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H.P. Lovecraft

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CONTENTS

DEBATABLE AND DISTURBING: EDITORIAL SHARDS

Lovecraft, like most authors, was well-read. And of course an author's reading is going to influence his writing. Crypt of Cthulhu #49 explores both sides of HPL's literary process.

The first to explore the literary influences on Lovecraft and the use he made of them is Marc A. Cerasini in "Thematic Links in Arthur Gordon Pym, At the Mountains of Madness, and Moby Dick." Especially noteworthy is Cerasini's revealing suggestion as to the possible genesis of Lovecraft's crinoid Old Ones in an overlooked detail of Poe's novel. The Moby Dick connection is traced by Peter H. Cannon into another Lovecraft tale in "Call Me Wizard Whateley: Echoes of Moby Dick in 'The Dunwich Horror.'" Thomas Quale considers the possibility of John Milton's influence on Lovecraft in "The Blind Idiot God: Miltonic Echoes in the Cthulhu Mythos." The case made here is especially interesting in light of August Derleth's claim that the Cthulhu Mythos is parallel to the Christian Mythos, especially the fall of Satan.

It is useful to draw inferences from what HPL read to what he wrote, but it is also inevitably unverifiable (for instance, who would not have pontificated that "Polaris" was influenced by Dunsany if we didn't know for a fact that Lovecraft wrote the tale before he ever laid eyes on a piece of Plunkett's prose?). We are on safer ground for arguing when we can examine Lovecraft's own background materials; does he himself explain a story in a letter? Do we have notes or drafts? In fact we do, at least sometimes. And in this issue we are able to present two illuminating if esoteric pieces. David Hodson has provided a copy of a hitherto unpublished postcard from HPL to Fantasy Fan editor Charles Hornig, congratulating him on his new job as editor of Wonder Stories. As S. T. Joshi's brief commentary reveals, the card's text reveals interesting details about the revision of "Supernatural Horror in Literature." The other item shows Lovecraft the revisor at work. As readers of Crypt of Cthulhu #47 know, HPL offered extensive advice to Wilfred Talman on his draft of a story to be called "The Pool." It was Donald Burleson who actually incorporated Lovecraft's suggestions into a finished story decades later. Having presented the story in Crypt #47, we felt you deserved a look at the original notes, both to assess the extent of Lovecraft's original and to appreciate Burleson's considerable skill in turning the rich but rather raw material into a polished whole. Herewith, thanks to Gerry de la Ree, "The Pool, Recommendations for Revision—Synopsis."

Finally, we present Donald Burleson's study "Aporia and Paradox in 'The Outsider'" in which he brings the new hermeneutical key of deconstructionism to bear on Lovecraft's text.

Robert M. Price, Editor

THEMATIC LINKS

IN ARTHUR GORDON PYM, AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS AND MOBY DICK

By Marc A. Cerasini

A previous issue of Crypt of Cthulhu[1] was dedicated to one of H. P. Lovecraft's finest works, the short novel At the Mountains of Madness. In that issue two authors, Peter H. Cannon and Ben P. Indick, addressed the question as to whether or not Madness was a "sequel" to Edgar Allan Poe's only complete long fiction, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket.

Peter Cannon concluded that "At most Lovecraft took inspiration from [Poe] . . . [Lovecraft's] main concern being to do his version of an Antarctic yarn, in the process paying incidental tribute to Poe . . ."[2] and Cannon goes on to state categorically that At the Mountains of Madness and Arthur Gordon Pym are very different stories, written for very different reasons.

Ben P. Indick summarized the two tales, and pointed out some of the connections between them, and he asserts: "It is interesting that Lovecraft's novel may be considered a sequel (but not a continuation) of Poe's novel. He uses ideas and sites from the earlier work, in no way inferring that Arthur Gordon Pym was a real person, but rather that Poe may have disguised terrifying truths he had unearthed . . . in fictionalized form."[3] Indick, however, is not explicit about what "ideas" Lovecraft borrowed from Poe's novel.

Moreover, both writers missed or glossed over some pertinent points in their examinations of these two tales, points which support the existence of vital thematic and ironic links between the two stories, as well as surprising ties with another classic of American literature, Herman Melville's Moby Dick. Furthermore, Lovecraft's exploration of these themes places him squarely in the mainstream of classic American literature. At least one of the major concepts found in Lovecraft's novel springs directly from Edgar Poe's tale, and contrary to Cannon's conclusion, there are more than mere "incidental" tributes to Poe in Lovecraft's At the Mountains of Madness.

What connections can be found in these three dissimilar works composed by three of America's most distinctive authors with very different intentions in mind?

What shall be discussed in this article is, first, the central source material that inspired, directly or indirectly, all three tales; and second, the thematic and ironic elements which link the three novels.

Central Source Material

A primary source of inspiration for both Moby Dick and Arthur Gordon Pym was Jeremiah N. Reynolds, a contemporary of Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville.

Reynolds was a controversial figure, a scientist and explorer who became America's foremost exponent of the "Symmesian" theory of the hollow earth--a theory originally formulated by John Cleves Symmes in his novel, Symzonia: A Voyage of Discovery, first published in 1820 under the pen name Adam Seaborn.

Like Pym and Madness, Symmes' novel is written in a journalistic style, purporting to relate the events that occurred on a voyage of exploration in the Antarctic.

In the course of the novel, Symmes outlines his theory of a hollow earth, with openings to the interior located at the poles. Symmes postulated that there was a vast underground tunnel in the earth through which a mighty river flowed, the source of this cataract located at the Antarctic. The river was believed to run entirely through the earth's core to emerge again at the opposite end of our globe—somewhere in the Arctic.

While a student at Ohio University (the present author's alma mater), Jeremiah Reynolds fell under the spell of J. C. Symmes and dedicated his life to proving the man's theories. Reynolds, after Symmes death, became the major American supporter of the "hollow earth" theory, and he tried to interest the newly-elected Jackson administration in funding an expedition to the south polar regions in an attempt to locate and exploit this underground world.

In his quest to prove the earth was hollow, Reynolds made several exploratory voyages. On one trip to the South Seas he heard a story about a strange white whale often seen in those waters. The whale had over a dozen harpoons in its back and was said to have killed thirty seamen. When he returned to civilization Reynolds wrote an article called, "Mocha Dick: or the White Whale of the Pacific: a Leaf from a Manuscript Journal."[4] This article appeared in 1839, and has been cited by various critics as a primary (but, as we shall see, not the only) influence on Melville's Moby Dick.

It was from this same Jeremiah N. Reynolds that Edgar Allan Poe first heard the theory of the Antarctic tunnel and the hollow earth, two concepts he utilized in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. Knowledge of the Symmesian theory is vital to an understanding of the climax of Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. It must also be remembered that the "hollow earth" theories that sound absurd to us were not so ridiculous to Poe and his contemporaries. The Antarctic was a vast unexplored region; who knew what was there? There was much scientific speculation about the possibility of a hollow earth, both in the United States and Europe. This idea of the hollow earth was to endure in fantasy fiction long after the hypothesis was disproved by scientists.[5]

The exploration of this theory was part of Poe's design when he conceived his tale of Arthur Gordon Pym's adventure in 1838.

Poe composed his tale in the style of the "travelogues" that were so popular in his day. Though Pym was a failure with the public (just as Lovecraft's At the Mountains of Madness was a failure with Farnsworth Wright, who refused to accept it for publication in Weird Tales), the form remained popular, and Herman Melville was to achieve worldwide (if shortlived) fame nearly a decade later with his reminiscences of the South Sea islands told in the very same style.[6] Of course, Poe's stated goal was to compose a hoax for the gullible readers of The Southern Literary Messenger, of which he was then editor, and to offer speculations about the Antarctic and the flora and fauna that might be found there.

Lovecraft regarded Poe as his "god of fiction."[7] He enjoyed Poe's novel of the Antarctic, most especially the latter chapters wherein Pym encounters the strange creatures and people of the south polar regions. Both Poe and Lovecraft were interested in the rush of Polar explorations going on during their lifetimes, and both men found Antarctica to be a suitable springboard for their respective leaps into the fantastic.

