America. The man was unique and so was his name, so perfectly suited to one who was an *amator* of his writing craft, that W. Paul Cook was hard-pressed to convince one reader of *Vagrant* that it was not a manufactured pseudonym for himself.

## "Childhood Shows the Man"

Of his unusual childhood, this extract from "The Thing on the Doorstep" (*Weird Tales*, 1937) is autobiographical, as the boy Howard learned to read at age four, and first turned to writing at six.

He was the most phenomenal child scholar I have ever known, and at seven was writing verse of a sombre, fantastic, almost morbid cast. . . . Perhaps his private education and coddled seclusion had something to do with his premature flowering. An only child, he had

organic weaknesses which startled his doting parents and caused them to keep him closely chained to their side. He. . . seldom had a chance to play unconstrainedly with other children. All this doubtless fostered a strange secretive inner life in the boy, with imagination as his one avenue of freedom.

At any rate, his juvenile learning was prodigious and bizarre. . . .

Lacking youthful companionship, Howard imagined himself, at five, as an Arab, Abdul Alhazred (a family name was Hazard). Many years later the "mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred" was to become author of the hideous tome *Necronomicon*—"the ultimate horror whose secrets would curdle and boil the seething organ of the brain in its bone-pot as its ghastly mysteries unfolded to the eyes of those who dared to read it." Used by HPL and then his circle of fantasy writers as a basic reference book in the Cthulhu mythology, it was thoroughly imaginary, but so meticulously substantiated that readers pestered librarians for it!

At six, he became a Roman, intrigued by ancient myths and legends of Rome and Greece. Reminiscing, he wrote of this period: "The imaginative stimulus was immense, and for a time I actually thought I glimpsed fauns and dryads in certain venerable groves. I used to build altars and offer sacrifices to Pan, Diana, Apollo, and Minerva." This phase passed, too, but in passing left its mark on the future—"The Literature of (Ancient) Rome," *United Amateur*, November 1918.

To Reinhart Kleiner he wrote, in 1917: "I was a persistent fiction-writer in youth and turned out rubbish. . . by the bushel. A large proportion is still in my possession. . . The next time I visit the attic I will bring down two or three 'thrillers' of the vintage of 1899 or 1900. . ." (when he was 9-10 years old) . . . "I revelled in tragedy and sudden death, and had a marked partiality for graveyards and ghosts. When I took up fiction again, a month or two ago, I found that my tastes had changed but little."

We glimpse another segment of his childhood background in this quotation from a letter, reprinted in the *Acolyte*:

I've always wished I could draw, but have no natural aptitude for it—so that despite infinite pains my best efforts in that direction are rather ludicrous and pathetic. Odd too, for my grandmother, great-aunt, and late elder aunt were all accomplished artists—while my father's sketch book attests his very passable

skill with the pencil. . . . It is my weakness that I can't conform to rules and restrictions very well. I have to learn and do things in my own way—as dictated by my especial interests and aptitudes—or not at all. That was probably what turned me against music in childhood—I was confined to the simple drudgery and repeated exercises of orthodox instruction. . . .

In "The Music of Erich Zann," (*National Amateur* and *Weird Tales*) the "daemon madness of that night-baying vic!" heralded the ghastly end of the dumb musician.

Upon the death of his father, Howard's mother withdrew the child from school and kept him secluded to an extent that seems, in the light of present-day psychology, to reveal not only solicitude but an almost-neurotic sMother-love. Certainly his health was not normal, but it is equally certain that withdrawal from sunshine, fresh air and human intercourse cures nothing.

Indeed, his seclusion, and his later complete disregard for healthful dietary habits, his nocturnal rambles and studies would have produced ill health, even tuberculosis, in a normal man. In him it produced an amazing erudition which seemingly encompassed all of man's history and literature, geography, astronomy and sciences, all of which merged into one single interest always: the weird and macabre. Possessing an extensive library and apparently a photographic memory, he was able to hold his own with specialists in various fields in the most exacting minutiae.

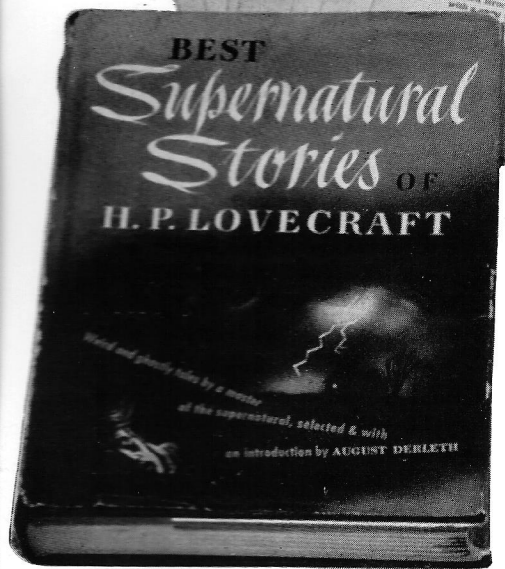
His uncle was a professor at Brown University; Lovecraft lived his life within its shadow, and ended his days in a house fortuitously attached to the college heating plant. He took advantage of the Open Sesame afforded him as few matriculated students have, yet he remained self-conscious of the fact that he had not been able to attend college, for later, in the *United Amateur*, 1920, he wrote:

The United aims to assist those whom other forms of literary influence cannot reach. The non-university man, the dwellers in distant places, the recluse, the invalid, the very young, the elderly. . . .

He was all these but the last; he never attained the old age which he affected, even to calling himself, in humorous moments, "Grandpa."

## Publisher at 8½

Lovecraft was a child-publisher. At 8½ years he "printed" a weekly *Scientific Gazette*, using pencil with four carbon copies. This journal, devoted to the science of chemistry (at 8½ years!) was a long-lived paper, being issued from



### Collectors' Items

W. Paul Cook's printing of "The Shunned House;" signatures never bound, and only a few sets remain.

Tower Mystery edition of "Best Supernatural Stories of H. P. Lovecraft," published April 1945.

All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by other races who, in practicing black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again.

In this cosmic saga, The Cthulhu Mythos, the benevolent "Elder Gods" dwelt on the red star Betelgeuse; Aldebaran, a principal star in the Hyades, located in the head of the Bull, is another dwelling place of the deity and pre-human races of this mythology, which such other writers as Fossil August Derleth have explored but of which HPL was hailed as the Great Master.

If Edward Daas had done nothing more for Amateur Journalism than recruit Edna von der Heide—the Fossils' "Vondy"—the 'Dom would be beholden to him; but he also recruited Howard Phillips Lovecraft. On April 6, 1914, Lovecraft's application for membership was submitted to the United Amateur Press Association. His credential was "The Alchemist;" written in 1908 when he was 18, it was his first weird story to be published (*United Amateur*) and the cause of his resumption of story writing when it was well received. (He later "disavowed" the story, but he had a habit of disavowing all previous writing upon the completion of a new story.)

He was ignored for several months by a lethargic 'Dom, but by September 1915 his photo was featured on the cover of the *United Amateur* as First Vice-President, and his Department of Public Criticism started on Page 1 and continued for 11 pages!

The United had another of its bewildering splits; Lovecraft was Official Editor

briefly in 1917, and then became President in 1917–1918. Regardless of succeeding Presidents, this faction was the Lovecraft United, and this faction continued until 1925–26, when it slid into the general apathy of Amateurdom and was succeeded by a united United with J. F. Roy Erford as Official Editor.

