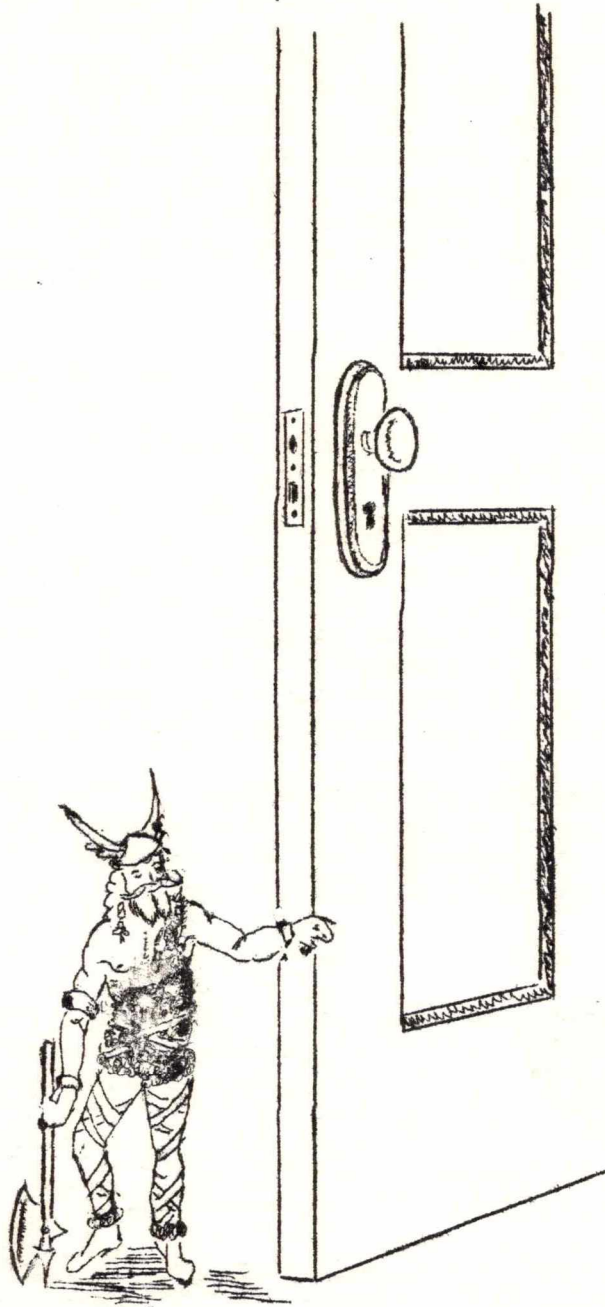


helen's fantasia



WISDENBECK, (c. 145)



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#18 is published by HELEN V. WESSON for the Feb. '67 helen's FAPA mailing, from 340 Washington St., Glen Ridge, FANTASIA N.J. 07028. This issue is being typed in the cellar printshop for two good reasons: First, my husband spends most of his spare time in the printshop, which is two loooong flights of stairs from my Hell Room and I make the trips too often during the winter evenings; Second, the Hell Room has just gotten out of hand and I spend my publishing time trying to keep ahead of the chaos, vainly. It is my hope to publish for each FAPA bundle before the New York Convention, which I hope to attend.

It has been 20 years since I've attended a gathering of s/fans. I was out of place then, and I expect I'll be out of place now..perhaps even more so. At that time I had just emerged from the social seclusion enforced by my mother which had made me a book-lover, and had married a gregarious amateur journalist-printer.

My field of reading in fandom has always been Weird, Horror and at that time Lovecraftian. This genre has always received the back of the hand from s/fandom. I remember Sam Moskowitz, heavy and swarthy, delivering a speech or conducting the meeting in an erudite manner, but the only thing that saved the day for me was that another fellow amateur journalist was present, Bill Groveman, still one of our best friends, and a boy, Ronald Clyne, who illustrated weird-horror book jackets. (Whatever became of him?)

Now I can name-drop and place-drop to the extent that I don't have to, to boost my ego (in fact, to the extent that I am homesick for far-off places), but whereas I'd look forward to an Embassy party with delight and anticipation, an S/FCon arouses trepidation.

