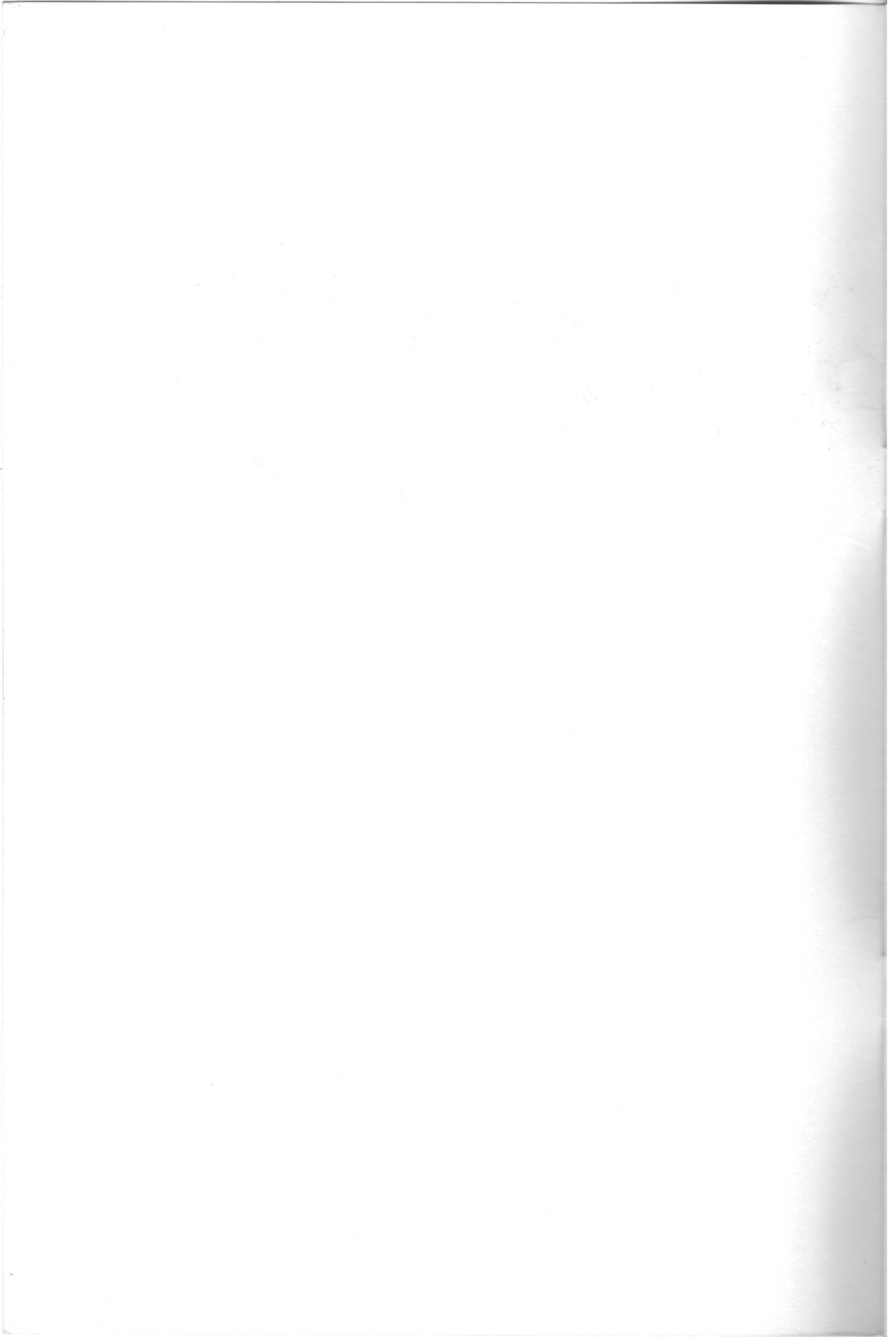




Journal of the H.P. Lovecraft Society  
featuring Fritz Leiber









# Journal of the H.P. Lovecraft Society

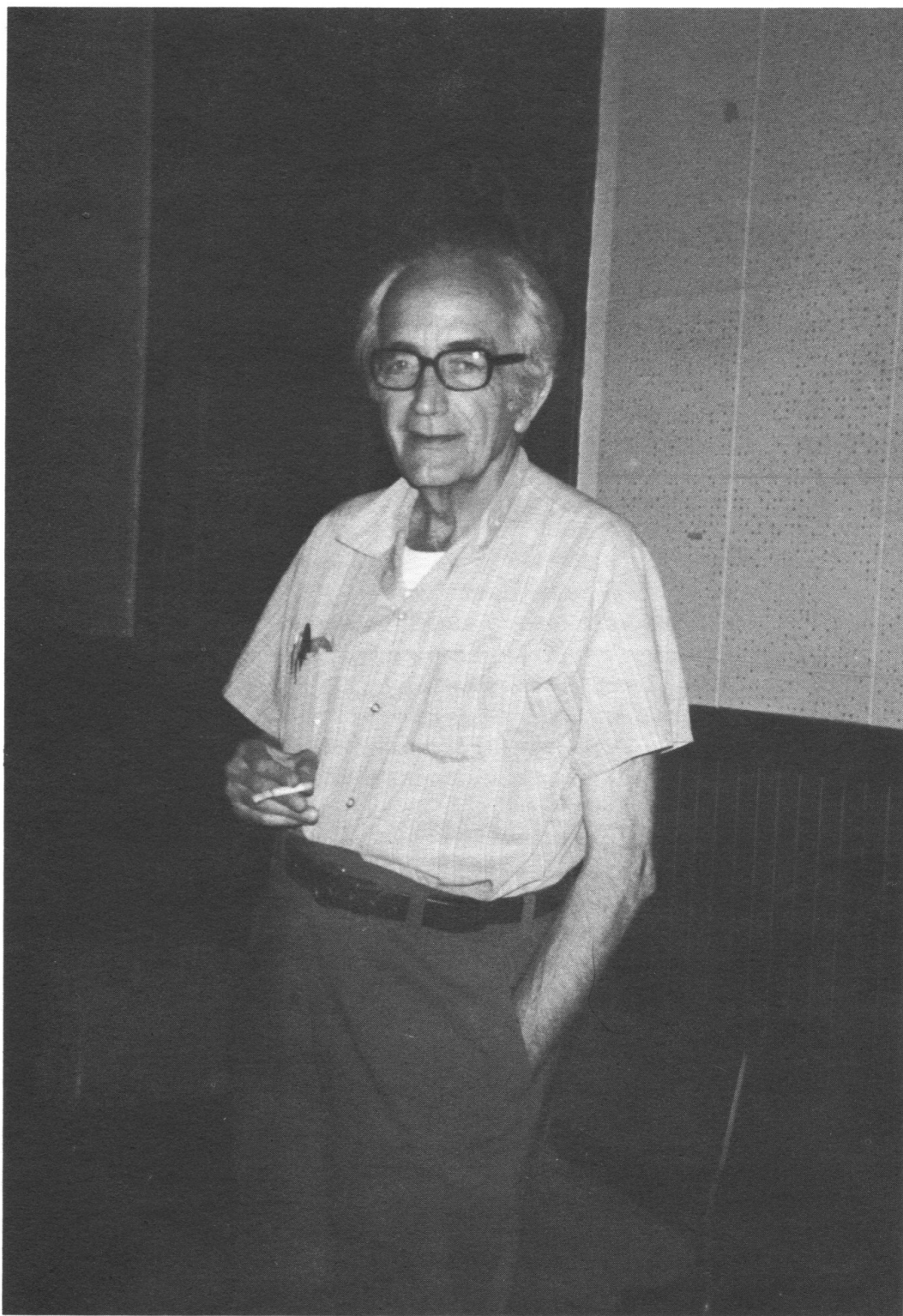
To Bill Hart,  
With best wishes,  
Ozzy Leibes