The Lovecraft United embraced a literary group active in Fantasy such as Amateur Journalism has not seen before or since. The nucleus of this literary movement was the friends and correspondents of Lovecraft, perhaps a comparatively small nucleus, but powerful on the immediate scene. Lovecraft generated a tidal wave of literary achievement in Amateur Journalism, and the ripples lapped on the shores of contemporary American literature.

In "Modern Mythological Literature," serialized in Koenig's *Reader and Collector*, Robert Butman, discussing Fantastic Fiction in England, continued:

In America, however, there has been an interesting merging of the tales into a form which almost makes a consistent mythology. The development of this form was inspired in great part by Howard P. Lovecraft and his United Amateur Press Association. The Association in the early 1920's brought together most of America's fantastic writers, and their practice of exchanging and judging each other's works led to a unified subject matter.

Lovecraft serves well as an example of the whole group. The story of his life shows clearly the type of questionings which were aroused in the "sensitive" men after the Victorian Breakdown. The development of his style and mythos is parallel to that of the whole American group, both because of like external influence, and because of his influence on them through the Association.

The *United Amateur* of January 1918 lists HPL as President, Miss Verna McGeoch, Official Editor, and friend W. Paul Cook, Official Publisher. Another friend, Rheinhart Kleiner, was in charge of Public Criticism; while the Department of Private Criticism was headed by Philip P. McDonald (who retired from the 'Dom after winning its prize, our beloved Vondy.)

The roster of the Lovecraft United reads like a "Who's Who of Amateur Journalism." Besides the forementioned were: ex-Presidents Will H. Greenfield, William Ahlhauser, Vincent Haggerty, Helene Hoffman Cole, Dora Hepner Moitoret, Paul Campbell; and Edward H. Cole, Samuel Loveman, Hazel Pratt Adams, Edna Hyde (Vondy), Charles Shattuck, Anthony Moitoret, Harry E. Martin, Walter Mellinger, Arthur Goodenough, Maurice Moe, Wesley Porter, Clark Ashton Smith, Helm Spink, James F. Morton, Frank Belknap Long, Jr., Sonia Greene, Victor Bacon, etc.

Yet, in that company, HPL's journal, the *Conservative*, initiated March 1915,

March 1899 to February 1904, surpassing for longevity Edwin B. Swift's printed *Weekly Amateur*.

His second journal, *Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy*, published from 1903 to 1907, was printed by hand and then duplicated on the hectograph—circulation 25.

His astronomical notebook, meticulously detailed, gives his Position of Residence as 598 Angell St. Prov. R. I. Latitude 41°50'00"N. Longitude 71°23'09"W,<sup>(1)</sup> and mentions a "Pro. Astronomical Scy. 1904. H. P. Lovecraft, Pres't," at a time when HPL was 14 years old.

As this interest in astronomy, incited by his grandmother's collection of old astronomical books, is reflected in his weird cosmology, it is worth noting that the *Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy* contained not only rewritten telegraphic reports from Harvard University and Ladd Observatory, but also HPL's forecasts of stellar phenomena. He owned a three-inch telescope of French make—"Purchased 1906 (Sept. 13)"—and at 16 years contributed monthly astronomical articles, "Mysteries of the Heavens Revealed by Astronomy," to newspapers in Providence and elsewhere, a feature still continued when he joined Amateur Journalism, a connection which lowered Astronomy to his second great interest.

HPL's major premise states:

(1) Dr. David H. Keller, fellow-author, commented: "I do not know of any other author who was so careful to be completely oriented in space."

was reviewed in the *United Amateur* as the "leading amateur magazine of the year in sustained literary tone and polish." It was published occasionally for seven or eight years. In the *National Amateur*, the *Conservative* was reviewed by Edward H. Cole:

...one of those unusual among amateur journals that evinces an intellectualism profoundly stimulating. . . . As essayist and editorialist, Mr. Lovecraft has few superiors. . . . Protagonist of intellectualism in amateur literature, the editor of the *Conservative* has contributed an issue of his own journal that will not soon be equalled in merit or standard.

### A New Life

The first time Lovecraft was away from home over night (and mind you, points out Cook, he was thirty years old) was to attend a Hub Club convention, reported in *NA* as a consolation party for those unable to attend the 1920 NAPA Convention in Cleveland.

By that time Lovecraft was a "former UAPA President," and he revelled in the company of such great amateurs as Edith Dowe Minter and W. Paul Cook, both former NAPA Presidents; Rheinhart Kleiner; Mrs. Harriet Cox Dennis, NAPA's first woman official editor; C. A. A. Parker, ex-Official Editor; Miss Marjorie Outwater, Official Editor at that time; and Nelson G. Morton, also a past President of NAPA, and brother of James F. Morton whom HPL missed at that meeting, *NA* report notwithstanding.

Morton led the more intrepid walkers on a tour of the Middlesex Fells, in the course of which a bay wreath ("a genuine Parnassian wreath," Lovecraft called it) was constructed for crowning Mr. Lovecraft in honor of his triple laureateship in the United. HPL put the wreath in a cigar box and sent it on to John Milton (Heins).

For the first evening, Lovecraft returned to Providence, as enjoined by his family. (He lived with two aunts in 1923, Mrs. Lillian Clark and Mrs. Annie E. P. Gamwell; in 1919 his mother had been a psychiatrist's patient at Butler Hospital and lacking exact data, it is assumed here she died between those dates.) When it was pointed out he'd get more rest by staying in town with his friends, this was arranged,

### Amateur Journals with HPL's Imprint

*Eggephi*—"Some Impressions of the First Orgy"—was a humorous and substantial journal published by those, including Lovecraft, who attend the 1920 Hub Club convention. *The Rainbow* is opened to a portrait of its publisher, Sonia Greene (Lovecraft). HPL is featured on the cover of the *United Amateur*, Sept.

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and Cook stated later, "from that time Howard was almost free to go and come as he pleased and was trusted with a group of amateur journalists anywhere." (This at 30!)

The poignancy of it! Like his own creation, "The Outsider," he arose from the stygian abyss of his forced seclusion; but there the simile ends, for he was revealed as a shining personality who was to become, by his circle of friends, the most beloved amateur the 'Dom has known, so loved that one of them suffered a nervous collapse upon his death.

In 1918, he had written Kleiner: "I am absolutely devoid of friends outside of correspondence." Now, a laurel wreath, a coronation with pleasant sallies and much laughter. Just think what that must have meant, that climax of such a memorable adventure among people—and people so akin to him intellectually, for he was at home only with those who approximated his own intellectual and literary aspirations, but to them he was unforgettable.

This incident was certainly the turning point of his life. After this, he made more trips, including yearly jaunts to historic places from Quebec to New Orleans.