There is, however, little in his published correspondence to indicate that Lovecraft held any special fondness for Herman Melville's Moby Dick—he may not have even read it. If he did, he may have read it as a child—as a "boys" book. He probably was not aware that he

was reading one of the seminal works of modern fiction. This would not be surprising. The recognition of Moby Dick as one of the greatest American novels is a modern one . . . Melville died in obscurity, most of his popular works like Typee and Omoo having been composed in his youth. Moby Dick was virtually ignored when it first appeared in 1851; most of the critical and academic recognition of this novel's true worth came in the early part of our century.

Strangely, Lovecraft does not even cite Melville's contribution to the horror genre in his otherwise thorough study of "Supernatural Horror in Literature." Yet Melville wrote several effective terror tales, most notably the horrific short story of vampirism and enslavement, "Benito Cereno."

The Theme of Whiteness

There are many aspects of the theme of "whiteness" as it has been explored in mainstream American literature. These aspects range from the material (the confrontation of the civilized white man with the dusky primitive men of the wilderness) to the more spiritual (i.e., "whiteness" symbolizing the unknown, the void, death). There is a whole chapter in Moby Dick dedicated to the discussion of the color white and what it symbolizes.

In the 1830s, the American people stood on the threshold of a vast frontier peopled only by savage Indians. The West was still largely untrodden and unsettled by the white man—a new field of infinite possibilities—and this feeling of wonder, of questing, of exploration, became an American mania. In the fiction of the times writers like Melville, James Fenimore Cooper, and later Mark Twain and Henry James, were to make the figure of the wandering American—the questing Yankee—into a mythic symbol.

In the pseudo-documentaries of Melville—works like Typee and Omoo—and in the fiction of Cooper, most especially the "Leatherstocking Tales"[8]—white men fled civilization and, without the constraints of female society, embraced the wilderness and the unknown. As Leslie Fiedler[9] has pointed out, white heroes embraced the wilderness in the company of nonwhites—noble savages—in a nonphysical marriage of comraderie in an all-male society. In Fiedler's own words this was the beginning of "[the] essential Western myth of male companionship triumphing over hostility between the races and death itself."[10] Fiedler goes on to suggest that an element of homoeroticism is inherent in such relationships, but that will not concern us in the present study.

In James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales," the companion of the wandering white man Nattie Bumppo was the Indian Chingachgook; Melville's protagonists fled civilization in the company of South Sea islanders, most notably Queequeg, Ishmael's companion; in Mark Twain's Hucklebury Finn the escaped Negro slave Nigger Jim becomes Huck's surrogate father. This theme of the white man fleeing bourgeois constraints imposed by civilization (and women) with the company and companionship of nonwhites still flourishes in popular culture today.[11]

Another aspect of this pervasive image of "whiteness" is the symbol for purity and innocence, the "Protestant virgin" of the European gothic novels, the essence of the bourgeois Sentimental Heroine. But in American literature "whiteness" came also to represent the infinity of the unexplored, the all-consuming void. In Arthur Gordon Pym the color white comes to dominate descriptions of the landscape near the close of the novel (natural enough in a novel set in the polar region), and incidents involving the strange or the unknown are often heralded by "white mists," or a "white abyss" in both Pym and in Lovecraft's At the Mountains of Madness. Lovecraft himself experienced a fleeting

glimpse of the wonder of the unexplored, and expressed it in a letter to Clark Ashton Smith:

> . . . I stopped off at Boston for an all-day boat trip . . . my first experience on the open sea out of sight of land —was well worth the price of the excursion. To be on limitless water is to have the fantastic imagination stimulated in the most powerful way. The uniformly blank horizon evokes all sorts of speculations as to what may lie beyond, so that the sensations of Odysseus, Columbus, Madoc, Arthur Gordon Pym, the Ancient Marlner, & all the other voyagers of song & story are rolled into one & sharpened to expectant poignancy . . .[12]

"Whiteness" came also to symbolize death, the final white void, the ultimate unexplored (and unexplorable, at least by the living) region. The color also became a symbol of racial purity. It was the white man who enslaved the black in the South—it was the white man who exterminated the nonwhite Indian and stole his land. This pervasive symbol, this "whiteness beyond white," like the white man's flight to the wilderness with his nonwhite soulmate, was to dominate much of the fiction produced in this country.[13] This theme of "whiteness" is evidenced in all three works being discussed here.

Marie Bonaparte,[14] Leslie Fiedler,[15] and Harold Beaver[16] all have commented on the allusions to whiteness found in Pym. Marie Bonaparte has conjectured that Pym's journey to the Antarctic was really Poe's spiritual journey In search of his "pale mother" . . . the pallid, emaciated, tubercular mother Edgar Poe lost as a child. For Leslie Fiedler, Pym's journey south symbolized Poe's spiritual return to his roots, the Antebellum South, with its slavery, plantations, and white racism. In either case, the interpretations suggest that Pym is, first and foremost, a spiritual journey—a voyage of self-discovery, a journey of descent and rebirth, a quest for the Self. This is also especially true of Melville's Moby Dick and, as we shall see, it is true of H. P. Lovecraft's At the Mountains of Madness.

The Spiritual Journey

There is no need to discuss at length the theme of the spiritual journey and rebirth in Melville's Moby Dick—it is, of course, all-encompassing. However, certain points should be mentioned.

Ishmael, retreating from his native land, his family, and civilization in general, goes whaling. He signs aboard the Pequod, captained by the fanatical Ahab—once a just and rational man, who has since been embittered and maddened by his contact with Moby Dick, the white whale that took his leg. Ishmael's closest companion and soulmate on his voyage is Queequeg, a savage cannibal South Sea islander who tries, on first meeting Ishmael, to sell the white man a shrunken head.

As the voyage progresses, the characters become further and further removed from civilized constraints. Ahab forms a bond similar to Ishmael's—with Fedallah the Farsi, another nonwhite crew member. Ahab's obsession with destroying the white whale becomes all-consuming. Queequeg sees a vision of his own death and asks the ship's carpenter to construct a coffin. The Pequod comes across another whaler, the Rachel, and when her captain asks Ahab to help find some of her lost crewmen who have been dragged out of sight by a whale, Ahab refuses—violating all civilized conventions and laws of the sea. The Piquod and her crew fall under a baleful doom.

Finally, the crew sights the white whale—Moby Dick—and in the confrontation (which lasts three days) Fedallah becomes entangled in the harpoon lines bound to Moby Dick's flank. Ahab, too, is swept away, entangled In the harpoon lines that fasten the white whale to

the whale boats. Moby Dick, enraged, destroys the Pequod in the end, and only Ishmael survives—floating on the coffin fashioned for Queequeg. Ishmael finds resurrection from a watery tomb on the cannibal's coffin—and rescue in the arms of the whaler Rachel which is still searching for her lost crewmen.

It is amazing how closely Melville's novel parallels the themes and some of the events of Arthur Gordon Pym, and Harold Beaver[17] has suggested that there is little doubt that Melville was familiar with Poe's tale and borrowed Poe's themes as a basis for his classic. Harold Beaver asserts that Melville buried two seminal sources for his adventure—Poe's Pym and Reynolds' article on "Mocha Dick." According to Beaver, James Fenimore Cooper's novel, The Sea Lions, set in the polar regions, was reviewed by Herman Melville in April 1849—only two months before Poe's death. Harold Beaver conjectures that this review, coupled with news of Edgar Allan Poe's passing, may have prompted Melville to look up Poe's Antarctic yarn. As he points out, it would have been strange if Melville had not known Poe. They moved in the same literary circles in New York City. Poe even addressed a meeting of the New York Society Library in 1848. At that time Melville was a member of the organization. They shared mutual friends, most notably Every Duychinck, who was Melville's mentor and a constant correspondent with Poe. As Beaver states,

> Moby Dick: or, The Whale was published in 1851. Though lavish in his quotations and allusions to sources from Genesis to Darwin, Melville suppressed these two seminal influences: Jeremiah N. Reynolds and Edgar Allan Poe. Both Mocha Dick: or, The White Whale of the Pacific (1839) and The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838) must have seemed too uncannily close to the very origin of his inspiration.[18]

A closer look at Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym is now in order.