No. 1

1976  
H.P. LOVECRAFT SOCIETY  
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94804

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*Fritz Leiber*

FRITZ LEIBER



## LOVECRAFT IN MY LIFE

by Fritz Leiber

I read Lovecraft's "The Color Out of Space" in the summer of 1927 when I was halfway through my senior year at Lake View High School in Chicago. It put me off *Amazing Stories*, which hitherto had pleased me with its tales in which science could solve almost any mystery. Its powerful pessimistic statement of mysteries beyond the ken of science and of the futility of life in the face of the inevitability of death depressed me for weeks. It frightened me as much and more profoundly than *The Cat and the Canary*. (In those days I eschewed *Weird Tales*—its stories were too morbidly uncanny for me. Even Fu Manchu scared me—all those centipedes and spiders!).

In 1932 or thereabouts, when I was rooming at Hitchcock Hall at the University of Chicago, I read in about two days most of Lovecraft's professionally published stories, preserved in magazine tearsheets by an acquaintance whose name I have forgotten. By then I was less afraid of the dark and had a new lifelong friend, Franklin MacKnight, with whom I shared a taste for the eerie. (He loaned me the October 1923 *Weird Tales* with "Dagon" in it and I lost it—even then a crime for which I am still deeply ashamed.)

All of the stories thrilled me. They matchlessly conveyed, I felt, the fascinating and strangely sparkling mysteriousness of the cosmos. My enthusiasm was uncritical; I recall thinking that "The Moon Bog," a trifle, was perhaps the best. I describe my reactions in more detail in "My Correspondence with Lovecraft" in *Fresco: The University of Detroit Quarterly*, Spring 1958.

"At the Mountains of Madness" surfaced spectacularly in the January, February, March 1936 issues of *Astounding Stories*. During a protracted spell of zero weather I read it aloud to my new-wed wife, Jonquil Stephens, who loved supernatural horror stories, in an apartment

on Chicago's South Side which we occupied the first three months of our marriage. Later that spring, when we'd moved in with my parents in Beverly Hills, California, we read "The Shadow Out of Time" in the same magazine and also reread "The Silver Key" and "The Whisperer in Darkness," which I bought in tearsheets from a Los Angeles schoolboy, Forrest J. Ackerman.

Then that summer Jonquil wrote Lovecraft care of *Weird Tales* and for the next half-year, until his death, there was much furious corresponding (described in my *Fresco* article). We also read "The Haunter of the Dark" and "The Thing on the Doorstep" as they appeared in *Weird Tales*.

It was an odd period. I was supposed to be humping myself to get publicity and jobs as a movie actor, but all my real interest was focused on an obscure pulp writer and my efforts to write stories more or less like his. In the summer of 1937 we met Lovecraft's young fellow fantasy writers Robert Bloch and Henry Kuttner, who had learned about me from Lovecraft, and later (when we'd returned to editorial work in Chicago) August Derleth, whose Arkham House published *The Outsider and Others* in 1939. I caught up on the Lovecraft I'd missed, especially his almost book-length essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

Back in Los Angeles in 1942, living in Santa Monica Canyon near the sea, Jonquil and I met (at the home of our neighbor Craig Rice, the popular mystery writer) Francis T. Laney, publisher of the early Lovecraft fan magazine *The Acolyte*, which had some fine Lovecraft covers by Alva Rogers. For it I wrote two short articles about Lovecraft's fiction. (Later Laney "gafiated" from fandom and wrote about it all in his remarkable, mimeographed, book-length *Ah, Sweet Idiocy!*) By then I had sold supernatural horror stories to *Weird Tales* and *Unknown*, especially my witchcraft novel *Conjure Wife*, inspired by Jonquil and a year teaching dramatics at Occidental College.

In the late 1940s, when I was (1945-1956) associate editor of *Science Digest* in Chicago, I combined my *Acolyte* articles with additional material into "A Literary Copernicus," published in *Something About Cats*, edited by August Derleth, Arkham House, 1949. This essay analyzes Lovecraft's style, interprets the Cthulhu Mythos as symbolizing Lovecraft's atheism and materialism, gives a brief history of Miskatonic University as Lovecraft developed it in his fiction, and argues that Lovecraft's chief original achievement was in shaping science fiction to the ends of supernatural horror. At the time it was my swan song to things Lovecraftian. My own interests then lay chiefly in other directions. I silently disapproved of Derleth's posthumous collaborations with Lovecraft and disagreed with his claim that he could mimic his style perfectly. I saw nothing good in *anyone* writing Lovecraft pastiches.

By that time Derleth had excerpted Lovecraft's letters to myself and Jonquil (for eventual appearance in the last of the *Selected Letters* volumes, still to come) and I loaned them to a seemingly serious scholar,

whose name I have truthfully forgotten and who has not yet returned them. I didn't care much then—a measure of my mood.