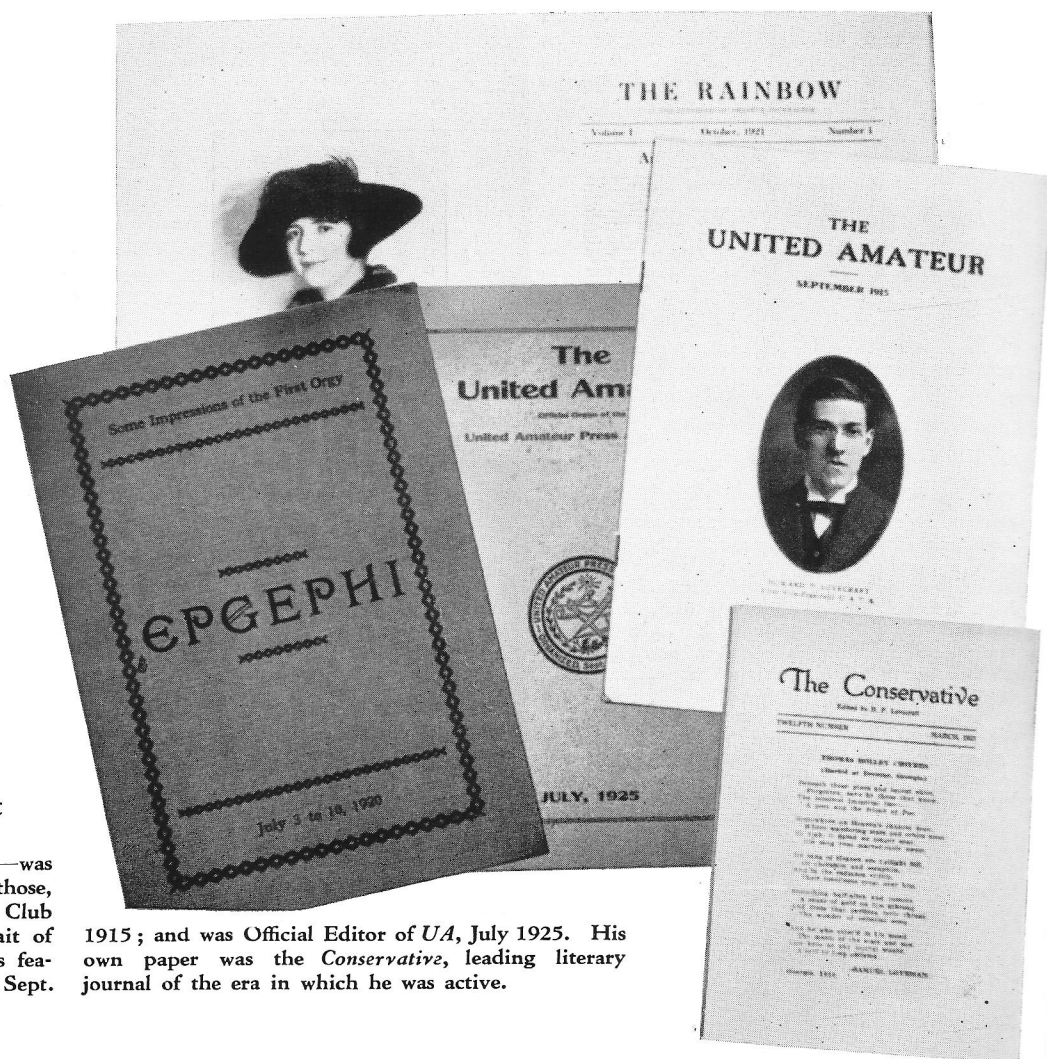
After this, too, in 1921, he addressed the Boston Conference of Amateur Journalists on "What Amateurism and I Have Done for Each Other:"

What Amateur Journalism has given me is—*life itself.*

As a loyal United member, Lovecraft bitterly resented the constant NAPA forays, political or proselyting, but he himself capitulated in 1917 "at the repeated solicitation of many persons who declared that my aloofness from the National was a barrier to inter-associational harmony . . ." He was sponsored by Helene Hoffman Cole; his credential was the *Conservative*. However, he wrote Rheinhart Kleiner (*Californian*, 1937):

My connexion, however, will be purely nominal; as I gave the Nationalites very clearly to understand. I have time and strength only for my own association. . . . Should the National presume to treat the United with disrespect again, I shall be the first to resent the act. My exhibition of good will is based upon Edward H. Cole's statement that he has induced Graeme Davis to abandon his anti-United campaign. If Davis will be good, so will I.

In 1918, he was still the iconoclast: "Regarding your qualifications for office in the United," he wrote Kleiner, "pray do not think that the regular publication



1915; and was Official Editor of *UA*, July 1925. His own paper was the *Conservative*, leading literary journal of the era in which he was active.

of a paper is essential to recognition. This is not the National—with us, literary standing is the prime consideration.”

Considering his irreverent attitude toward the venerable oldest association—as Cook words it, he had no great love for Dear Old Siwash, it wasn't *his* Alma Mater—it is not surprising that “the amateur world rocked with the sensation when Lovecraft's name was announced as that of the new President,” after William J. Dowdell resigned his office in 1922. With genuine reluctance, HPL accepted after much persuasion the appointment of the National Executive Judges to fill out the term. His aloofness from the National and its politics made him acceptable to the warring factions of the moment. He and his literary circle became prominent in the literary output of NAPA, but in NAPA he was as comfortable as a light sleeper on a bumpy mattress. In January 1923, he wrote Kleiner:

The National, with such official tangles as constantly appear for adjustment, is an unending burden. . . . I am requesting volunteer critics and reviewers to communicate with Loveman, in the hope that the National may gradually acquire that helpfulness to the novice which marked the United before its recent destruction.

In his Annual Report he wrote:

. . . we are entering upon a spontaneous literary renaissance. . . .

and, politely:

I have encountered so much encouragement at every turn that I am forced to look outside the National in order to maintain my cosmic attitude of perfect cynicism. . . .

He remained with NAPA till his death, probably in accord with his philosophy expressed in his editorial on United affairs, *UA*, July 1925:

. . . it is at least better to have some sort of amateur journalism than none at all.

## Marriage

Easily the foremost of all the current amateur output, and unquestionably the most brilliant first issue of any paper within the present critic's recollection, is the October *Rainbow*, edited and published by Mrs. Sonia H. Greene. Mrs. Greene, though a very recent recruit, has absorbed the amateur spirit with amazing speed; and possesses a very high conception of the duty of the individual to the institution. . . . Mechanically dazzling and impeccable with its iridescent cover, numerous illustrations, and pleasing paper and typography, it nevertheless derives its chief claim to notice from its intellectual policy and carefully chosen contents. . . . Mrs. Greene is a thinker with much to say, and a fast growing power to say it effectively.

This was an unsigned criticism in *NA*, March 1922,<sup>(1)</sup> when the Bureau of Critics consisted of Samuel Loveman, Chairman (ruled out as writer because the article refers to him as “the last of the Hellenes—

a golden god of the elder world fallen among pygmies.”); Edward H. Cole (possibly); H. P. Lovecraft (probably, due to several favorite words of HPL's, and considering a remark about “Nietzscheism and Realism” by HPL: “Not written for publication, they deserve some leniency of judgment. . . .”)

Lovecraft had been introduced to his future wife by Rheinhart Kleiner, at the 1921 NAPA Convention at Boston. She decided to marry him, it became apparent to his dismayed friends. The *Rainbow* followed. It contained material from his circle of friends, and even his photograph. Member of the Blue Pencil Club, editorialist and writer of brief epigrammatic and philosophic paragraphs, Mrs. Green published in the *Rainbow* an essay, “Commercialism—The Curse of Art.” Lovecraft's own life-long disdain for the confines of professional publishing was summed up in his statement, in the *NA*: “But here in Amateurdom there is no gold to weigh us down or buy our conscience.”

The eve before his departure to New York, Lovecraft visited some Providence neighbors about a matter of furniture he wanted to give them—fine linens and family silver would be sent later to New York to grace his marital home. Old New York with its historic background appealed to him, he told them.