Pym, like Ishmael, wishes to flee civilization—this he does with his companion, Augustus. Pym decides to run away from home and family and to stow away on his friend's father's whaler. They depart Edgartown (a nice pun on Poe's name, also a real place in Martha's Vineyard) after a chance encounter with Mr. Peterson, Pym's grandfather. Pym denies his identity to the old man three times (the New Testament reference here is not to be missed; Moby Dick is also full of biblical allusions, so many, in fact, that a solid grounding in the Bible is necessary for a thorough understanding of Melville's novel) and finally manages, with Augustus' help, to secrete himself on board the ship, entombed in the vast hold, where he remains hidden for three days until the ship sets sail (another New Testament allusion, this time to Christ's resurrection—the entombment and resurrection themes are constantly appearing and reappearing all through Pym). After a long passage of time, during which Pym sleeps deeply, the young man realizes that he has not heard from his friend Augustus and fears himself abandoned. He cannot escape the hold, as he discovers the hatch has been covered by some heavy object.

Soon Pym senses another presence with him in the confines of the ship's hold—after a fright, he discovers it is his dog, Tiger, which Augustus had also sneaked aboard. There is a note tied to the dog's neck, but Pym can only make out a few lines. Just as his sanity is giving out, and his pet turns on Pym, maddened by thirst and hunger, Augustus arrives to tell Pym that there has been a mutiny and that the ship has been divided into factions—all led by

nonwhites. The most violent faction is headed by the black cook, a vicious brute. A more moderate faction is led by a misshapen dwarf half-breed named Dirk Peters, who wears a bear-skin wig to cover his bald pate.

A plan is worked out whereby Pym, with the help of Augustus and Peters, disguises himself as a ghost of a seaman murdered by the cook's faction. The plan is to frighten the rival faction into turning over the control of the ship to Peters. Pym is reborn from entombment here for the second time in the narrative (the first time being when a drunken Augustus and Pym are involved in a boating accident, briefly described in the story's opening). The plan works, but not for long; after Pym gains his freedom the ship is wrecked in a storm and Augustus, Peters, and Pym must murder another crewman and feed on his flesh or face starvation. After the grisly meal is partaken of, Pym and Peters thrive, but Augustus, who was wounded in a struggle, dies of gangrene. Augustus, whose name suggests the rational and civilized, passes quietly from Pym's life; his rotting corpse is tossed overboard by Peters on the First of August (the date of Melville's birth). It is the "savage" Dirk Peters who replaces Augustus as Pym's soulmate for the rest of the story.

At length they are rescued by a seal-hunting ship, the Jane Guy, which is heading for the South Seas, by way of the Antarctic. When they arrive at the south polar regions, they find the climate moderate, not frigid as assumed. They discover a tribe of people living there—the Tsalalians, black men to their teeth, who worship the color white and fall in supplication to anything of that color (except, of course, the explorers—whom the tribe plans to murder). After long passages about the life, the economy, and the agriculture of the people of the south polar regions (reminiscent of the long passages on whaling that can be found throughout Moby Dick) the crew of the Jane Guy are betrayed and killed by the Tsalalians, their ship blown to bits in the struggle.

Only Pym, Peters, and another man survive, as they are accidentally buried in a rock slide during the confrontation. Once more Pym emerges from entombment, this time to be greeted by the waiting arms of his savior, Dirk Peters, who has become a symbolic father to him (note that at the beginning of the tale Pym denied his grandfather Peterson in a dockside scene at Edgartown, only to find salvation and comfort in the arms of Peters on the cliffs above the bay of Tsalal near the close of the tale). On the island they find strange carvings—a sort of cryptogram—in the rocks. They are very ancient. The course of the story has come almost full circle, the spiritual journey is almost complete.

Pym and Peters escape Tsalal on a canoe, taking one of the blacks prisoner. They are swept into a swiftly running cataract which rushes them uncontrollably to a fateful rendezvous. In fear, the black savage dies, and as the canoe rushes on, past strange birds crying "Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!" they confront a huge, white, human-like shrouded figure. Here the narrative abruptly ends, and the whole work is closed by Poe himself, wearing the hat of the editor of The Southern Literary Messenger, who tells the reader that Arthur Gordon Pym, who had survived the ordeal in the Antarctic, has died suddenly in New York, his narrative uncompleted. Of course, Poe meant to suggest that Pym and Peters were swept into the tunnel at the Antarctic and sucked through the hollow earth, to emerge at the other side—again suggesting a voyage of self-discovery as the characters come full circle, both literally and figuratively.

Poe goes on to suggest that the strange carvings on the cliffs

of Tsalal are actually Egyptian, and hints that the Tsalalians are really "Ethiopian." The mysterious white shrouded figure is never explained—except by Marie Bonaparte, in a deeply Freudian manner—she suggests that the figure was Edgar Poe's lost mother. The theme of self-discovery and rebirth is only reinforced by this interpretation.

We can see the similarities in plot and theme to be found in Pym and Moby Dick: the device of the white man fleeing civilization and facing the unknown with a member of another race, the allusions to "whiteness" throughout both stories, the biblical references, the lush descriptions of flora and fauna, and the livelihoods of the characters—but most especially, the archetypal spiritual journey taken by both protagonists, climaxed by a resurrection on the verge of what appears to be certain physical death.

These situations and themes, somewhat veiled by the dry, scientific prose, can also be found in the pages of H. P. Lovecraft's At the Mountains of Madness.[19]

The Lovecraft Connection

The narrative style of At the Mountains of Madness, like Pym, is a first-person account of an expedition to the Antarctic, told by Professor Dyer of Miskatonic University. Dyer is telling the story now, seven years after the events he describes, in an effort to warn off a newly-organized expedition about to depart for the same area.

Dyer, a geologist, had accompanied the Miskatonic University expedition to the Antarctic, an expedition equipped with a new electric drill for recovering deep rock and soil samples under the ancient ice. The group, Dyer, Pabodie, the drill's inventor, Lake of the Biology Department, Atwood of the Physics Department, and sixteen assistants—"seven graduate students from Miskatonic and nine skilled mechanics"[20] depart on two "wooden ex-whalers."

As the expedition approaches the South Pole, they pass Ross Island, with its twin volcanic peaks. Here "one of the graduate assistants—a brilliant young fellow named Danforth—pointed out what looked like lava on the snowy slope; remarking that this mountain, discovered in 1840, had undoubtedly been the source of Poe's image when he wrote seven years later of

> . . . the lavas that restlessly roll
> Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
> In the ultimate climes of the pole—
> That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
> In the realms of the boreal pole.[21]

This first allusion to Edgar Allan Poe in Lovecraft's story is a quote from Poe's poem "Ulalume" and what follows is a description of Professor Dyer's own fascination with Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and a wry observation by Dyer about his colleague: "Danforth was a great reader of bizarre material . . ."[22]

At length, the expedition reaches its first goal and begins drilling for samples. After some success, the expedition leaders decide to divide their effort; one group, led by Lake, is to fly on and establish a base deeper in the polar regions northwest of their encampment. This they accomplish with the four Dornier aeroplanes they brought along. Dyer is strangely reluctant to press on further with the others in the forward expedition. His misgivings are expressed in scientific and rational arguments—"I still failed to see the good sense of Lake's demand . . . requiring the use of all four planes, many men, and the whole of the expedition's mechanical apparatus. I decided not to accompany the northwestward part despite Lake's plea for my geological advice . . ."[23] but his decision

not to accompany the others ultimately leads to his physical salvation, as well as a confrontation with madness and horror.

The forward party radios a report of the discovery of a previously unknown mountain range that "May equal Himalayas . . ."[24] and later, even more shocking discoveries are unearthed. Lake's party finds a cave filled with specimens of prehistoric life, some never encountered before, including huge, star-headed crinoid-like creatures. Some of these crinoids are perfectly preserved and, after radioing exact descriptions of the find to Dyer's camp (these descriptions are reminiscent of the long scientific and informative passages in both Pym and Moby Dick), Lake decides to dissect one of the more intact creatures. A storm is blowing up, and radio contact is soon lost between the two exploration parties.