It was about fourteen years until nostalgia hit me really hard. (The 1958 *Fresco* article was a minor attack.) Jonquil and I were living in the placid, well-to-do city of Santa Barbara with its solid Mexican-American subcommunity and I was, most appropriately, helping care for three cats and cleaning dead wood out of and bringing to new life a fantastically overgrown garden. I decided at long last to write a story in the *style* of Lovecraft, though with no references whatever to the Cthulhu Mythos. I still looked down on writers of *that* sort. The result was “The Black Gondolier,” published in *Over the Edge*, edited by Derleth, Arkham House, 1964. The story must have meant a lot to me emotionally, because *after* writing it I explored its “almost impenetrable” Potrero Canyon, finding three easy ways down into it, tramping its entire length alone and in company, and surprising large mule deer there amongst its thickety vegetation. And I ended up living in its Venice (1967-1969).

Having indulged nostalgia once, I continued to do so. I was becoming philosophical about Derleth's Lovecraftian activities. After all, the man was keeping Lovecraft in print, forcing mainstream critics and libraries to pay attention to him, and putting into hardcover books for the first time writers as diverse as Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury, A.E. Van Vogt, and myself. That he should have a lot of ego and behave very possessively toward Lovecraft and his works were inevitable.

Moreover, I was having to admit the great and continuing influence of Lovecraft on my life. I *was* writing supernatural horror stories from time to time. “The Dreams of Albert Moreland” (1947), “The Girl with the Hungry Eyes” (1949), “You're All Alone” (novel, 1950), “I'm Looking for Jeff” (1952), “The Hatchery of Dreams” (1961), “A Bit of the Dark World” (1962), “The Spider” (1963), “Midnight in the Mirror World” (1964), “Four Ghosts in Hamlet” (1965), etc. (The long gap here from 1952 to 1961 covers four years when I was writing almost nothing and then five when my entire output was science fiction.)

Moreover, during this period Lovecraft was one of the writers I would read just before going to sleep. The stories one reads this private way are one's true favorites, at least in my case, whatever ones one rates “best” publicly. The other writers were Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, Montague Rhodes James, Poe, Robert Heinlein, Robert Graves, Eric Ambler, and Nigel Balchin. In this way I read most of Lovecraft's stories over and over again. (Later I came to include Dashiell Hammett, Ian Fleming, and John D. MacDonald.)

Finally, I was trying to heed Lovecraft's injunctions to be skeptical, research and choose words carefully, pay attention to organization and grammar, and polish the final product.

Again I began to write little articles about Lovecraft for the fanzines, culminating in “Through Hyperspace with Brown Jenkin” and “To Arkham and the Stars,” both published in *The Dark Brotherhood*,



Arkham House, 1966, the first an essay about the science-fiction element in Lovecraft's last stories (especially "The Shadow Out of Time," "At the Mountains of Madness," "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Color Out of Space," and "The Dreams in the Witch House," where Brown Jenkin is the familiar of the witch Keziah Mason), the second a whimsical short story of Arkham and Miskatonic as they might be today along with the professors who were Lovecraft's heroes, now grown old but as resourceful as ever. (It is a Cthulhu Mythos story, if you will, since the *Necronomicon* and the weird denizens of Lovecraft's Vermont, Antarctica, and the Australian desert are mentioned.)

During the same period Walter J. Daugherty, director of the Los Angeles Photography Center, made slides of photographs of Lovecraft and places associated with him and of almost all the illustrations, both published and unpublished, of his stories (including those of Alva Rogers, Rankin, and some of my own). A sound tape was made to be shown with these. I chose and read suitable short selections from the stories to go with the illustrations, while biographic material to go with the photographs was prepared and recorded by Samuel Russell, for the second issue of whose magazine *Haunted* I wrote the article, "The Whisperer Re-examined." After a few successful showings, the slides and tapes were stolen and have not been recreated.

In 1969 Jonquil died and I left Venice for San Francisco. In 1973 I wrote "Midnight by the Morphy Watch" (*Worlds of If*, August 1974), my first supernatural-horror story set in San Francisco.

Then early in 1974 Raymond H. Ramsay, author of the fascinating *No Longer on the Map* (Viking and Ballantine) and columnist and book reviewer for the *Berkeley Barb*, organized the Berkeley H.P. Lovecraft Society, which had several enjoyable informal meetings at the Berkeley home of the actress Jean Hauck, where we read stories by Lovecraft and others. My interest in the man was pleasantly restimulated.

There came simultaneously a spate of new Lovecraftian books, and so I devoted to them the next four Fantasy Books sections I write for the magazine *Fantastic*. The first of these (June 1975) sets down a short history of the Cthulhu Mythos and reviews *The Burrowers Beneath*, a Mythos novel by Brian Lumley. By some proofreader's oversight the short fifth paragraph was omitted from that review, so I give it here:

Wingate Peaslee of Miskatonic University, American professor and profound student of the Mythos.