It was obvious he was not the calm, poised self he wished always to be, for leaving Providence's Union Station on an early morning train, he lost a manuscript he had ghost-written for Harry Houdini (a stock-holder in *Weird Tales*, incidentally)—a weird episode the magician had experienced in Egypt, right in Lovecraft's field of erudition, for he was an Egyptologist also. In vain HPL offered a substantial reward in the *Providence Journal*; fortunately, in his scholarly way, he had brought the original pen-and-ink version to New York—probably to check the proof-reading of *Weird Tales*.<sup>(2)</sup>

On March 3, 1924, reported *NA*, occurred the wedding of Sonia H. Greene, President of the United Amateur Press Association, and H. P. Lovecraft, Official Editor of that society, ex-President of the National, and member of the National Board of Executive Judges. The ceremony took place at historic St. Paul's Chapel, New York, a noble Colonial structure built in 1766 and dignified by the worship of General Washington and

(1) In this same *National Amateur* is “The Music of Erich Zann,” by HPL.

(2) Lovecraft always made it a condition that he be allowed to check all his mss. in final proof before they were run off.

Lord Howe, as well as the Prince of Wales who was to become King George IV.

Despite these details which must have pleased HPL inordinately, his marriage was brief, a small fragment of his life which friends and biographers glossed over mercifully, the only first-hand information being an article by Sonia Greene in a Providence Sunday supplement of 1948-49 (not at hand).

In 1924 and 1925, Mrs. Lovecraft was President of the Lovecraft United, and HPL its Official Editor, with faithful friend W. Paul Cook as Official Publisher in charge of the printing end. They were not happy years, and HPL's editorial, *UA* July 1925, as he ended his stint is rather heart-breaking, between the lines. . . hospitalization of the President. . . lack of associational funds. . . lethargy throughout Amateurdom. . . .

That same *United Amateur* bears these two separate News Notes:

H. P. Lovecraft, Official Editor, on January 1st moved from Flatbush to the old Brooklyn Heights section, where he may be found at 169 Clinton street, amidst rows of venerable brick and brownstone. In November he made a somewhat leisurely trip to Philadelphia, staying at the Y.M.C.A., and studying at length the Colonial antiquities of the city and its suburbs. In April. . . he paid a hurried visit to Washington and its Virginia environs. . . .

and

President Sonia H. Lovecraft, having last January spent some time in Cincinnati, has just returned from Saratoga Springs where her health received substantial benefit.

Separated after less than two years, they were finally divorced in 1929.

A gentlewoman, designer of exclusive hats for “the fastidious and discriminating in taste,” Mrs. Sonia Haft Davis reappeared at the NAPA Convention in Los Angeles, July 1948, “as if she had never been away.”

## Literary Life in New York

His bleak years in New York were not entirely lost. He participated actively in the monthly literary meetings of the Blue Pencil Club. The slim book-essay, “Something About Cats,” resulted from a monthly literary assignment: Cats and Degs. Lovecraft started his article on cats and, like Henny Penny, it went along and went along, and never was completed in time for the meeting!

More important were those informal gatherings of fantasy connoisseurs, The Kalem Club. Today Koenig reminisces: The original Kalem Club consisted of Kleiner, Frank Belknap Long, Everett McNeil. Later, the following men became

members of the Club: George Kirk, Herman C. Koenig, H. P. Lovecraft, Samuel Loveman, Arthur Leeds, James F. Morton. Orest Orton, W. B. Tallman and Donald Wandrei, one of HPL's proteges, though their names did not fit into the KaLeM formula, also attended. In the FOSSIL, 1951, Koenig wrote: "I can still recall with pleasure Lovecraft's discourses on such subjects at anthropology, religion and ethnology..."

HPL appeared at his very best, socially, at the sessions of the Kalemities, men of mutual interests and scholarly conversation.

The strongly marked lineaments of a countenance which, at time, seemed expressive of naught but austerity, became animated with a conviviality of emotion directly traceable to an intense satisfaction with his surroundings. He relished the wit of others,

wrote Kleiner in the *Californian*,

and indulged in sallies of his own which usually topped the best efforts of the rest. He was capable of singing a song, in a high, clear tenor, which would evoke appreciative applause, and his knowledge of the operettas that had won popularity at the turn of the century was nothing less than astonishing. Lovecraft never made any secret of the esteem in which he held his friends, and every member of that group felt himself regarded as a rare being in his own right.

Robert Barlow, Lovecraft's "nephew" (nephew?—HPL addressed his aunt as "daughter"! ) and publisher of the *Dragonfly*, estimated that HPL's voluminous correspondence—about 100,000 letters—averaged about eight letters a day, long, many running to 60 pages, crowded with fine script, his thoughts "ranked and marshalled before he ever set pen to paper, clearly and logically, exquisite in structure..." (*Acolyte*). Yet he never used the typewriter for correspondence: it was a modernization. Lovecraft dreaded change and modernization, and abhorred any influence which might lay the ghost of New England Past. It could not be expected that he'd become reconciled to fast-paced New York, progressive, with immigrant hordes diluting old blood with new.

"Cool Air" (*Tales of Magic and Mystery* and *Weird Tales*) and "The Horror at Red Hook" (*Weird Tales*) were among the results of his stay there, with this expert from "The Horror" autobiographical:

... My coming to New York had been a mistake; for whereas I had looked for poignant wonder and inspiration in the teeming labyrinths of ancient streets that twist endlessly from forgotten courts and squares and waterfronts to courts and squares and waterfronts equally forgotten, and in the Cyclopean modern towers and pinnacles that rise blackly Babylonian under waning moons, I had found instead only a sense of horror and oppression which threatened to master, paralyze and annihilate me.

... But success and happiness were not to be.

Garish daylight showed only squalor and alienage and the noxious elephantiasis of climbing, spreading stone. . . . And the throngs of people that seethed through the flume-like streets were squat, swarthy strangers without dreams and without kinship to the scenes about them, who could never mean aught to a blue-eyed man of the old folks, with a love of fair green lanes and white New England village steeples in his heart. So instead of the poems I had hoped for, there came only a shuddering blankness and ineffable loneliness.

... I . . . still refrained from going home to my people lest I seem to crawl back ignobly in defeat.

He did not crawl back—his aunts in Providence despatched a truck to bring him and his belongings back to Providence, after Cook found him, his entire wardrobe stolen except what had been on his back, and living on about 20 cents a day for food, which he spent instead for stamps. He was happy to return to his library, his study at 66 College Street, where he could, when he had to work by day, pull the blinds and simulate night darkness.

### The World of Fantasy

His book-plate depicts HPL with quill poised over paper, against a backdrop of a skull with flowing hair, a werewolf's head, and the head of the Ram. (A ram's head is one of the three heads of Asmodeus, chief of the fourth hierarchy of Zoroastrian evil demons; address him, "In truth thou art Asmodeus," and he will teach you geometry, astronomy. . . )



Fittingly the drawing of HPL is clothed in "his accustom'd periwig and small-clothes" (*Conservative*, 1923) for as Critic Cole wrote in the *NA*, 1923:

Mr. Lovecraft has often amazed and amused his incredulous acquaintances by the warmth of his praise for the art, the literature, the architecture, the manners, and the ideals of England in the eighteenth century, especially during the period of his adored Dr. Johnson's ascendancy. . . . He has a mastery of the ideas and the art of his favorite time.