After the storm subsides, there is still no contact with the advance party. Dyer, the student Danforth, and several others, proceed to the forward site with one of the aeroplanes, and find the first of the horrors they will soon encounter. The camp is in ruins—we later learn that some of the humans and dogs have been dissected—and the crinoid samples are buried under mounds with strange, systematic dot patterns etched on them. "Madness struck the advance party" is the assumption made by Dyer, for one of the members of Lake's party, the student Gedney (and one of the dogs), is missing. The only "rational" explanation is that Gedney killed the others and buried the crinoids under the mounds. Yet some of the star-headed creatures are also missing, and the conclusion—again rational—is that they were "blown away in the storm."

Dyer and Danforth agree to fly the aeroplane toward the mountain range in an attempt to locate the missing Gedney. They are delayed by another small wind-storm, but depart as soon as possible. They locate the mountain ranges described to them by the now-dead advance party—they observe the strange regularity of some of the granite blocks. At length, they discover a long-dead city, once the seat of a powerful prehistoric civilization of star-headed Old Ones, the remains of some of which had been discovered by the advance party. They decided to land the plane and explore for a while, and soon gain entrance to the necrop-

olis.

Lovecraft here proved himself the master of the sublime—the passages describing the dead city are awe-inspiring and wonderful. As Dyer and Danforth explore the ruins they learn the fearful history of the Old Ones; details of their civilization and way of life are found on bas-reliefs in nearly every giant corridor and massive chamber of the ancient site.

When the two men decide to search for a deep tunnel that leads to an ancient riverbed, they come upon an unexplainable, yet all too familiar smell: gasoline. Danforth and Dyer remember that some of the supplies, including a petrol heater, were missing from the advance camp. They soon discover the source of the odor, a small campsite inside the ruins, and this discovery leads to further horrors. The two men come upon the corpses of the missing student Gedney and the dog, both preserved like laboratory specimens and strapped to a sled. The conclusion is now inescapable: the crinoid Old Ones had somehow survived their aeon-long slumber and were responsible for the deaths at Lake's advance camp. As this realization washes over Dyer and Danforth the fact is confirmed—they find a corpse of a star-headed Old One. The creature, revived after millenia of hibernation by the advance party, returned to its ancestral home—only to die in the grip of its hereditary enemy, one of the shoggoths, whose existence was foretold on the bas-reliefs and murals in the ruins. The two men proceed, discovering a species of hitherto unknown albino penguins and more dead Old Ones. Then, a fine white mist begins to surge out of the tunnel ahead, followed by a living shoggoth—piping its hideous litany, "Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!" A refrain all too familiar to both Dyer and Danforth—and other readers of Poe's Pym.

The two men flee in horror, stumbling into the aeroplane and taking off. But as they are leaving the mountains, Danforth turns around and sees in the white, hovering mist some terrible, final revelation that he neither explains to Danforth, nor can live with and still retain his sanity. In the end, both men agree to keep the secret of their discoveries until such time as events (in this case, the coming Starkweather-Moore expedition) force them to reveal the facts.

Lovecraft's Racial Attitudes

Let us examine the theme of interracial male-bonding and interracial harmony as expressed in At the Mountains of Madness.

Lovecraft's attitudes toward Negroes, and in fact toward any nonwhite, non-Aryan, non-New England Yankee, have been discussed and argued about repeatedly—so much so that no new light can be shed on the subject here. Suffice it to say that Lovecraft was not the most tolerant man toward individuals and peoples not of his own race, class, or economic background. He nevertheless was able to write convincingly about members of other races when necessary (most notably in the ghost-written "Medusa's Coil") but seldom wrote a story where the main characters moved in the same circles as members of other races. That Lovecraft did not often employ characters of another race has less to do with his personal feelings than it has to do with the society in which he lived.

Lovecraft's characters, in his most-accomplished fiction, are either echoes or idealized versions of himself. Charles Dexter Ward, De la Poer, Francis Wayland Thurston, and Professor Dyer all share similarities with their creator. All are men with powerful intellects, aristocratic or New England backgrounds, and finely-honed aesthetic senses. Some are scientists or academics, what Lovecraft might have become had his family possessed the financial means for him to attend a university.

Lovecraft never peopled his tales with shop-stewards, coal-

miners, janitors and the like. His major characters were all cut from a different cloth. So it would not be logical to expect nonwhite characters in the tales of H. P. Lovecraft; in the 1920s and 30s nonwhites in the United States did not become scientists, they did not move in the same social circles as whites. It would not have made sense in the social climate of Depression era America for a scientist or academic to be portrayed as nonwhite.

Yet male-bonding is a very important ingredient in much of Lovecraft's fiction, as it is in classic American literature, and there is even a specific incident of white/nonwhite male-bonding in Lovecraft's fiction. This episode occurred in Lovecraft's "collaboration" with Zealia Bishop—the short novel "The Mound." The two characters were the conquistador Zamacona and an American Indian who led him to the entrance to the underground world.

In a perceptive article that appeared several years ago in Crypt of Cthulhu "Lovecraft and Classic American Literature,"[25] Peter H. Cannon discussed male-bonding in classic American literature and drew attention to this sole example of archetypal white/nonwhite male-bonding in Lovecraft's entire fictional output. I would like to take Cannon's arguments a step further and connect them with Pym and Madness. An example of interracial male-bonding in Poe's tale is, as we have seen, self-evident. Male-bonding in At the Mountains of Madness is also evident, but this bonding does not involve blacks and whites; it does, however, involve members of higher and lower social classes, as we shall see. And, surprisingly, there is a note of interracial harmony present in At the Mountains of Madness, though Lovecraft himself may have been unaware of it!

In Madness Dyer's soulmate, the man with whom he experiences the horrors of the expedition, is "the student Danforth." Note the similarity of the names of paired characters in both Lovecraft and Poe. In Poe the names are "Pym" and "Peters," in Lovecraft "Dyer" and "Danforth." The narrator of both tales possesses a "y" as the second letter of his name. Poe, of course, substituted the "y" for the "o" in his own name. Lovecraft would have had a tough time attempting a similar substitution, but there is little doubt that HPL conceived Dyer as an idealized alter ego of himself (in fact, as Donald Burleson has pointed out, "Dyer" was an ancestral name of Lovecraft's).[26]

Danforth is introduced as "one of the graduate assistants." He is referred to as "a brilliant young fellow . . ." but in almost the same breath we are told he is a "great reader of bizarre material."[27] The "bizarre material" with which Danforth is familiar is later revealed to be the dreaded Necronomicon and other eldritch tomes, but here the narrator is referring to Edgar Allan Poe. The tone here suggests that a true "scientist" would most certainly not be a reader of this sort of thing. And though Lovecraft gives the reader a first hint of the bond that will later develop between Dyer and Danforth, in that the Professor admits that he himself is familiar with Poe's novel, some sort of line has been drawn here by Lovecraft, through his narrator's words, to suggest that young, inexperienced Danforth is neither the academic nor intellectual equal to Dyer.

Danforth's education and background, it is suggested by the tone of the narrator, are "unorthodox": he is not a full professor like Dyer, hence not quite the older man's peer; yet in the pages that follow, Danforth's observations are often intuitively accurate—and just as often in the early section of the novel, his ideas are denigrated and dismissed by Dyer. It is Danforth who "drew our notice to the curious regularities of the higher mountain skyline"[28] when the two men first sight the mountains of madness. It is Danforth who

"thought that the slight cracks and pittings of the weathering tended toward unusual patterns." Dyer suggests that "Filled as he was with the horrors and strangenesses discovered at the camp, [Danforth had] hinted that the pittings vaguely resembled those baffling groups of dots sprinkled over the primeval greenish soapstones, so hideously duplicated on the . . . snowmounds above those six buried monstrosities."[29] Danforth is "impressionable"—suggesting to the reader that Dyer is not; rather, Dyer is coolly scientific and rational.

After they land the plane, Danforth "was frankly jumpy, and began making some offensively irrelevant speculations about the horror at the camp. . . ."[30] These speculations, which at this point the logical Dyer finds "offensive," are later proven correct, but at this point in the narrative Dyer "resented [these speculations] all the more because [Dyer] could not help sharing certain conclusions forced upon us by many features of this [city]." Danforth later "insisted that he saw faint traces of ground markings which he did not like; whilst elsewhere he stopped to listen to a subtle imaginary [emphasis mine, but expressive of Dyer's nonbelief] sound . . ."[31] The young and impressionable—no, "jumpy," Danforth actually experiences an auditory hallucination, not the stamp of a rational, dedicated scientist. The reader can almost visualize Lovecraft's alter ego shaking his head!