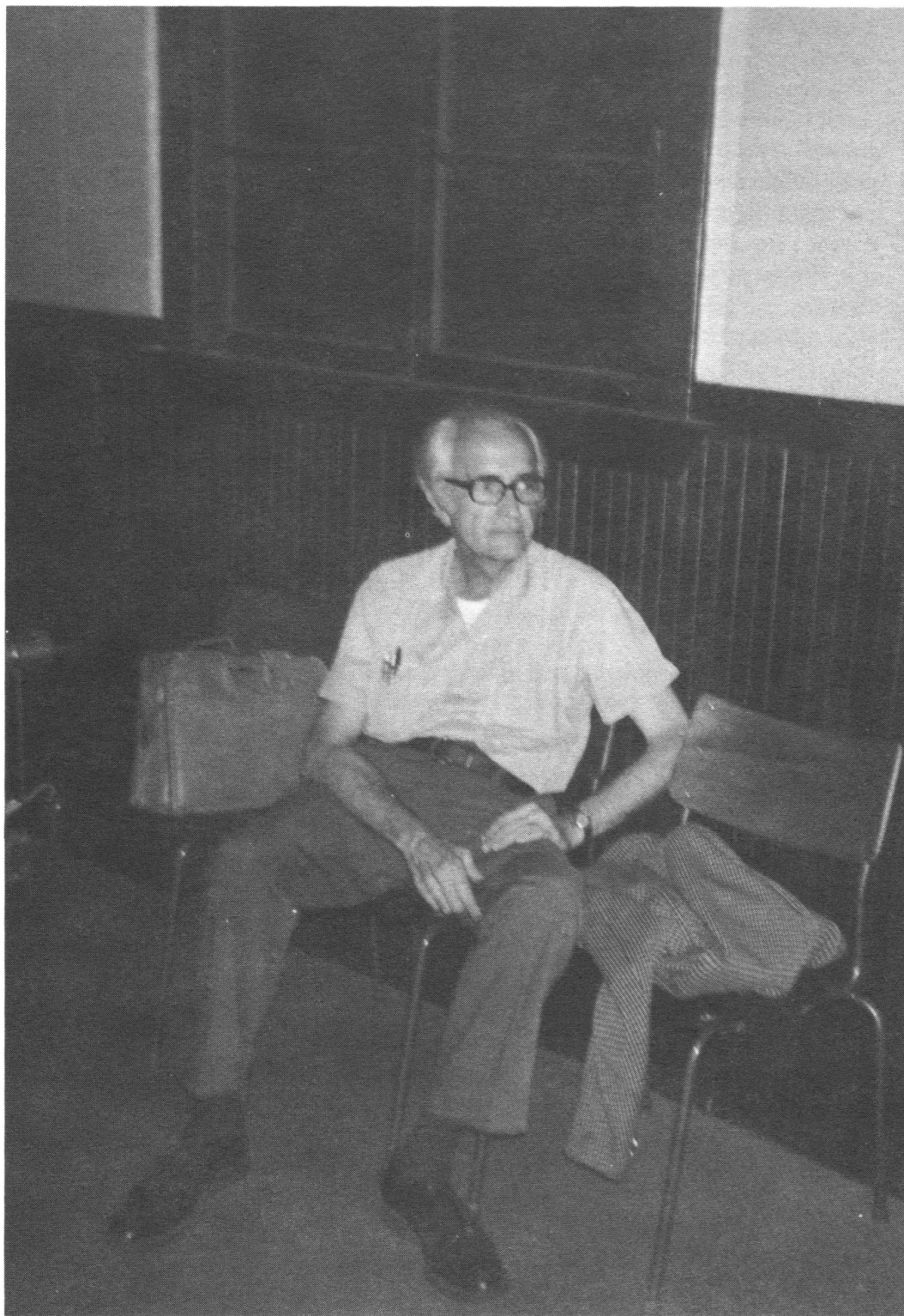
The following three sections in *Fantastic* will (1) briefly discuss the horror novel over the past fifty years and review an excellent collection of "best" horror stories; (2) review *The Watchers Out of Time* by H.P. Lovecraft and August Derleth, discussing the pros and cons of the latter's very large influence on the Mythos; and (3) review Willis Conover's interesting, lively and off-trail *Lovecraft at Last* and L. Sprague de Camp's big biography of Lovecraft, which I recommend highly.



Coincidentally with Ramsay's activities, Douglas Palmer got me to do some story readings in Berkeley, became more deeply interested in Lovecraft, and launched this journal.

San Francisco is spectrally electrifying—Lovecraft would have loved her! Last summer her TV tower on Sutro Crest and her forgotten nearby hill—Corona Heights—stimulated me to write my first supernatural horror novel in twenty-five years, *The Pale Brown Thing*, just now finished.

And right now I'm in the midst of writing a fullblown Cthulhu Mythos novelette, having finally come around and decided it's permissible for me to do so—at least once.



## THE STAGE IN MY STORIES

by Fritz Leiber

In recent years—the last two decades—the theater has come to play a larger part in my stories. For one thing, I've written more stories with only a few or even just one setting.

Although it is a novel of time travel, *The Big Time* (1957) hews to the classical unities of time, place and action (one set, two hours, a single concern) and is quite clearly a two- or three-act play, as A.J. Budrys pointed out in a belated review in *Galaxy*, and currently there are projects to produce it in Providence, R.I., and here near Berkeley in Kensington.

"No Great Magic" (1963) all takes place backstage just before and during a production of *Macbeth*. It may become the third act of the Kensington production.

Also, beginning with "The Secret Songs" (1962), I started to write short stories in the form of one-act plays with the speeches, or dialogue, given after the character's name in capitals, which at least gets rid of quotation marks and lots of he-said-she-said's. These include "The Inner Circles" (1967) which was actually produced as a one-acter by Joana Russ in New York City in 1969, "237 Talking Statues, Etc." (1963), where the rest of the story appears in italics as stage directions, and a short section of "The Frost Monstreme," my newest Fafhrd-Mouser novelette, to be published in *Flashing Swords* #3, edited by Lin Carter.

The last story I've written handed me a surprise in this connection. It is also a novelette, "Dark Wings," written for *Superhorror*, a British anthology of supernatural-terror stories edited by Ramsey Campbell, to be published in 1976 by W.E. Allen (although it might well appear under another title and even elsewhere—nothing is certain in the publishing business). I had written more than a quarter of it before I realized that it was also a one-act play: only one set and two characters (twin sisters parted at birth, meeting when of age), acting time under an

hour, everything told in dialogue and action (even the descriptions of feelings being directions to the actor), the horror being conveyed in part by offstage noises and by three or four uses of colored stroboscopic lights to indicate a visual trauma one of the characters is suffering at those times. Even the problem of the fourth or audience wall is solved—it becomes a mirror in which the characters look at themselves and each other. All of which indicates that even when I don't consciously intend to, I'm apt to write in the dramatic form.

Actually, the odd thing is that I have not yet tried to write directly for stage, screen or TV, although my father and mother were Shakespearean actors and between 1920 and 1935 toured a company in which my father starred, directed, and produced, besides designing sets and costumes, and I acted with them during the seasons of 1928 (I'd just graduated from high school) and 1934 (two years out of college).

Incidentally, I've done only bits of other acting during my life. In college I produced and played the title character in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. In the late 1940's in Chicago I twice played Othello in a semipro show with my friend Georg Mann as Iago and also acted in my wife Jonquil's *Mrs. Lancing*, opposite Geraldine Page, who had the title role, a single production at the Cliffdwellers Club. In the 1960's I did a mad Lovecraftian scholar in the witch-film *Equinox*, and right now am trying out for a part in a supernatural-terror film to be shot in San Francisco.

I have before me now a long panoramic photograph titled "Fritz Lieber and Company, Broadway Theatre, Denver, Colo., Jan'y 14th 1923." The 24 people are standing in front of the theater in a semicircle equidistant from the camera, but its panning magic puts them in a long straight row and curves the street. My father and mother are standing in the center, looking very handsome, I am beside them, while down the row a way are my Chicago aunt Marie, with whom I was briefly visiting the company, and, in the other direction, George Ford, the company manager. At one end are the three stagehands who traveled with the company—property man, electrician and carpenter. The rest are actors. We are mostly wearing overcoats (winter near the Rockies!) and the women's skirts range from ankle to mid-calf. They all hold felt hats except my father's younger brother Allen and myself—we have caps in our hands.