I am so square, from a beatnik point of view. And the contempt is mutual.

My David has heard that there will be a folk song group and looks forward to attending that session at least. He is founder of our high school's Folk Music Club, and with two girls (a trio known as The Frets) provided appropriate music for the local Rotary's Christmas program. He also reads a bit of legit s/f now and then. His Christmas presents to me included Campbell's "Analog 4" and Knight's "Turning On," perhaps as preparation for the Convention.

Shel, 19, at RPI, enjoys the night sessions. He is the only Wesson who listens more than he talks. He'd go well with the Chauvenets, no stinkpot sailor he.

Pam has heard there's to be a Costume Ball (there will, won't there..Rotsler nudes, too?) and even Wessonmale said off-hand he might drop in.

Now let's hope this is not simultaneous with the APA Wayzgoose in Detroit.

--HWV

BOOKS 'n' Stuff

WRITING IN THE STICK is printer's terminology, the equivalent of composing onto the mimeo stencil. However, composing onto the stencil direct, without draft, is more dangerous because one proceeds more rapidly than when each separate letter is set, sliver by sliver. What goes onto the stencil is ineradicable if, on re-reading, it's not exactly what is meant, whereas corrections can be made in type (accompanied by much grumbling by hobby printers, or a big bill from pro printers).

Last issue, I wanted to make the point that when a critic, book reviewer, or reader knows an author, his attitude toward the output of that author is likely to be flavored, if only a trifle, by his reaction to the author himself, more or less to the extent of the acquaintanceship. My point may become apparent later when I review, or just discuss, MZBradley's "Castle Terror" - in fact, I made the point already since I'd not have bought the book if I had not known the author, however remotely through FAPA.

I wrote: "...I'd like to see John Creasey" (in Sneary's biblio-efforts). "He, and not Boucher's choices of Agatha Christie and Ellery Queen, most deserves the honor. (I can see why Boucher gives EQ a compliment--his employer --but Christie can be nauseating. Not that I have anything against my favorite magazine, EQMM; just that as a novelist or short-story writer, EQ is/are too contrived and gimmicky, and the character of Ellery Queen rubs me the wrong way... -- as does too much of any detective-character like Hercule Poirot or Miss Silver. That's why Creasey has my accolade. Commander Gideon is a good man to live with, story after story.") (So's Inspector West.)

Despite the way it came out, I had not meant to impugn the literary honesty of Anthony Boucher. After all, every Sunday since returning to the States, I have read his "Criminals at Large" in the Sunday Times even before the Bergdorf Goodman ads and Russell Baker. In fact, I saved several years' worth of his columns with the idea of ordering from the Glen Ridge library. Then I discarded them in a periodical (and futile) chaos-ridding of the Hell Room. Like anything else I've ever thrown away, I regretted it later, because now my husband (himself a newspaper columnist) has a new assignment which will leave me with, perhaps, time for that project.

My apologies, Mr. Boucher (or Mr. White?), and a grin for the personal comments which crept into your latest Creasey reviews.

THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS by Poul Anderson (Avon G1127 50¢)

Since I read no science-fiction and very little fantasy, this is given mention here because to date Poul Anderson has been the husband of the writer of "The Piebald Hippogriff," a charming fantasy that I did read (Aside to K: I am indebted for a salmon loaf recipe that I intend to try some day.) Anyway, ~~323~~ is on the shelf in good company with the professional output of various amateur journalists (like "Getting and Spending" by Burton Crane, also unread because, as Crane would be the first to remark, I don't need advice on spending). "brilliant romp of a modern earthman who became a reluctant knight in another age of an alien world" and with Morgan le Fay. Det var som fandem!

CASTLE TERROR by Marion Zimmer Bradley (Lancer 72-983 50¢)

When I returned to the States 4½ years ago, I was delighted to discover Mary Stewart, then Virginia Holt. The Gothic novel had not reached Japan, or if it had, the few titles had been snatched off the English-language racks before I'd seen them. During those 4½ years, however, there has been such a deluge of Gothica that I am forced to pick and choose, some on my own quirks, some on Boucher's recommendations. Due to the former, I bought Marion's "Best-seller Gothic Novel" off a rack in Indianapolis (I guess it was) during the APA Wayzgoose last summer and finally got around to reading it this winter. I wanted to approach it in the right mood - not rushing to finish in one evening. I wanted, frankly, to see what I could read of the author through her book (since all Gothica have pretty much the same plots as well as cover scenes: a girl in the foreground and a mansion/castle in the background).