The artistic style of the book-plate—a background of infinitesimal ink bubbles—determines it to be the work of Virgil Finlay, prominent professional fantasy artist. His artwork here probably represents a correspondence arising out of

mutual admiration of each other's efforts, as HPL's poem, "To Mr. Finlay," was published in the amateur fantasy magazine, *Phantagraph*, then in *Weird Tales* ("To Virgil Finlay"), early in 1937.

This world of Fantasy is a facet of Lovecraft virtually unknown to mundane Amateur Journalism, and to it, more than to the 'Dom, is owed his post-humous success. The stature of HPL was not fully appreciated within the sphere of Amateurism proper; he achieved his great audience and was inspiration to the more alien field of the amateur (and professional) fantasy press. While Amateur Journalism mourned him sincerely but emptily, publishing journals dedicated to his memory, this other world set about, methodically and practically, to popularize his works so that HPL could take his proper place in American weird literature. It is a world divided into professional writers—of whom Fossil August Derleth was most important to HPL's post-humous literary success—and amateur publishers, with no clear line of demarcation.

Of great importance to this narrative, and to the fantasy literature of America, was the advent of *Weird Tales* magazine in March 1923. In his "Immortal Storm," a history of Fandom serialized in *Fantasy Commentator*, Sam Moscowitz wrote:

From its earliest days those who wanted it to be predominately supernatural and those who would have it mainly scientific waged a bitter struggle for supremacy. It is perhaps fortunate that the former clique, supporting the more literate school of writers including H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, eventually won out. . . . there appeared in these pages that fiction blending the supernatural with the scientific—the combination so well mastered by the late H. P. Lovecraft. . . .

HPL held a scorn for readers of pulp magazines; in his opinion a "hopelessly vulgar and stupid rabble comprise the bulk of the clientele" and demanded of the editors "detailed and prosaic explanations for every unusual element. . . (which) . . . ruins the story from a truly artistic standpoint. . ." (*Acolyte*)

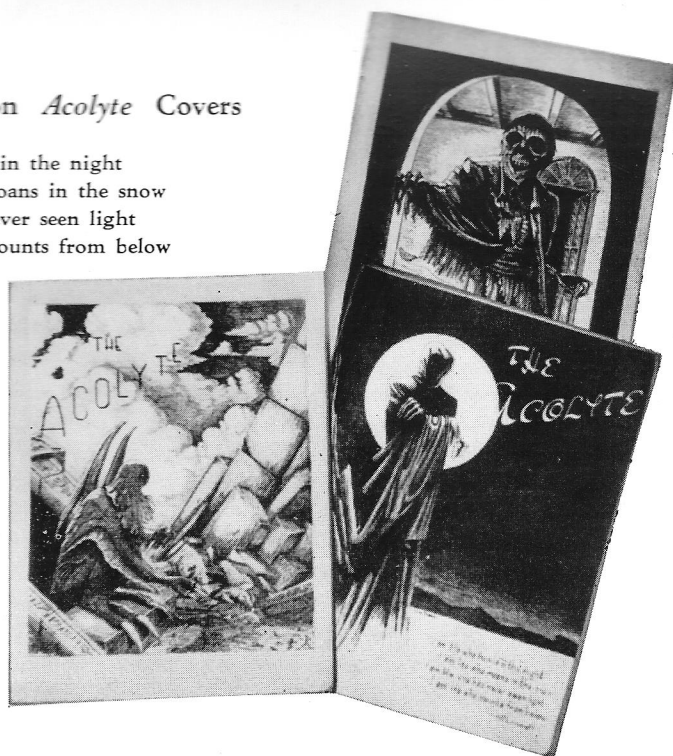
"The Lurking Fear" (*Home Brew* and *Weird Tales*) was being serialized by his "good friend Julius" (probably Julius Schwartz) when a Providence neighbor urged him to submit his tales to the new magazine. He was disinterested in commercializing his work, but as more and more tales were published in the amateur press—journals and fanzines—he was besieged by his friends. They did more than urge him. "The career of 'The Shadow,'" he wrote to Duane Rimel, "has certainly been one of surprises—first Bobby Barlow flabbergasted me with the typed

## Lovecraftian Themes on *Acolyte* Covers

I am He who howls in the night  
I am He who moans in the snow  
I am He who has never seen light  
I am He who mounts from below

—HPL poem quoted and illustrated on cover, bottom right.

The Outsider, above right; and Cthulhu, lower left; as visualized by fantasy artist Alva Rogers. Originals lithographed as covers for mimeographed fanzines, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 inches.



copy—and now Wandrei has put one over on Grandpa by marketing the selfsame copy!” (1)

(Duane W. Rimel was a fantasy writer—amateur and pro like HPL—with whom Lovecraft had intended to co-publish a fanzine, the mimeographed journal of the Fantasy publishers, but the project was foiled by his untimely death. This should raise the eyebrows of amateur journalists who are apt to view this field of publishing through a disapproving lorgnette.)

Ten years after the advent of *Weird Tales*, HPL, his tales successfully being re-printed at the demand of the readers, was still unconvinced. About “The Haunter of the Dark,” written in 1935 (*Weird Tales*), he wrote one of the “gang:”

I doubt if this tale will land anywhere professionally, but am circulating two carbons among the gang. . . . There is a good deal of actual Providence color in this story. The house inhabited by “Blake” is none other than No. 66, and the view of Federal Hill is also genuine. . . .

And so we have this autobiographical description:

. . . a venerable dwelling in a grassy court off College Street—on the crest of the great eastward hill near the Brown University campus and behind the marble John Hay Library. It was a cozy and fascinating place, in a little garden oasis of village-like antiquity where huge, friendly cats sunned themselves atop a convenient shed.

(This was HPL’s Kappa Alpha Tau fraternity. Considering the cat’s place in ancient lore and weird literature, his passion for cats was no inconsistency. Nor was it wasted: “The Cats of Ulthar”

(1) “The Shadow Out of Time” was written in 1934, and published in *Astounding* in 1936. With the reader-public clamoring for “more Lovecraft!” small wonder the “gang” took matters into their own hands.

(*Tryout, Weird Tales* and a *Dragonfly* Press booklet). He mourned the disappearance of his own cat Nigger-Man in the superbly gruesome tale, “The Rats in the Walls:” “Now they have taken. . . my Nigger-Man away from me. . .”)

Lovecraft derived intense satisfaction from architectural details such as these:

The square Georgian house had a monitor roof, classic doorway with fan carving, small-paned windows, and all the other earmarks of early Nineteenth Century workmanship. Inside were six-paneled doors, wide floor boards, a curving colonial staircase, white Adam-period mantels, and a rear set of rooms three steps below the general level.

Blake’s study, a large southwest chamber, overlooked the front garden on one side, while its west windows—before one of which he had his desk—faced off from the brow of the hill and commanded a splendid view of the lower town’s outspread roofs and of the mystical sunsets that flamed behind them. On the far horizon were the open countryside’s purple slopes. Against these, some two miles away, rose the spectral hump of Federal Hill, bristling with huddled roofs and steeples whose remote outlines wavered mysteriously, taking fantastic forms as the smoke of the city swirled up and enmeshed them.