Pause there. Everyone else is standing firmly on two feet and looking sincere, but I have my weight on my right leg with my left trailed artistically behind me—a somewhat plump 12-year-old in knee britches and belted jacket, eyes and mouth drooping toward the outside corners in the fashion of a somewhat spoiled and supercilious young aristocrat.

Some of these people I later drew on in my Shakespearean novellette, "Four Ghosts in Hamlet" (1965)—the portly yet dashing Louis Leon Hall (everyone else is looking at the camera, but he is smiling boldly to one side while fingering a pipe—good attention-gettings, both); John Burke, tall as my father, hat clasped in both hands, looking the

honest Horatio he always was; beefy, intense-eyed Joe Singer, who'd once been a boxer and later played Macbeth in his own shoestring company—and always got a department-store job as Santa Claus when he had a free December; and balding Alexander Andre, who played Caesar and taught me to play chess during that brief visit (my father, an endlessly competitive lonewolf man, learned it too at the same time and used to beat me at first, which made me miserable). For some of the other characters in "Four Ghosts" I drew on other seasons—Tyrone Power, Sr., during my father's second year (1930) heading the Chicago Civic Shakespeare Society, and Vera Loday, ingenue the last season of all, when I too was finally acting (for the second time) in the company.

I wrote "Four Ghosts in Hamlet" at Theodore Sturgeon's suggestion for a *London Mercury* contest. The stories were supposed to have Shakespeare as a character. It was his quatracentennial. I wrote it in four days, at a rate of 3,500 words a day—*very* fast for me—to meet the contest deadline. It didn't win or place, but eventually sold to *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, a magazine that is the final resting place of many a story written with mainstream ambitions by established fantasy authors—Blish, Ellison, Knight, Merrill, etc. "Four Ghosts" skims the cream of my recollections of my father's company—it is very sentimental and revealing.

But back to the supercilious Shakespearean aristocrat poised in the panoramic photograph. An exiled young aristocrat, really, for through grammar school, high school, and the first two years of college he lived in Chicago with two childless aunts and a dull uncle, deeply resenting being shut away from the shadowy, high-lit, glamorous world of backstage, treasuring memories of John Burke fabricating and putting on a beard, of Bobbie Strauss tuning his mandolin, of winsome ingenues, of crepe hair and spirit gum and curling gelatin that colored the spots and floods blue, red, and amber.

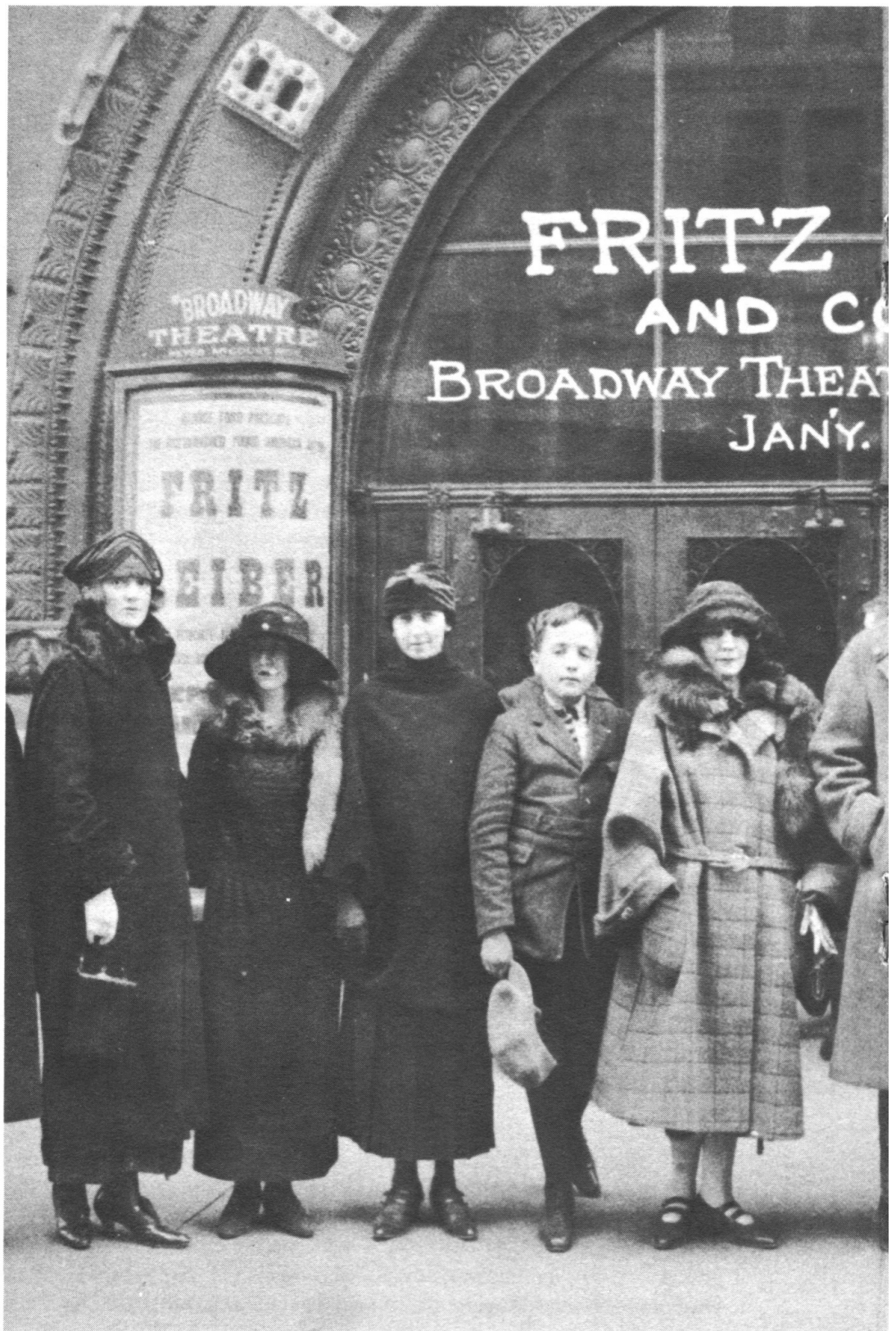
There was always the thought that one day he would enter that world fully to succeed his father after the fashion of the Booths and Barrymores. But the reality was Chicago's grimy bricks and coal smoke and dull, dull schoolrooms.

The *company*! That was the wonder word, and world too, for him. It meant more and went deeper even than family. A band of kindred artists, skilled, cultured, and liberated, roving the country to amuse, entertain, and illuminate, spreading the areligious gospel, vision and philosophy of Shakespeare.