It is to Marion's credit that I forgot her almost completely while reading the book. It is straightforwardly written, no words wasted (I have the feeling she was paid by the novel rather than word rates) yet the scenes were set vividly and I could easily visualize the climax in its setting. The plot concerned the heroine (here a private nurse for the teenage puzzle), the teenage daughter's 70-year-old father, her brother, her mother (without giving the plot away, I must wonder why Marion dedicated this novel to her mother!), and the usual assortment of mysterious young men who will either kill her or marry her in the end.

In one of her FAPazines, Marion once made the error of disparaging Mary Stewart; if I remember correctly, she made the suggestion that M.S. might be Princess Margaret. Marion overlooks one vast chasm between her works and Stewart's. I read Mary Stewart no longer for the Gothic but for the backgrounds. Marion makes up her own worlds and is safe therein. Mary Stewart travels, as does Ann Bridges, and both transport the reader to Other Places--but real places. This is difficult because there is always the reader who Has Been There, and who spends the entire story checking on the author's description. (I still can not place the crucial swimming pool that was located on the Bluff in Yokohama, in "Kill Me in Yokohama," though I spent 10 years walking the Bluff, sometimes with Peko-chan on my back, Japanese-style.) It is hardly likely that Princess Margaret did such traveling, or could take notes where she does travel, though I'd not put the writing ability past her. Even princesses can be intelligent people, you know. But they don't get around incognito to amass data.

At any rate, Mary Stewart is still a Princess, in the royal family with DuMaurier of "Rebecca." Marion is just a pretender. But it pays.

VIRGINIA HOLT is revealed to be Mrs. Eleanor Hibbert. Now, who in the name of Emma Dai-O, is Mrs. Hibbert?

THE SECRET OF SANTA VITTORIA, by Robert Chrichton, has somewhat restored my faith in the Best Seller List, if I ever had any. It has the warmth and compassion of Giovanni Guareschi's "World of Don Camillo" - a series beloved by this whole family since our stay in Italy - but it is meatier, with none of the Church, but much more plot. I do hope Hollywood doesn't louse it up.



A GOODLY COMPANY

Obviously, the two cuts above should have been saved for a Convention report, but like a child with a toy, I can't wait to use them. So, the FAPA bundle...

SPINNAKER REACH (Chauvenet)..About Al Fick, did you know he changed his career completely, from newspaper printer to Volks-Wagen salesman, quite successfully, but with more demands on his time. His son, Paul, entered Rensselaer Polytech this year, but as there is a ban on talking to Freshmen during the first half of the year, Shel wasn't able to socialize. One night, however, he had some papers he wanted to deliver to Paul. Shel, 6'5" and well-built, is not a man who can go anyplace unobtrusively. So he dressed up in his frat brothers' sloppiest, unmatched clothes, and went to the local pizzeria and bought a pizza. He threw the pizza away and put the papers into the pizza box, and holding it high, entered the freshman dorm and announced, "Pizza for Paul Fick." Anti-climax: Paul, innocent of the conspiracy, was out. # Did anyone see the meteor shower? I kept my solemn promise to Peko that I'd wake her at 1 am, even though visibility was nil. It was supposed to rival the hanabi on the Sumida. # The racing boats at YYC were "L"-boats, named after a member, John Laffin, who designed them for the particular characteristics of Yokohama Bay. 18', center-board, sloop rigged, relatively rare in the States because Laffin allowed only a couple of boat yards to make them. I can't imagine anyone Frost-Bite racing who wasn't fit. # I have made a mental note to sit near you at the Con; when you tell them to "Speak louder," I'll benefit. A secondary infection to the staph, which rattled around my head for a full year after, robbed me of more hearing than I could afford to lose..perhaps another reason I am hesitant about attending. # A 16-year old boy in Newark or nearby, came home and told his mother he had taken LSD, and went to his room. A few minutes later his grandmother went to his room, found a window open and his body lying six floors below. To think, a whole lifetime wasted for a few minutes. Too much publicity is given to LSD; the kids think they're missing something. # Enjoyed your "cool Poul" but thought it rhymed with yawl.