His “amateur” attitude was neither coyness nor affectation, nor the result of independent wealth. (Generous with others, he was forced to be penurious with himself.) He wrote for “the pleasure it gives you during the writing—the mental and emotional satisfaction of self-expression.” This is well illustrated by the circumstances of “The Haunter of the Dark,” which also reveals his sense of humor. “The Haunter” was dedicated to fellow-writer Robert Bloch in exchange for his dedication of “The Shambler.” E’ch-Pi-El, as he sometimes signed himself within his fantasy circle, wrote Rimel:

He left me as a splotch of ensanguined jelly—and now I’ve left him as a glassy-eyed corpse whose expression of cosmic unutterable fear turns the spectators sick!

Lest there be to much sweetness and light in this biography, let there be this discordant note, about Lovecraft’s militant pen. J. Austin Fynes saw fit to print this pertinent paragraph in the *Fossil*, Nov. 1920:

It seems to us that Lovecraft is a singularly inappropriate name for a muckraker.

Fandom, too, know his rapier thrusts. The *Fantasy Fan*, published by Charles Hornig, featured fiction and poetry by HPL. In one issue Forrest J. Ackerman, en route to becoming No. 1 *Fan*, criticized Clark Ashton Smith’s “Light from Beyond” as a sorry example of science-fiction.

He was promptly pounced upon by both Smith and Lovecraft, who with verbal pyrotechnics and glorified name-calling proceeded to pummel him soundly,

reported Moscowitz in “The Immortal Storm,” adding,

It is the opinion of this writer that their actions were unbecoming to their statures as intellectuals and authors. . . .

Lovecraft argued on principles: a point of criticism, a defense of friend or dogma, a moral viewpoint, a tilting-at-windmills in behalf of UAPA. He bore no personal animosities, ever, and he left behind no personal enemies. His bitterest anger revealed itself only by a growing coolness and an exaggeration of his formal politeness. Nor did he harbor any jealousy, envy, or pettinesses. He helped his proteges and encouraged his friends. Proudly he announced in the *United Amateur*, 1925:

Frank Belknap Long, Jr., is achieving considerable prominence as a fantastic fictionist through work featured in the professional magazine, *Weird Tales*. The December issue chose one of his stories, “Death Waters,” as a theme for the cover design, and few subsequent issues have been without his work.

And, ever the amateur journalist:

It is interesting to note that the editor of this piquant publication, Farnsworth Wright, is a former United member; having been one of us when a resident of San Francisco.

The *Conservative* was once reviewed in *UA*:

Despite the commanding nature of the outside material, Mr. Lovecraft’s editorials remain the chief attraction to the majority of amateurs. . . . Mr. Lovecraft’s personal peculiarities, notably extremism and dogma, make his comments occasionally ill-advised; but the level of the whole is incomparable, and a personal element but makes them more appealing if less impartial.

HPL held no wishy-washy opinions—and many smarted under his forthright words when he was Critic. However, he respected always the other man’s point-of-view and, most importantly, did not expect others to conform to his own code, likes or dislikes.

In Providence, in the Thirties he was host to pulp writer E. Hoffman Price and his friend Harry, another of those thirty-to-

forty-hour sessions HPL enjoyed so much ("hair-splitting wrangles over each comma," reminisced Price). Price made Indian curry and his friend bought six bottles of beer, somewhat to Price's astonishment as they were in HPL's home.

But HPL, the perfect host, had not a frown of disapproval: after all, beer was legal, we were not violating the law of the land, he asserted by way of justifying his attitude.

However, HPL refused to touch the beer. "What'll you do with it all?" he asked, out of scientific curiosity.

"Hell, drink it," said the guest; Price added,

...and I'll never forget HPL's incredulity. It was as though Harry had promised to evoke a familiar spirit. And what I enjoyed most was HPL's growing incredulity as he watched us drink three bottles apiece. He could not quite believe that we would not pass out, almost any instant; perhaps he expected us to vanish in a puff of flame.

Besides this spicy Indian curry, HPL loved ice-cream, and coffee too-heavily sugared. However, he loathed sea-food. Yet he took Price to a Rhode Island sea-food house for the famous steamed clam dinner. After ordering for Price, to be sure he was served the best, he said,

While you are eating that God-damned stuff, I'll go across the street for a sandwich. Please excuse me.

Price adds:

Those are his very words. And for HPL, that grand Puritan, those were unusual; unique, I believe. His "damns" were for state occasions; this utterance could only come in the presence of a supreme horror, such as a man eating sea-food!

This, too, is reflected in his writing. "The Weird Shadow Over Innsmouth"<sup>(1)</sup> tells of hordes of abominably repellent degenerates, a mutation of humans and sea creatures:

The fishy odor was detestable, and I wondered I could stand it without fainting.

"My first sight of H. P. Lovecraft," reminisced Price in *Acolyte*,

was when he welcomed me in the lobby of a third class hotel on St. Charles Street in New Orleans in 1932. . . . He wore a baggy and threadbare suit of what might be called snuff-color; it had been neatly and inconspicuously patched in at least two places. He made some remarks about having just finished laundering a shirt in his room.

(This before nylon shirts made it fashionable to do so! HWV.)

From this I knew that I had come face to face with a man who preferred the feeding of brain and soul. . . a sight and a sandwich. . . better than a banquet and being in the same old rut.

He was inclined to be stooped, somewhat the stoop of the Chinese scholar; thin, narrow face, long chin and jaw, and intense brown eyes.

(1) In book form by Visionary Publishing Co., 1936; *Weird Tales*, American and Canadian editions, posthumously. (Written 1931.)

The next striking aspect was his choice of words: an animated and highly keyed dictionary! Yet so natural and unaffected was his use of formal locutions, "two-bit" words, bookish expressions, that I suddenly realized that if he spoke as other people did—THAT would have been an affectation.<sup>(2)</sup>

Price made HPL his first Indian curry at that first visit.

The man's enormous enthusiasm for novelty of idea, of food, of spectacles, of word combinations; this if anything, could be called as characterizing H.P.L. I have met in all my time only one or two others who equalled him in what I call "mental greed," that insatiable, everlasting hunger for impressions, sights, knowledge of no matter what source. . . . He did not drink liquor nor smoke, and, judging from all his conversation and letters, women simply did not exist as far as his personal life was concerned

(though still later Sonia inquired solicitously about *him*, in a chance meeting with Loveman!)

but in all other fields, I am sure he never willingly left anything untried, untested, unappreciated.

### Environment and Inspirations

"Upon few other authors do we find the influence of surroundings, of environment more fully apparent," to repeat Butman in Koenig's *Reader and Collector*, continuing:

The scenes of his childhood, the primitive landscapes, the brooding trees and sparsely scattered, weathered farm houses, the aura of oldness and mysterious force, so deeply endeared themselves to him that not a single story or poem is without some mention of them and of their meaning.

However, Lovecraft drew from other sources than his environment, his enthusiasms and loathings.

The secret of perfect effectiveness is an atmosphere so thoroughly co-ordinated that every sentence has some subtle bearing on the whole plan and outcome,

HPL wrote Rimel. To this end he channelled all his erudition and, more mundanely:

I also save press cuttings bearing on weird topics—reports of monsters, lost races, excavated cities of antiquity, sunken islands, etc.—for possible use in fiction.

(2) Discrediting "hunches," instinct, presentiment, and intuition, HPL described them to his friend "Culinarius" as "subconscious correlation of apparently unrelated impressions."

Cook adds: "When he would relieve himself of a combination of words like that, I would say, 'Now, please, Howard, if you will translate that into the good old Anglo-Saxon words of one syllable, perhaps I can understand you. When with proletarians you should, if possible, speak the proletarian language.' Which would annoy him so that he would stutter. But he finally was able to speak an idiomatic, even slangy, English of considerable raciness when he had been sufficiently goaded. 'There! How do you like that?' he would ask. Removing my fingers from my ears, 'You are coming, Howard, you're coming,' I would reply."