The Chicago Civic Shakespeare Company foundered during the third year of the Depression, due chiefly to a socially ambitious sponsor's insistence on hiring more and more big names regardless of their ability to act Shakespeare.

In retrospect I think that it was chiefly with the forlorn hope of giving his son something which had vanished irretrievably with the winds of change lashing the world that my father organized his last







Shakespearean company in the early autumn of 1934. The repertory consisted of only five plays: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Julius Caesar*.

After getting my Ph.B. from the University of Chicago in 1932, I had spent the next two years in a sort of half world between education and life, going to a theological seminary and doing some very spotty graduate work, learning to drink, trying to learn about sex, and thinking rather impractically about vocation—hardly an unusual situation for a young man who didn't absolutely have to earn a living. But now at last I was following in my father's footsteps. I worked hard at my parts: Fortinbras, Malcolm, Edgar, the Prince of Morocco, and Marullus and Octavius, and did especially well in Edgar, the notices seemed to indicate. But my mood was one of depression, loneliness, and unreality—I still didn't feel that I was really living and I was making my first efforts to write fiction (and did write the stories of the five plays for the souvenir program).

The tour took us quickly to the West Coast, where we played Vancouver, Portland or Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Notices were good, but we were playing theaters that hadn't had shows for a year or two—the Great Depression—and there was heavy fog the three days in Canada. By the time we hit Los Angeles the handwriting on the wall was clear. After two weeks there and a three-night stand in Tucson my father paid off the company and returned at once to Hollywood with my mother and myself to try (ultimately with modest success) to establish himself in the movies for the remainder of his life, cashing in on the fillip his last tour had given his reputation. I imagine now that even when he'd planned the tour he'd had this possibility in mind. At exactly the same time the Abbey Players from Ireland had played Los Angeles, and Barry Fitzgerald, Arthur Shields, Sara Allgood, and some others got permanent movie jobs—just as had Roman Bohnen and some others from the remarkably fine, semi-professional Goodman Theater of the Chicago Art Institute. It was a time for seeking security and Hollywood still had money, though the competition was intense. It was no longer enough just to be good and have a Broadway reputation, as it had been fifteen or so years earlier when my father had done *Julius Caesar* in the Theda Bara *Cleopatra* and Solomon in *The Queen of Sheba* with Betty Blythe. Or to have a good voice for talkies—all the stage actors were out there now, led by the three Barrymores, and many from Europe as well, such as Conrad Veidt and the producer Max Reinhardt. After about a year my father was getting enough character roles to make a good living without the bondage of a studio contract, but at the price of being typed despite his more than Shakespearean versatility, first as a Frenchman (because his first new part was in the Ronald Colman *Tale of Two Cities*), then as a priest (French priests especially!), finally as an Indian.

After a while I returned to Chicago, got married to Jonquil Stephens, and took her back to Hollywood to try to follow my father's



phens, and took her back to Hollywood to try to follow my father's footsteps into the films. By now the young Shakespearean aristocrat (crown prince, rather, deposed with the king his father) wasn't cutting much of a figure in the lush, sleazy, publicity-mad, fiercely competitive world in which he found himself. For one thing, he was fooling around trying to write weird fiction. (His parents found this a bit weird too—if you were going to write why not aim at *The Saturday Evening Post* instead of *Weird Tales*?) He finally got one bit part with screen credit (as a Frenchman!) in the Garbo-Taylor *Camille*. But underneath his languidly bored exterior, he (I) was furiously angry with Hollywood for putting into grubby minor roles the king his father (who incidentally was more philosophical about all this), who had produced and starred in the greatest plays in the world—and for not understanding the latter at all, except to make the art-for-art's-sake gesture of putting on the clumsy and turgid Reinhardt *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, notable for Victor Jory's Oberon and not much else.

In my recollection it all culminated for me in the Hollywood premier of *Anthony Adverse*, in which my father played a French banker and incidentally showed more stage presence and smooth stage grace than anyone else in the cast. There was the usual fanfare and folderol of searchlights, police, jampacked fans, and progress of major and minor notables in evening dress, amongst them my father, mother, Jonquil, and myself. This was, you see, a sort of showpiece film designed to show just how tremendously artistic and cultured Hollywood could be whenever they chose to forget their main occupation of providing great entertainment for the world—and the hell with all that long-hair stuff. Well, Hervey Allen's overblown novel wasn't much to start with and all Hollywood added was a demonstration of how steadily pretentious and inept they could be. Six months ago I sat through it again on late TV and, rather to my surprise, seethed just as much.

So it wasn't really surprising that when a couple of years later I began not only writing, but selling a little, I eschewed the dramatic. Why, during the 1940's and most of the 1950's I wouldn't even go to see American films, preferring the English, French, Italian and Swedish cinema. As for the stage, well, Broadway was more and more obviously becoming an adjunct to Hollywood, with movie money backing the new plays. In short, I was a snob, though on the whole legitimately so.

But in the long run none of this could do away with the fact that I am basically a theater person, visually and dramatically oriented, and that this was bound to come out in my writing. In *A Specter is Haunting Texas*, for instance, I really ham it up, the author pretty obviously having a lot of fun playing Scully La Cruz, skeletally thin impresario of the space-located Theater-in-the Sphere, who takes on the promotion of a revolution in the spirit of one more theatrical tour.

And in my more self-satisfied moments I feel I've gradually worked around to an ideal solution: stories completely adequate as such, but also capable of being staged with a minimum of alteration and new invention.



Review from Berkeley Barb,  
March 15, 1974

## THE BOOK OF FRITZ LEIBER

by Fritz Leiber

DAW Books, 95¢

Reviewed by Ray Ramsay

It is humanly impossible to expect me to write objectively about Fritz Leiber. There are a number of great men around in the science-fiction-fantasy field, and Leiber is several of them. And this is an opportunity to honor the man I have dug the most since long ago, when I was a teenager.

Leiber didn't actually invent Swords and Sorcery (Howard and Smith were before him), but he coined the term. In his peak periods (the late 40s to early 50s, and the late 50s to who knows when), he could conjure up in time to make deadline, such concepts as would make the everlasting fame of any man; as witness *You're All Alone* and the "Time War" stories. Or better yet, his classic, *Conjure Wife*.

Fritz Leiber is not one of those authors who alternate between hard science fiction and supernatural fantasy. He managed to amalgamate the two, a hard-to-believe feat, but possible because he did pull it off. He is a stimulating philosopher, but you can read the book and see for yourself. He is the most sympathetic student of the witch cult currently writing, short of Sybil Leek. And his work includes some of the most tasty and tasteful sexy writing in our literature.

