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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

I have long been fascinated by the works of H.P. Lovecraft and the authors who surrounded and associated with him (and, of course, with *Weird Tales* magazine, their primary showcase and venue). Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury, Frank Belknap Long, and so many others...including Carl Jacobi (1908-1997). I never got to meet Carl, but I was certainly aware of his literary shadow. He had the requisite Arkham House books—*Revelations in Black* (1947), *Portraits in Moonlight* (1964), *Disclosures in Scarlet* (1972)—and I certainly saw his work often enough in print. I even bought his story “The Tunnel” when I was co-editing *Weird Tales* in 1988. But for some reason, much like Frank Belknap Long, Carl Jacobi never really fired my collector’s interests—until recently, when I actually sat down and read a lot of his work.¹

You know what? He’s good...*really* good. You don’t sell hundreds of stories over a 60-year career without being a more-than-competent wordsmith, but at his best he’s as good as Howard or Lovecraft.

But why didn’t he take off the same way they did?

I think I know the reasons, and there are four of them:

First, Carl Jacobi didn’t have a literary champion (and he was too humble to toot his own horn). To be a huge success, you need someone to build you up to the public at large. August Derleth did it with Lovecraft; L. Sprague de Camp, Lin Carter, and Glenn Lord did it with Robert E. Howard.

1 Wildside Press purchased Carl Jacobi’s literary estate in 2014, and my readings were done in preparation of putting his entire body of work back into print.

Second, he never made the leap from short fiction writer to novelist. You can be a success without short stories, but it's a lot harder to do it without novels. And having both helps.

Third, he was viewed as part of the second generation of *Weird Tales* writers, following after Lovecraft. His work might have been as good as the first generation's...but (as they say) who remembers the *second* man to set foot on the moon?

Fourth, he wrote in too many different genres.

Let's look at the cumulative effects of these points in greater depth.

The most successful authors spend their whole careers building a public image. They make themselves (or those promoting them do!) so identified with a type of story that their name becomes synonymous with it. It's a form of branding. Think of H.P. Lovecraft and you think of horror (thank you, August Derleth, for your promotional efforts). Think of Robert E. Howard and you think of sword & sorcery (thank you, Lin Carter and L. Sprague de Camp). Think of Robert Bloch and you think of horror (thank you, *Psycho* and Alfred Hitchcock). Ray Bradbury? Literary science fiction. Clark Ashton Smith? Weird fantasy.

Think of Carl Jacobi, and what comes to mind? Probably not a lot. "Oh, yes, a member of Lovecraft's circle. Didn't he write science fiction, too?"

Unlike Lovecraft *et al.*, Jacobi was not a specialist in his writing. He wrote horror, yes—some very good stories, in fact. And he wrote science fiction—well-written space opera and space adventure. Sometimes a bit dated now, but fun. And he wrote mystery stories. (I've just started tracking down his mystery work in *The Saint Mystery Magazine*, *Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazine*, and others from the 1960s and 1970s, so I haven't formed an opinion of them yet.) And he wrote adventure stories—well researched, exciting tales of far-off lands.

The problem for magazine writers is that their work is ephemeral. It's hard to build a following when you're writing short stories—and four times as hard if you're writing in four different genres,