Dyer begins the next paragraph by admitting that "our scientific and adventurous souls were not wholly dead . . ."[32] and the two men decide to press on. From this point, discarding the previous foreshadowing in the earlier parts of the tale, Dyer and Danforth come to increasing agreement about the strange ruins they have discovered—their mutual experiences drawing the graduate assistant/reader of "bizarre material" and the coolly rational elder scientist together in a bond of shared events and shared secrets—until, at the story's climax, they both confront the penultimate horror together. This confrontation forever bonds the two men just as it transforms them. And Danforth becomes, through the events of the story, Dyer's spiritual equal—and his soulmate. Like Queequeg, like Dirk Peters, Danforth moves from a position of social inferiority to equality with his fellow-protagonist.

Strange as it may seem, racial harmony can be construed as one of the messages in Lovecraft's tale, just as it is one of the messages in Moby Dick and Pym, for, as Dyer is moved to remark of the newly-awakened Old Ones near the close of the story: ". . . poor Old Ones! . . . Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star spawn—whatever they had been, they were men!"[33]

Lovecraft's Spiritual Journey

In Arthur Gordon Pym the protagonist wishes to have an adventure. It is his motivation to go to sea with his friend. Pym experiences the ultimate adventure—probably more adventure than he wished for. In the end, his voyage was one of self-discovery, disguised as a mere adventure. Ishmael wanted to flee civilization and go whaling—his flight from the bourgeois is more complete than he ever desired, for on the Pequod all civilized constraints are abandoned at the behest of the fanatical Ahab. Dyer and his companions journeyed in search of scientific knowledge—truth, if you will. They got more knowledge than they ever bargained for—and a truth that shattered the scientific foundations that Dyer built his life around. For Dyer and Danforth, the spiritual journey, the journey to the roots of truth and Self, ended by skirting (and, in Danforth's case, crossing) the boundaries of madness.

The journey to the "mountains of madness" profoundly changed the protagonist of the story. In Dyer's

own words:

> Every incident of that four-and-a-half hour flight is burned into my recollection because of its crucial position in my life. It marked my loss, at the age of fifty-four, of all that peace and balance which the normal mind possesses through its accustomed conception of the external Nature and Nature's laws. Thenceforward . . . the student Danforth and myself . . . were to face a hideously amplified world of lurking horrors which nothing can erase from our emotions, and which we would refrain from sharing with mankind in general if we could."[34]

The voyage was, for Dyer, a watershed, and the parallel in Poe's tale to this passage would be the death of Pym's social equal and boyhood friend, Augustus. At these points in the two tales, the rational, logical and ordered world passes from the protagonists' consciousness, to be replaced by madness and chaos. Like another of Lovecraft's masterpieces, "The Shadow over Innsmouth," written in the same creative period, At the Mountains of Madness is a spiritual journey that changes the protagonist forever—though not necessarily for the better. Some have even suggested that "Innsmouth" is a sequel of sorts to Madness.[35]

Though Edgar Allan Poe set out to deliberately perpetuate a hoax when he wrote Pym, there are elements in the tale that can best be termed "obsessive." In Poe's more personal (and less self-conscious) fiction, certain elements that obsessed Poe are always present: the threat of premature entombment (found in "The Black Cat," "Premature Burial," "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Fall of the House of Usher"); the loss of a loved one, most especially the loss of a beautiful young woman (as in "Ligeia," "Berenice" and "The Oval Portrait"); and the ever-present threat of madness, which is confronted by many of Poe's protagonists. In Pym we find a recurring motif of entombment and resurrection; in the dark hold when Pym first stows away; and later at the South Pole, when the protagonist is buried under a landslide. The main character goes through many burials and rebirths.

The threat of madness is the only element in Lovecraft's fiction which can accurately be termed "obsessive." Madness is the only consistent danger to the protagonists in his tales, and the one most feared. Both of Lovecraft's parents died institutionalized because of mental aberration, and he must have lived in constant fear of losing his own mind—and this fear of madness is reflected in his fiction—including At the Mountains of Madness.

So we can see another similarity between the two tales. Despite the self-conscious element inherent in the composition of the two tales—the logic and deliberation with which Poe and Lovecraft set about composing their respective tales of the Antarctic—neither author was able to dispense with the obsessive fears that plagued them most of their lives. Those obsessive fears are reflected in both works.

Those "Incidental" Tributes to Poe

Peter Cannon felt that Lovecraft paid only incidental tribute to Poe in his novel, but he did not specify what those tributes were. Let us look at some of these allusions to Poe's novel found in At the Mountains of Madness.

Poe was inspired by the polar explorations going on in his lifetime when he set down his "narrative." In 1828-29 the American Antarctic Exploring Expedition led by Benjamin Pendleton and Nathaniel Palmer confirmed the findings of an earlier expedition, also led by the American, Nathaniel Palmer, in 1820. The first landing on Antarctica was made by John Davis of

New Haven in February 1831. There was a federally sponsored United States Exploring Expedition led by Charles Wilkes that sailed from Norfolk, Virginia, in 1831—the year Pym was published—and it has been suggested that Poe wrote his novel to capitalize on the publicity the Wilkes Expedition was generating. This expedition ultimately proved ill-fated as Wilkes, who had mapped over a thousand miles of the Antarctic coast, was promptly court-martialled on his return to America—accused wrongly of falsifying his records.

Lovecraft was also fascinated by the Antarctic expeditions that went on in his lifetime. The most famous of these were the Scott and Amundsen expeditions of 1911—like the Wilkes Expedition, the results of both the Scott and Amundsen expeditions were contested, and the Scott Expedition ended in tragedy. In 1929 Admiral Byrd reached the South Pole by airplane, and several years later published his findings. It was probably the Russian, Otto Schmidt, who first set foot on the South Pole in 1936—five years after Lovecraft wrote his tale.

Both Poe and Lovecraft utilized highly controversial theories in their narratives. Poe, of course, relied heavily on the now-discredited theories propagated by Reynolds, but Poe was fortunate enough (from a writer's point of view!) to die before these theories were disproved. Lovecraft had more trouble. When he penned his tale in 1931, Lovecraft relied on the theory that the Antarctic was really two separate continents, divided by a frozen sea or river. This, we now know, is untrue. According to S. T. Joshi,[36] Lovecraft wrote At the Mountains of Madness between February 14 and March 22 of 1931. The story of its rejection by Weird Tales editor Wright is well known. The novel remained in manuscript for five years, until it was published in a textually unsound form in Astounding.

The problem was that in the interim between the composition of the tale and its publication, the results of the expedition by Admiral Byrd were made public—and they confirmed that the Antarctic was a single continent. Lovecraft attempted to correct this mistake in his tale for the version that appeared in Astounding, which in turn led to some of the textual problems plaguing the novel.

Another questionable theory employed by Lovecraft in this novel was the so-called Wegener Theory of continental drift, first postulated in 1912 by Alfred Wegener, an Austrian geophysics professor. This theory was developed independently by Frank B. Taylor in the United States around the same time. According to Wegener and Taylor, the continents began as a single mass, which scientists call Pangaea, back in the Paleozoic Era. This supercontinent began to drift apart sometime during the Mesozoic Era, until the pieces ended up in the position they now occupy (though they are not stationary and are still drifting). The Hungarian geophysicist, Egyed, calculated the rate of expansion at one yard every thousand years.

While some of the mechanics have yet to be worked out, the theory of Continental Drift itself is sound and now scientifically accepted, and it provides a solution to other tectonic mysteries, such as earthquakes. In this case, Lovecraft was fortunately correct.

So, as with Poe, Lovecraft consciously utilized the most current scientific speculation in the composition of his novel.