Furthermore, Fritz Leiber, former Shakespearean actor, former divinity student, longtime pacifist now turned military history enthusiast without any compromise of principle, is one of the most worthwhile human beings around these days. Some time you might be lucky enough to meet him. He currently lives in this area.

That says a little of what I want to say. Perhaps I should mention that my logo [Xavier Hammerberg, in the *Barb*] is the name of a man mentioned in his *The Silver Eggheads* as the last great author, and that I use it by Fritz's kind permission. Since he has seventeen year's seniority on me, he seems satisfied to be the second to the last.

And it's my dream to edit Leiber's complete works, and I do not

mean posthumously. I want it to be an ongoing process that someone else will have to take over when I am gone. As of now, we have a book to consider.

The book is an alternated collection of short stories and factual essays, and the stories have never before been anthologized, some of them specially written for this collection. Consequently, many of my old favorites are not there, such as "The Man Who Never Grew Young" and "Damnation Morning," and "The Thirteenth Step," and . . . oh well, I could extend the litany to the length of this article.

The essays we can deal with quickly. They involve a study of *King Lear* showing the author's stage background, a hard science study a la Asimov, a chess piece, a critical essay on Lovecraft, a very amusing thing with regard to pronunciation, and one called "Monsters and Monster Lovers" that hit me just where I live. Among others, revealing the many-sidedness of the man. Now, the stories:

"The Spider." A good nasty piece of horror.

"A Hitch in Space." Hard science fiction, but funny; and the title involves a neat play on words.

"Kindergarten." Weird and way-out.

"Crazy Annaoj." A beautiful demonstration, almost Avram Davidson, of what can be done with a switch on a historical theme.

"When the Last Gods Die." A beautiful example of Leiber's ability to fuse the natural with the supernatural.

"Yesterday's House." Despite appearances, a rather naturalistic science fiction story, until you get to the ending. The concept is not now too far from reality (ever hear of a clone?).

"Knight to Move." Among all else, Leiber is a chess champion, and those who read the chess section of the *Barb* will dig this.

"Beauty and the Beasts." A good little snippet, the latest in the adventures of the Grey Mouser and Fafhrd (pronounced Faferd).

"Cat's Cradle." The satisfying literature on cats is scanty. We have Gautier, Loti, Repplier, Colette, Van Vechten, perhaps a couple more that I don't remember, and Leiber, who obviously loves them the way I do. Incidentally, the story contains a very witty but unflattering self-portrait of the author.

You will want to read this book. So, in case it's hard to find on the stands, the publisher's address is DAW Books, Inc., 1301 Avenue of the Americas, New York. And yes, DAW does stand for Donald A. Wollheim, the famous editor of science fiction and fantasy, who has had too much career to go into at present.

Review from Berkeley Barb,  
November 22, 1974

**THE BEST OF FRITZ LEIBER**  
with Introduction by Poul Anderson  
Ballantine Books, \$1.75  
Reviewed by Ray Ramsay

Strictly speaking, there is no such book as *The Best of Fritz Leiber*, though there is a book by that title. *The Best of Fritz Leiber* would run to at least twelve volumes, and be titled *The Collected Works of Fritz Leiber*.

But that is not to fault Ballantine Books. Every bit of Leiber that comes our way is appreciated. And this collection includes a lot of goodies that haven't been available in too many years.

Perhaps the most indicative pointing-up of Fritz Leiber's greatness is his standing with the Now Generation. The young newcomer readers, who missed out on the formative years of projective fiction, tend to be downright in their judgment of the established greats. To them Asimov is a dusty old classic; Heinlein a fascist; Clarke a hardware specialist; Bradbury a quaint sentimentalist; Sturgeon a leftover from the fifties.

But they still dig Leiber. Nearly forty years of exposure have not decreased the something special that is Fritz Leiber, and the young know it. In fact, any teenage reader, given a new anthology that did not include a new Leiber, would simply assume that the editor goofed.

I can testify from my own experience to the "undating" quality of his specialness, since I read my first Fritz Leiber story at the age of thirteen (it was his first published story, incidentally), and was solidly grabbed by it. And now after thirty-five years, the same holds true of every memorable time that a new Leiber opus comes out.

One more touch of autobiography, before proceeding to the book. During my recent hospitalization, my longtime friends came through magnificently in taking care of my needs. But what took care of a really deep need was the beautiful mail I received from Fritz, a man whom I had known personally for only a few months. That is the best illustration I can offer of what Fritz is like as a human being.

To proceed to the book itself, Ballantine presents us with a collec-

tion of twenty-two gems, that one will probably read at one sitting and then keep permanently for future pleasure. Since the selections are largely from Leiber's relatively earlier work, newcomers will find it a welcome opportunity for catching up.

As I said before, there is no Best of Fritz Leiber. You can have all of Leiber, or somebody's Leiber favorites. Most of my own favorites are here; I do miss "The Black Gondolier," but it is rather long.

You can find the man's soul in this collection. His lifelong pacifist convictions in "Wanted—An Enemy," and "The Man Who Made Friends With Electricity." His love and understanding for cats in the almost heartbreaking "Space-Time for Springers." His religious interest, perhaps a bit transmuted since his earlier years, in "Gonna Roll the Bones." "The Enchanted Forest" seems to me to reflect a touch of his long devotion to chess, but there are none of the stories reflecting his stage background. The fact that some of his many sides had to be left out is comment enough in itself.

The technique of plunging the reader abruptly into an unfamiliar milieu, and letting him come to some kind of terms with it, is common in projective fiction; but usually the author eventually uses flashbacks to rationalize it all. Leiber seldom needs flashbacks. He simply places you in the world of "The Foxholes of Mars," or "A Deskful of Girls," or "Little Old Miss Macbeth," and makes you accept it and live there because temporarily it's all the reality you have. No one who reads "The Man Who Never Grew Young" will ever quite get over its gentle, evocative, but intensely meaningful presentation of reverse-reality.

Fritz Leiber's varied aspects present themselves less as gradations than as quantum leaps. He moves you from "Coming Attraction" (strictly grim and ghastly) to "The Big Holiday" (an excursion into pure joy). From "Rump-Titty-Titty-Tum-Tah-Tee" (funny as the dickens) to "Mariana" (a new experience in poignancy) to "Try and Change the Past" (an acceptance of fatalism) to "The Big Trek" (the ultimate in optimistic escape) to "The Good New Days" (played-down outrageousness) to "America the Beautiful" (dead serious philosophy) and beyond.