This must have been the source of his "Mi-Go," the *yeti* or Abominable Snow Men who periodically through the decades crop up inexplicably in the Himalayas and wend their way into the world-wide press. To HPL they were pinkish, crustacean creatures who dwelt in the High Himalayas and in certain mountains of Vermont. Unexplained by scientists, with Lovecraft they were natives of "Yuggoth," flying through space on great wings to outposts on earth to obtain certain minerals not found on Yuggoth.

Other press clippings undoubtedly concerned the cataclysmic natural disasters—oceanic upheavals, for instance: "The Call of Cthulhu," (*Weird Tales*); "Dagon" (*Vagrant and Weird Tales*). Certainly the Vermont floods of 1927 inspired "The Whisperer in Darkness," written in 1930 (*Weird Tales*). "The Colour Out of Space" (*Amazing; Famous Fantastic Mysteries* posthumously) resulted from his visits to W. Paul Cook's home in a north central Massachusetts town noted only for its proximity to a valley that was to be evacuated and inundated for an immense reservoir for metropolitan Boston. The "domed hills" did have a pattern of boulders left by glaciers, and not only were the generations-old homesteads of Colonial architecture to be destroyed, but all the graveyards, crypts and vaults were to be disinterred and their contents, if any, transferred.

Open to conjecture are the ideas, perhaps inspirations, he drew from his fabulous correspondence with his readers, on every conceivable subject. *Acolyte* reports an involved exchange with one reader, residing in Mexico, on the history and lore of the ancient Mayan, Toltec and Aztec civilizations. The man sent HPL several clay and jade figurines of Aztec and Mayan gods and godlings from Mexico and some publications on the subject, and reminisced later: "He seemed to be bubbling over with a deep Jovian inner laughter because supposedly intelligent readers of his tales took his gods for granted as real existing powers." (And many readers have scanned many maps of New England searching for the town Arkham!)

From his own viewpoint, if not his friends', Lovecraft did not "waste" himself on Amateur Journalism or its component, Fandom, but his success in professional letters—certainly including fields other than the Weird—could possibly have been meteoric had he been commercial-minded. He wasn't. He'd spend time on a Round Robin story, "The Challenge from



Beyond,"—fantasy writers C. L. Moore, Robert E. Howard and Frank Belknap Long, Jr., and HPL each contributing a portion of the story—for *Fantasy Magazine* or *Science-Fiction Digest*.

He wrote a pastiche, "Mss. Found in a Time Machine—The Battle That Ended the Century." (His denial of the unsigned hoax was not a forthright and emphatic "NO!" and August Derleth believed that he did have a hand in it; it was typical.) Copies were sent anonymously to his circle of friends. In this parody he was "Horse-Power Hateart," August Derleth "M. le Comte d'Erlette," H. C. Koenig "H. Canebrake," Clark Ashton Smith "Klarkash-Ton," Frank Belknap Long, Jr. "Frank Chimesleep Short," W. Paul Cook "W. Peter Chef," and Robert E. Howard, whose style was lampooned, "Two-Gun Bob." Fun, but not marketable.

*Weird Tales* continued publication until its reported demise this past year, a sad end but not surprising. Several factors caused its lamented death after a long illness lapsing into puerile senility.

First, financial troubles, no doubt, considering the high cost of union printing today. Wright had published *WT* "hand to mouth." Paying on publication, he sometimes had to delay HPL's work, despite reader demand, especially later on when Lovecraft lengthened his stories. (HPL refused to shorten his lengthening pieces just to make them more desirable to professional editors.)

Second, the Lovecraft circle dissolved gradually, and the momentum *WT* derived from it just petered out. As amateur journalists know, it is difficult to secure high-quality copy of a specialized nature to meet monthly, even quarterly, deadlines.

Then there is the tempo of the times. Today, fantasy author Ray Bradbury writes the screen script for *Moby Dick*, and *Harper's Bazaar* prints a tale about a girl possessed by a sailor-ancestor. Fantasy has grown up and graduated to the "slicks."

### Printed Works Lost

But let us return to Amateur Journalism, as Ernest A. Edkins did.

Soon after his retirement from business in 1934, Edkins was brought back to activity by the late Howard Lovecraft, whose efforts to improve the literary standards of amateur journalism met with Edkins' instant support,

wrote Cole in the *Fossil*, 1946. (Well, at least HPL's efforts were not entirely wasted!)

Some of Lovecraft's best never even

saw amateur publication though intended for it. In Amateurism, "there's many a slip between" the typeset and the reader. R. H. Barlow's *Dragonfly* Press printed the complete "Fungi from Yuggoth" but the pages were never collated. The 36 sonnets of "Fungi" were individually published by *Fantasy Fan*, *Causerie*, *Driftwind*, *Science-Fantasy Correspondent*, *Phantagraph*, as well as *Weird Tales*; the complete booklet would have become a collector's item.

Another collector's item would have been Cook's publication of one of Lovecraft's best, "The Shunned House," all printed and in the bindery, copyrighted 1928. Cook's life was at a crossroads, and he stored the unbound sheets away, giving them later to a very young amateur who promised to send them out but never did. The second issue of the *Recluse*, containing HPL's "The Strange High House in the Mist," with 40 pages printed, was destroyed by Cook in 1930 during the same move. Both of these were printed in *Weird Tales* (as well as anthologies), but 'tis a pity they were lost to Ajaydom.

Throughout his later years, Lovecraft was an "all-around Amateur Journalist" except in one respect—he disdained the mechanical end of the hobby. In the *United Amateur*, 1920, he had written:

The printing press, political and frivolous phases have been passed through; and our aspirations seem to be crystallizing into a form more worthy than any of our past aspirations.

To him that meant "the eternal truths of literary art."

Despite his questionable health, he was indefatigable at conventions and amateur gatherings. Writing about the Boston NAPA Convention of 1930, at the Statler, Edith D. Minter related:

The banquet was a pleasant affair with one exceptionally fine speech, that of Howard P. Lovecraft, his subject being "Within the Gates," while he was introduced as "One Sent by Providence." And he was much funnier than that, I assure you. He equals anything I ever heard—even the renowned Truman J. Spencer in his active prime on such a topic as "The Amateur Printer," with which he has been known to keep the table a-roar for an hour. . . .

Lovecraft served as an outstanding critic, even as late as mid-1936, leaving within the *National Amateur*, (and earlier the *United Amateur*), reams of eminently readable comments, a veritable history of the literary facet of our hobby. He served on the NAPA Constitution Committee in 1936. He literally gave *himself* to Amateur Journalism.

If Amateur Journalism had given him

life, that life he in turn devoted to Amateur Journalism.

### Post-Humous Fame

The boy who published the *Scientific Gazette* at eight, the man who jeered at the superstition, necromancy and other terrors which were his stock-in-trade,

("Science is true and irrefutable. Look at the stars above you!")

was consistent till the end. Dying of cancer and Bright's disease, his last moments he spent recording his reactions for the benefit of medical science.

He died in the month of the Ram (Aries) on his book-plate—March, 1937. He was interred beside his father, Winfield S. Lovecraft, and his mother, Sarah S. Phillips.