A more subtle (and perhaps questionable) allusion to Poe's tale occurs near the climax of Madness. Dyer and Danforth, as they are searching for the abyss hinted at in the murals in the ancient city of the Old Ones, discover a previously unknown species of albino penguin, over six feet tall. These creatures are blind, having evolved in the darkness of the city's lower levels. I propose that Lovecraft was hinting at a solution to the

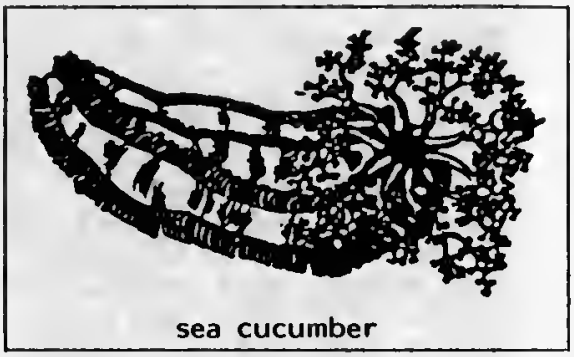
enigmatic ending of Pym, which reads:

> And now we rushed into the embraces of the cataract, where a chasm threw itself open to receive us. But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow.[37]

What "chasm" opened to receive them? Could Lovecraft have been alluding to this "chasm" when he wrote of the abyss in the lost city? We know, of course, that Poe intended the reader to believe that Pym and Peters were nearing the entrance to the hollow earth. Was Lovecraft's "abyss"—where the ancient star-headed Old Ones finally retreated as their world waned—suggested by and analogous to the chasm in Poe's tale? And was Lovecraft, as a sort of "throw-away," solving the mystery of the "shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men . . ." when he conceived the giant albino penguins? It looks as though he was, for what other purpose did the introduction of the creatures serve—beyond furthering a sense of wonder in the reader (which at this point in the story is the equivalent to overkill)?

Yet another biological entity in Lovecraft's novella has its source in Poe's story. I am referring to the star-headed Old Ones themselves. In The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, there are several long, descriptive passages on the flora and fauna found by the explorers in the South Polar regions. There are also some references to the livelihood of the natives living there. In both Peter Cannon and Ben Indick's summaries of Pym, and in the short synopsis found in the article you are now reading, this part of the tale was glossed over. Yet, it is in these descriptions of the agriculture of the Tsalalians that we find a central source of inspiration for Lovecraft's tale.

One of the activities of the Tsalalians is the harvesting of a marine creature referred to in Poe's story as biche de mer, more commonly known as the sea cucumber. The sea cucumber is an echinoderm of the class Holothuroidea which has a flexible, cucumber-shaped body and tentacles around the mouth. Note a picture of the sea cucumber—it has the same elongated, barrel-shape as the Old Ones. What is missing is the Old Ones' five-pointed symmetry. Where did Love- get this aspect of the creatures' shape? We must remember that he combined several echinoderm subspecies in the creation of his Old Ones. In an excellent article in Crypt of Cthulhu[38] Bert Atsma offered "An Autopsy on the Old Ones" in which he stated



sea cucumber

> The creature described in Lake's radio report is actually a combination of several echinoderm lines including the crinoids. A barrel "torso" that is both flexible and tough is reminiscent of Class Holothuroidea (e.g., the sea cucumber), whose members have a leathery dermis and whose hollow body is shaped like a stout cucumber. They do have a structure similar to what Lake describes as tentacles at the anterior end, but they are much smaller.[39]

It is no mere coincidence that Love-

craft had barrel-shaped, crinoid Old Ones resembling nothing so much as the lowly sea cucumber that the Tsalalians harvested in Poe's tale. And if we are to accept Dyer's explanation that the Old Ones filtered down from the stars to take root on earth, and later became the source of all life on this planet, then the biche de mer that the savages of Tsalal harvested for food and clothing are the de-evolved ancestors of the mightiest race ever to inhabit this planet—the star-headed Old Ones!

With consummate cosmic irony Lovecraft tied these threads together—not only deposing mankind from his pinnacle of earthly superiority, but hinting (through Poe's story) at a similar fate for the Old Ones. The concept of the Old Ones is central to Lovecraft's novel—and they spring directly from Poe's tale. No mere incidental tribute this!

In a perceptive and beautifully written study of Lovecraft's fictional landscapes,[40] Angela Carter expressed the feel of the dead city at the mountains of madness this way:

> The whiteness of the snow is the infinite blankness of true mystery; the discovery of a range of mountains in the subcontinent reveals to the explorers a gateway to a forbidden world of untrodden wonder. Under a cryptic sky, the landscape itself becomes a vast cryptogram which, once it is unravelled, reveals to man his insignificance in the cosmic scheme of things.[41]

Here we see the theme of "whiteness" as Lovecraft utilized it—to symbolize the infinite void of the unexplored. This is especially apparent near the climax of Madness, when Danforth sees the final horror so unspeakable that Danforth is unwilling to share this final revelation with Dyer.

There is also a strange riddle—a cryptogram, if you will—in Poe's tale. I refer to the eerie—and in the text of the tale, unexplained—carvings discovered by Pym and Peters, etched in the black granite of the ancient chambers the two men traverse on the island of the savage Tsalalians. Pym dutifully scribbles them down (like Dyer, Pym is always a diligent recorder of events and observations), but neither Pym nor Peters is able to solve the riddle. It is left to the editor of the magazine in which the tale was first published (Poe himself) to puzzle out the solution.

Poe explains that the final hieroglyphs recorded by Pym suggest that the origins of the Tsalalians are found in darkest Africa, and that the writing is in Egyptian, a fact which challenges the preconceived notions the characters have about the history of the South Polar regions.

Lovecraft, as Angela Carter has pointed out, transformed the entire landscape of the South Pole into a cryptogram—the solution to which changes the preconceived scientific notions of the protagonists forever. Carter further suggests that:

> This is the authentic landscape of interiority, of the archetypal Inner Place, the womb . . .[42]

Interiority, the Inner Place, the Womb—does this not suggest that, like Poe's novel, At the Mountains of Madness is at heart a spiritual journey, a voyage to Self, a quest for Self-Knowledge?

Literal Sequels to Pym, Moby Dick, and Others

We now see that Madness, while not a literal sequel to the events described in Poe's Pym, is surely a thematic sequel—with more than merely incidental tributes to the source novel. It is evident that Lovecraft instinctively grasped the themes of Poe's novel and turned them to his own purposes, that Lovecraft utilized some of the concepts (much changed) in his composition of the novel, and that Lovecraft borrowed some of the

events and items described by Poe and transformed them into his own vision. Furthermore, the central creation of Lovecraft's novel—the Old Ones themselves—spring directly from Poe's novel. So, as Ben Indick suggested in his article, Madness is not a literal sequel to Poe's Pym, but it surely is a thematic sequel.

There are literal sequels to The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, written by various authors to attempt a solution to this most enigmatic example of Edgar Allan Poe's work. These sequels vary in quality, the most typical being a straight adventure story with some sort of wild climax, which answers one or two of the questions left unaddressed in Poe's novel. Typical of this sort of sequel is Charles Romyn Dake's A Strange Discovery written in 1899; and Jules Verne's Le Sphinx des Glaces, written two years earlier. The Verne novel is more accessible, as there is a modern abridgement currently in print.[43]

In Verne's sequel, the strange white shrouded figure is discovered to be a huge sphinx, constructed of a strange, supermagnetic metal. We learn in the course of this tale that Arthur Gordon Pym did not survive the experiences at the South Polar regions. Dirk Peters, however, did survive—and assumed Pym's identity. It was Peters who wrote the Narrative and gave it to Poe—then fled with another expedition to the South Pole after faking Pym's death in New York—because he could not provide a climax without admitting that Arthur Gordon Pym was dead. In Verne's tale, Dirk Peters and his fellow shipmates find the Sphinx of the Icefields, and bound to the statue's flank by magnetic attraction, like Ahab was bound to Moby Dick, is the frozen corpse of Arthur Gordon Pym. We learn that it was the magnetic attraction of the sphinx that sent the canoe hurtling into the cataract, and Peters survived only because he wasn't wearing any metal. Poor Pym was trapped against the artifact by his metal belt buckle, which he was unable to unfasten!

This unsatisfactory answer to the riddle of Pym is typical of the sequels to Poe's novel—and we can see why Lovecraft's thematic sequel is by far the most famous one!