The earlier statement about the author's "undating" quality must be slightly modified. A couple of the stories do bear the mark of the early fifties when they were written. "The Ship Sails at Midnight" shows that it comes from the days of the flying saucer contactees' reports of benign visitors from outer space; and "The Night He Cried" is even more obviously of that period, when Mickey Spillane parodies were the in thing. In fact, the latter story will only be fully appreciated by those who can remember twenty years back. But there is a difference between "dated" and "of its time," and nothing wrong with the latter—particularly when it makes as good reading now as on first appearance.

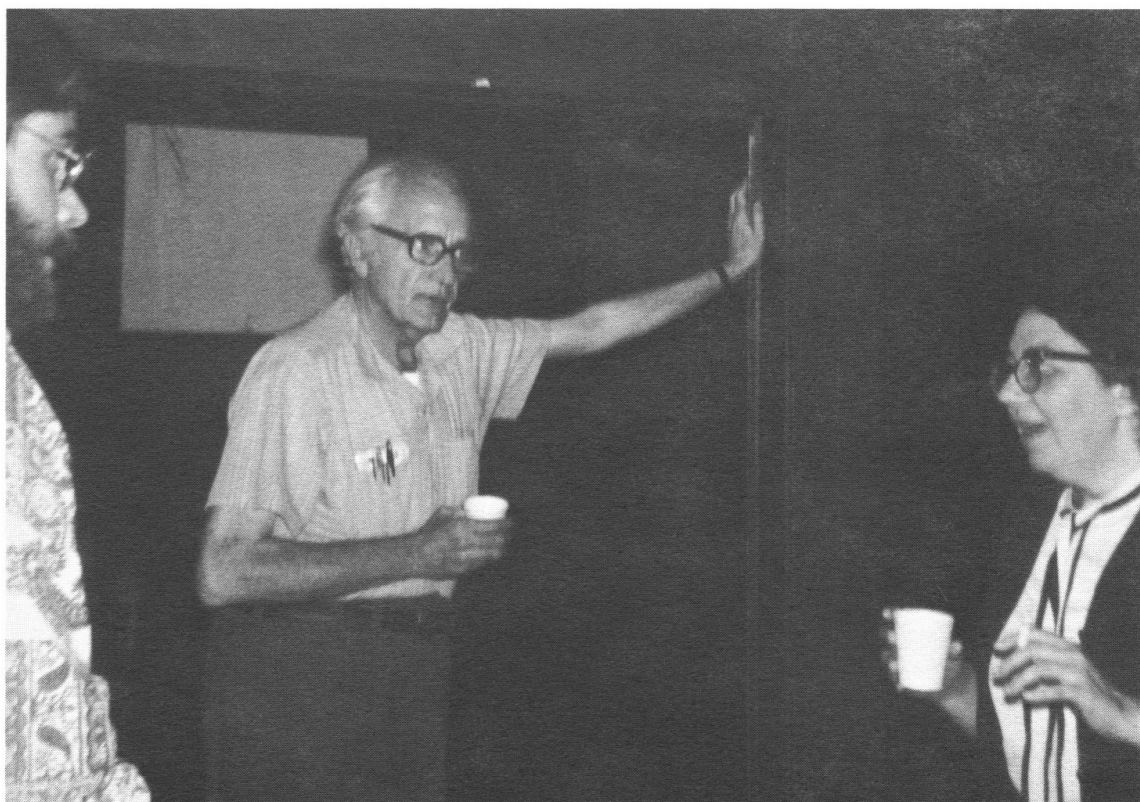
Two important facets of Fritz Leiber's work are not represented here: his studies in witchcraft and his magnificent creativeness in the swords-and-sorcery vein. I don't know the extent of Fritz's personal ex-

perience with witchcraft (my own is limited), but he appears to be about the most knowledgeable American male student of the subject. As for the second type of stories, suffice to say that he made me love them.

One final point. *The Best of Fritz Leiber* was selected by Fritz Leiber himself. I still say that any Leiber collection can only be somebody's Leiber favorites. These are Leiber's Leiber favorites. That point alone is sufficient to make the book a vital addition to my own Leiber-ary.

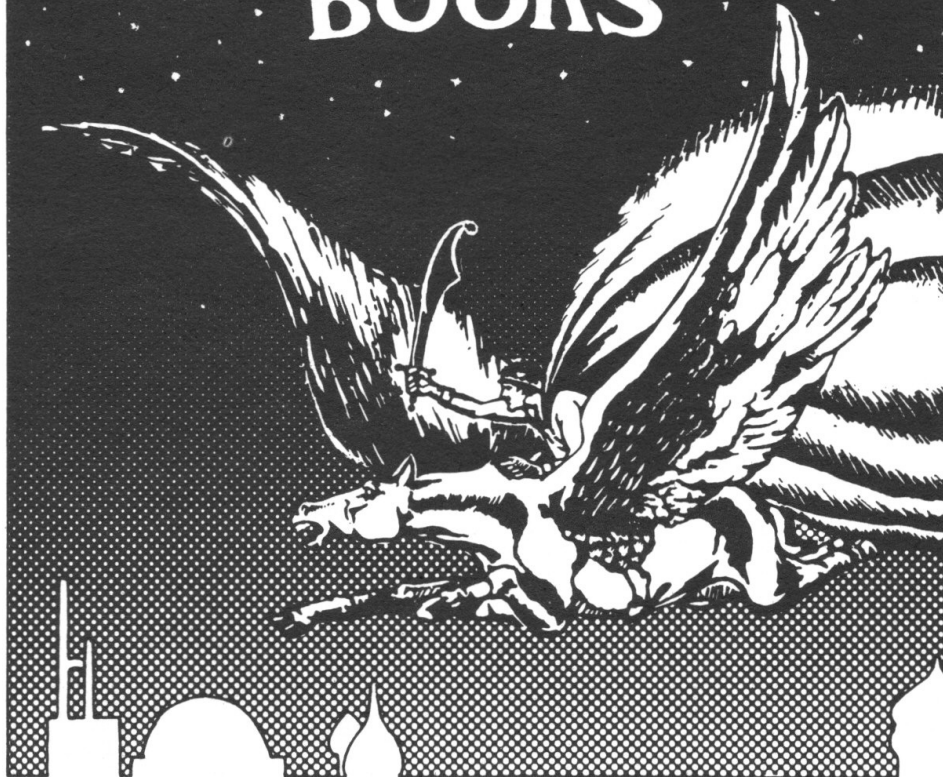








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