Only a small black box 'way back on Page 9 announced his death in the *National Amateur*, September 1937. At least he was not alone back there for the box reads: "In Memoriam—Arthur H. Goodenough—Howard P. Lovecraft."

Goodenough was a sincere poet. The long friendship of these two men was based on mutual admiration of each other's character and literary achievements.

There is no further official notice of Lovecraft in the *NA* until June 1939, when he was featured in a brief article chronologically following one on William Dowdell in the series, "N.A.P.A. Presidents."

So passed one about whom E. H. Cole wrote in the *Fossil*, 1946:

...Lovecraft is unmistakably the most remarkable amateur journalist that has won fame in professional letters.

If the official National took no note of the passing of a man who had laboured for it even as his fatal illness must surely have been upon him, the opposite is true of individual amateurs. Surely few, if any, amateur journalists have received as many accolades as HPL. Ed Cole published a fine *Olympian* 35 entirely devoted to HPL; in writing his contribution to it, W. Paul Cook found himself reminiscing into booklet length, his *Lovecraft*; *Fossil* Hyman Bradofsky's *Californian*, Summer 1937, was

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE  
HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT

WHO, AS A CRITICAL SCHOLAR, AN INSPIRING TEACHER, A SINCERE FRIEND, HAD BEEN CONSTANT IN HIS SUPPORT OF EVERY ENTERPRISE FOR THE BETTERMENT AND WELFARE OF AMATEUR JOURNALISM

Albert Chapin won the 1938 NAPA Poetry Laureate with "H.P.L." Ad infinitum.

*Weird Tales* eulogized the man:

Though only 46 years of age, he had built up an international reputation by the artistry and impeccable literary craftsmanship of his weird tales; and he was regarded on both sides of the Atlantic as probably the greatest contemporary master of weird fiction.

Fandom took a more practical view. They eulogized, long after HPL was forgotten by all but his circle, many of whom have joined him. But, more worldly than amateur journalists, they also set about to install HPL in his proper niche in the professional world.

August Derleth immediately arranged to type and sell for Mrs. Gamwell, Lovecraft's surviving aunt and heir, his unsold mss. This he did without agent's fees, and Mrs. Gamwell gained a needed thousand dollars. With Donald Wandrei, who visualized Lovecraft's entire literary output within hard covers, Derleth published the first volume of tales, dedicated to Mrs. Annie E. P. Gamwell. As a result of their interest, Mrs. Gamwell willed to the two faithful friends the income from all Lovecraft writings with the understanding that such income was to go to the ultimate publication of all the Lovecraft works.

"Arkham House," named after the locale of many of the Cthulhu and allied myths, has since become well-known among *aficionados* of weird fantasy for its publication of contemporary fantasists, as well as HPL's works. It was a slow, up-hill journey, however, fortunately only a side-line for the two publishers. (1)

"The Outsider and Others" was the first Arkham House volume of Lovecraft published. From mid-1939 until mid-1943, the small edition—1,200 copies—sold slowly at \$5. Two and a half years later, to the present, fantasy book dealers were listing this volume at \$100, a fabulous and exorbitant price, but there it is. Probably, if a possessor of the volume badly needed money and had to sell, the volume would go for half that—still beyond the purse of this biographer!

"Beyond the Wall of Sleep" followed, restricted by wartime regulations to 1217 copies, and containing lesser tales, poems, and a miscellany of Lovecraftiana, including a long biographical study. (No Arkham House publications were consulted for this biography aforewritten for several reasons, one being that they are not available to the biographer.) This, too, is out of print, and also "Marginalia"—various essays, revisions, fragments, photos; and the essay "Supernatural

(1) The story of Arkham House is told by Fossil August Derleth in the *FOSSIL*, October 1950.

Horror in Literature," a slim black-bound volume with, alas, proofreading that would make the Master wince. A complete "Collected Works of Howard Phillips Lovecraft," illustrated, was visualized. "HPL; A Memoir" was written by literary executor August Derleth and published by Arkham House.

It should be noted here that professional publication of stories sprinkled throughout this biography as flavouring (HPL would spell it with the "u") are principally those he saw printed. It is regrettable he could not foresee his post-humous success also—but he couldn't have cared less.

Subsequent publications included a popular-priced cloth-bound Tower Edition containing 14 "Best Supernatural Stories of H. P. Lovecraft." Boris Karloff included one tale in his anthology, "And the Darkness Falls;" Dashiell Hammett chose one for his anthology, "Creeps by Night;" two Lovecraft stories are included in elite company in "Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural," indeed, it would be an incomplete anthology of horror and the supernatural which did not include one or more Lovecraft tales.

There have also been paperback anthologies of all-Lovecraft, including a special Armed Forces edition exclusively for Overseas distribution to the boys fighting World War II.

No other amateur—or professional—has inspired entire journals into existence in the way HPL did posthumously.

Some, like the *Lovecraft Collector*, published by Ray Zorn, were printed. Most were mimeographed fanzines, of which one is a monument in itself.

The *Acolyte*, published by Francis T. Laney and various co-editors, "Dedicated to the Memory of the Late H. P. Lovecraft by Two of His Sincere Acolytes," comprises two bound volumes, 1942-46. Neatly mimeographed in the standard 8½×11-inch fanzine format, it is illustrated, each number also having a lithographed cover, many of which are worth reproduction as fine amateur illustrations of HPL's works. It is a scholarly treasure-trove of Lovecraftiana, and weird fiction generally.

W. Paul Cook regarded the almost-hysterical posthumous worship of HPL as rather unhealthy, but it did serve to give his works the initial push to start the volumes rolling. The reverberations were heard as far away as *Esquire*, January 1946, in "Ten-Cent Ivory Tower," an article on HPL by John Wilstach.

Today the hysteria has died down and Lovecraft's macabre tales proceed at a

## FOSSILS IN THE NATION'S NEWS

(Continued from Page 4)

"Gems of printing yield fame, not fortune, for typographer in Berkeley Heights." So reads the headline of a long feature article, with two illustrations, on Joseph Ishill in the Elizabeth (N.J.) *Daily Journal*.

Bibliophiles and literati of two continents have acclaimed the artistry of the exquisite volumes he has produced with handset type and hand-fed presses at the Oriole Press in the basement of his modest home. Most of these he has given away to libraries, universities and distinguished men of letters whom he numbers among his friends.

Several books printed by Mr. Ishill were translated by his wife from original manuscripts in French.

Sheldon Wesson was re-elected to his third term as vice-president of the Japan-America Society of Yokohama. He is also president of the Columbia Society of Yokohama, the American patriotic and community association; and in that capacity presided over its annual Washington's Birthday Ball, at which the guest of honor was the new American Ambassador to Japan, Douglas MacArthur II.

From the *Japan Times* (Tokyo)

"A short, deeply moving and artfully fashioned first novel by a 22-year-old North Carolina newspaper woman," is a summary description of "Caleb, My Son," by Lucy Daniels. At the conclusion of the enthusiastic and lengthy review in the New York *Herald Tribune*, John K. Hutchens comments: "The daughter of Jonathan Daniels and the granddaughter of Josephus Daniels could scarcely have done otherwise" (than support the cause... of human decency).

The novel is a finely-wrought study of the desegregation issue, as seen through its effect on one family.

slower pace that is, for that fact, steady and sure.

Albert Chapin, in his Laureate poem "H.P.L." perhaps did not realize that his "stay" would come to have the connotation later of "endure:"

"The voice has gone. . . .

"His written page the gods have doomed to stay."

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