Melville's sequel of sorts to The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym—Moby Dick—spawned even more sequels than Poe's original, especially among science fiction writers. It seemed that, during the sixties and seventies, it was de rigueur for up-and-coming science fiction writers (especially those that numbered themselves among science fiction's "New Wave") to try their hand at creating literal and thematic sequels to Melville's masterpiece. Like the sequels to Pym, these tales vary in quality, and a partial list of the better ones includes Philip Jose Farmer's The Wind Whales of Ishmael (1971) and The Unreasoning Mask (1981); Michael Moorcock's The Ice Schooner (1969); Samuel R. Delany's Babel-17 (1966) and Nova (1968, and one of the best); and The Godwhale (1974) by J. J. Bass. Frank Herbert's Dune (1965) and even Raymond Chandler's detective novel The Big Sleep (1939) owe a debt of gratitude to Melville's classic. The motion picture Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan (1982) has many illusions to Moby Dick and even casts Captain Kirk as the white whale!

There exists a superb short story by Steven Utley and Howard Waldrop called "Black as the Pit, from Pole to Pole" (1977) which is a sequel to Pym, Moby Dick, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Lovecraft's At the Mountains of Madness and even Robert E. Howard's Conan stories—a real tour de force![44] And, finally, it is worth noting that artist Lee Brown Coye must have sensed the connection between some of Lovecraft's work and Moby Dick. Take a closer look at the cover of the old Arkham House edition of Dagon—isn't that Captain Ahab striking at the white whale, Moby

Dick, from Hell's heart?

NOTES

[1]Crypt of Cthulhu #32, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1985.

[2]Peter Cannon, "At the Mountains of Madness as a Sequel to Arthur Gordon Pym," Crypt of Cthulhu #32, p. 33.

[3]Ben P. Indick, "Lovecraft's POElar Adventure," Crypt of Cthulhu #32, p. 25.

[4]J. N. Reynolds, "Mocha Dick: or the White Whale of the Pacific: A Leaf from a Manuscript Journal," The Knickerbocker, New York Monthly Magazine, XIII (May 1839). This article is reprinted as part of the Appendix to Moby Dick by Herman Melville, Penguin Books, 1972.

[5]Most notably the Pellucidar series (1914 to 1942) by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

[6]Typee (1846), Omoo (1847), and Mardi (1849).

[7]Letter to Rheinhardt Kleiner, February 2, 1916, Selected Letters I.20-21.

[8]The "Leatherstocking Tales" by James Fenimore Cooper are, in order of publication: The Pioneers (1823), The Last of the Mohicans (1826), The Pathfinder (1841) and The Deerslayer (1842). All feature the character Natty Bumppo and his Indian friend, Chingachgook. Some also feature another Indian companion to Natty, named Uncas.

[9]Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, rev. ed. (NY: Stein and Day, 1966).

[10]Leslie A. Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American, 1968, p. 132.

[11]Examples of this type of male bonding in modern popular culture include The Lone Ranger and Tonto, Sonny Crockett and Ricardo Tubbs of Miami Vice, Johnny La Rue and Neal Washington of Hill Street Blues and even Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock of Star Trek.

[12]Letter to Clark Ashton Smith, September 24, 1930, Selected Letters III.168-69.

[13]Again, this theme of whiteness even appears in classics of popular culture. One is reminded of the white mist which is the background for Scarlett O'Hara's flight to her Self—and the setting for her realization that she really does love Rhett Butler—this, at the climax of Gone With the Wind.

[14]Marie Bonaparte, The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe, London, 1949.

[15]Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, pp. 392-400.

[16]Harold Beaver, "Introduction" to The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, Penguin Books, 1975.

[17]Harold Beaver, "Appendix: 'Poe and Melville,'" The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket.

[18]Ibid.

[19]S. T. Joshi (ed.), At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels, rev. ed., Arkham House.

[20]Ibid., pp. 506.

[21]Ibid., p. 8.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., p. 12.

[24]Ibid., p. 13.

[25]Peter Cannon, "Lovecraft and Classic American Literature," Crypt of Cthulhu #7, Vol. 1, No. 7, 1982.

[26]Donald R. Burleson, H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study (Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 166.

[27]Joshi, Mountains of Madness, p. 8.

[28]Ibid., p. 29.

[29]Ibid., p. 42.

[30]Ibid., p. 52.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 96.

[34]Ibid., p. 28.

[35]Even with the solitary protagonist of "Innsmouth" there is the element of male bonding—in this case it involves the dual nature of the protagonist himself. The main character's hidden past (his dark side) serves to balance the human side of his personality—and the protagonist's journey to this "dark side" is a quest for Self.

[36]S. T. Joshi, "Textual Problems in Lovecraft," Lovecraft Studies 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 28-31.

[37]Edgar Allan Poe, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, Penguin Books, 1975, p. 239.

[38]Bert Atsma, "An Autopsy on the Old Ones," Crypt of Cthulhu #32, p. 3.

[39]Ibid., p. 6.

[40]Angela Carter, "Lovecraft and Landscape," Appendix C of The Necronomicon: The Book of Dead Names, George Hay (ed.), Corgi Books, 1980.

[41]Ibid., p. 180.

[42]Ibid., p. 181.

[43]Jules Verne, Le Sphinx des Glaces (1887); an abridged translation appears as Appendix III in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Penguin Books, 1975.

[44]Available in Terry Carr (ed.), Year's Finest Fantasy (New York: Berkley Medallion Books, 1978).

CALL ME WIZARD WHATELEY

ECHOES OF MOBY DICK IN "THE DUNWICH HORROR"

By Peter H. Cannon

When H. P. Lovecraft visited "ancient New Bedford" with Frank Long and his parents in the summer of 1929, he remarked: "The waterfront streets are still ineffably quaint despite the decline of the whaling industry, & the little Seaman's Bethel on Johnnycake Hill described in Melville's Moby Dick is absolutely unchanged in every particular."[1] Further, in "Suggestions for a Reading Guide," he observed: "Of Herman Melville at least Moby Dick deserves a hearing."[2] Like any literate American during the Melville revival of the 1920s, whether he had actually read it or not, HPL must have had some familiarity with Moby Dick. While I do not claim that Melville's masterpiece influenced Lovecraft, I do think that in "The Dunwich Horror" (written a year before his New Bedford visit) HPL rendered what one might consider his version—his own peculiar weird version, let us say—of the "mythic hunt" theme. (Faulkner's The Bear springs to mind as the other great example of this theme in American literature.)

Superficial thematic resemblances aside for the moment, I like to imagine it reflects well on Lovecraft that in at least two plot details he happens to follow Melville's example. First of all, Lovecraft likewise uses a sermon early on to foreshadow later dire events. While the Reverend Abijah Hoadley in the paragraphs quoted from "On the Close Presence of Satan and His Imps" may not equal the rhetorical flourish of Father Mapple in his sermon on Jonah and the Whale, his ominous words just as effectively, given the much smaller scope of Lovecraft's tale, fill the reader with suitable forebodings. Secondly, the Dunwich horror is rather whale-like in its attributes: "bigger'n a barn . . . all made of squirmin' ropes," it is, except for the "haff face on top," basically a featureless creature (when seen). Its very invisibility finds a counterpart in the whiteness of the whale, and its "tarry stickiness" or viscousness has an analogue in the spermaceti of the whale (if presumably lacking any commercial value as lamp oil). Finally, let us not forget that the horror's mother, Lavinia Whateley, was a "somewhat deformed, unattractive albino woman."

Moby Dick and "The Dunwich Horror" also share a broadly similar structure. Opening with the classic line "Call me Ishmael," Moby Dick starts out, like Melville's earlier books, as a straightforward first-person narrative of nautical adventure. Soon after boarding the Pequod a hundred pages or so later, however, Ishmael virtually drops from sight and Captain Ahab becomes the central figure in the novel. By the final chapters, after a lengthy buildup, Moby Dick himself has become the dominant "character," as he surges up from the bottom of the sea to wreak havoc upon the Pequod.