SYNAPSE (Speer):

"This Horizons has an unusually number of uncaught typos.." A case of the pot and the kettle, eh. And since I couldn't get a New Yorkerism out of that, I'd better stop right now and put wax on the seal of a petition for King George I of Social Science. (I believe children should do their own work on their own projects, but heating wax can be dangerous for a 12-year old girl with hair past her waist. That remark, in turn, reminds me of our new favorite Addams cartoon, "This is it speaking.") # What's the difference between genie and djinni? Which would you say Lilith might have been? # "Greek love" originated because the Greeks considered it a preferable alternative to infanticide, an extreme to which they had been driven by over-population. Our morals are based on the opposite, Judaic, code.

OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS CARD of the past Holidays was received by me, and from VietNam..from Dick Eney, much to my surprise, with AID. I had not known he'd even left the States.

VUKAT (Fred Patten) has a cover by Jack Harness that sent me looking for a Viking by Jack Wiedenbeck, a pen-and-ink bequeathed to me with the ACOLYTE estate when I visited Slan Shack on my first trip to Japan, 20 years ago. You'll find it reproduced herein, which just shows I get around to everything in due course. Jack was the first Fangelano I met; before I managed to get that fact published even, he had transferred from fandom to ceramics --our loss. # Now if you had boosted Tokyo in '58, I could have attended. Why do I always miss out? # A belated welcome.

ANKUS (Pelz): Descriptions of the costumes was most appreciated, and I've put this issue aside to make longer comments when I'm not deadline-pressured, Bruce.

VORPAL DRAGON (Harrell): Give us more of Stiles and Cameron in the Service. # Always interestingly written and illustrated.

THE PERSIAN SLIPPER (Johnstone): Too late for your deadline, I offer my Swiss Cowbell: Wink with kirsch. I keep kirsch around to use on fruit, for emergency dessert.

LIGHTHOUSE (TCarr): Disch's diary from Mexico is fascinating, Morocco and Europe even more so. Since Wesson-male is not here to interpret the Spanish, I shall draw from my Japan background and guess that NO PISE EL PRADO means Do Not Urinate in the Street. Except that the Japanese don't post such signs, probably because they recognize the futility. Church corruption? A while back, there was a shrine that promised elderly Japanese they could die in the hand of Buddha. As they sat in the Lotus, they drifted off to Nirvana or some place. Too much of this and it was discovered their journey was precipitated by a poison-needle contraption in the Lotus. # I don't know whether I'd enjoy Snow White today, having seen it 7½ times, plus once for each of my children in Japanese, but I resent the "cool" (and sour grapes) attitude of today toward Disney. He's probably the only man who became a millionaire by making people happy. # Saigon operated in French, also. I remembered enough to get what I wanted. Now I suppose it's all GI slang. # Would like to see the results of your Man in Lithography. I have seen only a few stones, not the process. # There is one great scene in "Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte" which probably escaped everyone, in all that camp: where Bette Davis creeps in terror down the stairs. # Friends who visited Greece, then went on to Italy, etc. reported that Italy was a letdown after Greece. To me this is incomprehensible but I hope to see for myself some day, though actually, like all expatriates, I have a contempt for tourists, believing with Disch that "The chief pleasure of a city is finally knowing it -- and knowing that you know it -- and then discovering at odd intervals the surprises still remaining to it." That's the way I love Hong Kong. I have no such affinity with New York. # Where did Lee Jacobs ever find a magenta-haze da-glo shirt? For the 25th Anniversary issue of SIAMESE STANDPIPE, I want to do a silk-screen da-glo cover, so if I don't meet my activity requirements for 1967 or 1968, have the police dig up the cellar floor under one of the presses and charge my coeditor with uxoricide, I think it is. # I have been looking forward to the Art Rapp family's reactions to Italy, particularly if they were the standard GI gripes. We stayed in small hotels along the Italian Riviera where GI families were also billeted, but to most I'll bet it was still Pratt, Kansas. # L was great to The End.