In "The Dunwich Horror" HPL adopts a similar narrative strategy. Avoiding the inconsistent shifts between first and third person and back again (which perhaps only a Melville could get away with), Lovecraft sets the tale in the omniscent third person from the start and maintains it to the end. At the beginning, after the evocative opening section describing the history and geography of Dunwich, Old Wizard Whateley takes center stage. Later, upon the birth and

rapid growth of his grandson Wilbur, the younger Whateley supplants him. Finally, at the climax, Wilbur's twin, the horror itself, long anticipated and just as awesomely foreshadowed in its way as the great white whale, bursts on to the scene with catastrophic effect.[3] Like the whale, chased by Ahab and his men for three days, the horror periodically emerges, if not from the waves like Moby Dick or Cthulhu,[4] then from the depths of Cold Spring Glen. In a manner reminiscent of Moby Dick's smashing to pieces whale boats and their crews, the horror bumps up against and demolishes wooden houses with fatal results for their inhabitants. In the end it is a trio of professors who confront the horror with their magic, just as the three harpooners face the white whale with their less lethal, merely physical weapons.

Naturally one can take these parallels only so far. Wilbur seeks to bring in the horror so it can "wipe off the earth," while Captain Ahab, of course, wishes to slay the whale. Both, however, display a similar single-mindedness or fa-

naticism in pursuing their respective opposite ends, and both die horribly for their pains (each done in by a savage animal). On the other hand, if one accepts Donald R. Burleson's argument for the mythic hero archetype in "The Dunwich Horror,"[5] then the "good guys" fail in both Lovecraft and Melville. On yet another hand, assuming that the humans are in fact the heroes of the story, one can argue that, despite the thwarting of Yog-Sothoth and his minions, "evil" or, if you prefer, the "blind impersonal forces of the universe" will ultimately prevail.

Given that both Lovecraft and Melville set out to say something about man's trivial place in a godless universe, who then does the better artistic job? Is a white whale or an invisible mass of wriggling ropes a more successful symbol of the strangeness of the cosmos? A telling difference, I think, is that Moby Dick is a creature of nature who is truly impersonal. Indifferent to man, he only strikes back when man himself seeks to conquer him. Yog-Sothoth, on the other hand, poses an unambiguous threat to humanity. The people of Dunwich can ignore this sort of rogue land-whale only at their peril. In such later tales as "The Whisperer in Darkness" and At the Mountains of Madness Lovecraft did contrive to make his supernatural entities less actively malign and thus more appropriate symbols of the universe's indifference. Akeley may feebly contend with the Fungi from Yuggoth who lay siege to his farmhouse, but never again do any characters in Lovecraft vigorously attempt to track down and destroy his monstrous beings, the mere revelation of whose existence leaves man devastated with the knowledge of his own cosmic insignificance.

NOTES

[1]August Derleth and Donald Wandrei (eds), Selected Letters III (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1971), p. 13.

[2]August Derleth (ed.), The Dark Brotherhood (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1966), p. 38.

[3]I suppose one could argue that Henry Armitage represents a fourth major character—indeed like Ishmael he serves as a sympathetic human point of view through which the reader can experience the wild events; however, as this throws off my neat trinity, I will dismiss it from serious consideration. To have had the action relayed from the point of view of the horror at the end would have wrecked the suspense, besides probably being beyond even Lovecraft's considerable skill to pull off convincingly.

[4]Besides "The Call of Cthulhu," other major tales with South Pacific backgrounds and hence Melvillean overtones are "The Shadow over Innsmouth" and "Out of the Eons." Too, does not Lovecraft in "The White Ship" (egad, that ominous color—or noncolor—colour?—again!) depict an allegorical voyage, if at far less tedious length, evocative of that in Mardi?

[5]"The Mythic Hero Archetype in 'The Dunwich Horror,'" Lovecraft Studies 1, No. 4 (Spring 1981), pp. 3-9.

MORE AND MORE

DUNWICH HORRORS

"'The Dunwich Horror' (1970) Sandra Dee, Dean Stockwell. A psychopathic young man plots to use a pretty co-ed as a sacrificial victim and mother to the devil's offspring."

--The Times Herald-Record/ Week, Week of March 22 through 28, 1987.

THE BLIND IDIOT GOD

MILTONIC ECHOES IN THE CTHULHU MYTHOS

By Thomas Quale

The controversial passage August Derleth attributed to H. P. Lovecraft goes, "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 another race who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again." Derleth pounds it home by insisting "It is undeniably evident that there exists in Lovecraft's concept a basic similarity to the Christian Mythos, specifically in regard to the expulsion of Satan from Eden and the power of evil."[1] There is some doubt that Lovecraft ever said or wrote the above passage. And the "Derleth Mythos" of a revolt of the "Old Ones" of evil against the "Elder Gods" of good who still seek to save man, along the lines of Christian mythology, is being exploded insofar as it relates to Lovecraft's work. But let's not throw the Deep One out with the bathwater: the "Christian Mythos" as filtered through John Milton's Paradise Lost is seen in Lovecraft's work. Milton laid the foundation for the horror story of space; that is, the story which uses as its engine of horror not the claustrophobia of ignorance and the grave, but the agoraphobia of too much knowledge and the perception of the smallness of mankind in the immensity of the universe.

That H. P. Lovecraft knew of Milton is obvious, as Paradise Lost is specifically mentioned in one of his earliest stories, "Dagon," and a "ghostly bust of Milton" appears in "The Whisperer In Darkness." Two of Lovecraft's alien races, the Mi-Go of "Whisperer" and the Old Ones (as represented by Cthulhu in one tale and the star-headed creatures of Antarctica in another), were able to wing through the ether between the stars like Milton's demons and were not made entirely of matter as we of Earth know it: "They had shape . . . but that shape was not made of matter" ("Call of Cthulhu"). Of the spawn of one of these Great Old Ones, Lovecraft wrote "Only the least fraction was matter in any sense we know. It was like its father . . ." ("The Dunwich Horror"), as Milton said of the demons "so soft/ And uncompounded is their Essence pure,/Not tl'd or manacl'd with joint or limb . . ." (Paradise Lost I.424-26).[2] There is an "Outside" from which both the demons of Milton and the horrors of Lovecraft come to Earth. And Earth . . .?

In Paradise Lost Milton establishes, for the first time in literature, the true vastness of the cosmos. Satan has flown from Hell, whose immense geography is detailed for nearly sixty lines in Book II, through the "dark unbottom'd Infinite Abyss" of Chaos through which the demon legions fell nine days. He stands gazing and sees

> Far off th' Empyreal Heav'n,
> extended wide
> In circuit, undetermin'd square
> or round,
> With Opal Tow'rs and Battlements adorn'd
> Of living Sapphire, once his
> native Seat;
> And fast by hanging in a golden
> Chain
> This pendant world, in bigness
> as a Star
> Of smallest Magnitude close by
> the Moon.
> (II.1047-53, pp. 256-57)

That "pendant world" is not this Earth, but all the created universe, and yet it is only as big as a star of the smallest magnitude compared to the size of Heaven. This vastness is echoed by Lovecraft in "The Whisperer in Darkness," where a devotee of an alien race discloses "strangely organized abysses wholly beyond the utmost reach of any human imagination. The space-time globule which we recognize as the totality of all cosmic entity is only an atom in the genuine infinity which is theirs."

Lovecraft adds to this spatial immensity a temporal one which Milton can only palely foreshadow. Both, however, use family history to frame certain revelations. Paradise Lost is, in essence, the story of three families: God's, Satan's (Book II), and Adam's (Book XI-XII). In the case of Adam, his family is mankind itself, and the setting out of that history itself (as far as the Bible and Milton could take it). When Mary Shelley came to "rewrite" Paradise Lost as Frankenstein, she retained the family history structure, endowing her characters with traits from each of the families in Milton's epic.[3] In addition, Frankenstein is the story of one family (the Frankensteins) destroyed by one of its members' desire to start another family (Victor's creation of the monster and almost a wife, an Eve, for it) whose only member is taught the ways of the world by spying on and overhearing the family history of another family (the de Laceys).

Family history is important, too, in Lovecraft stories such as "The Rats in the Walls," "Arthur Jermyn," "The Dunwich Horror" and even less likely candidates such as "The Shadow out of Time" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth," for the family history might turn up something nasty and unnatural. The most strictly family-history-structured is "Arthur Jermyn"; in it the Jermyn family history is very carefully laid out, from great-great-grandfather Sir Wade Jermyn, the African explorer who brought a wife back from Africa whom no one ever saw, through great-grandfather Sir Robert Jermyn, the anthropologist who one night killed his three children after learning a terrible secret, to his grandson, Arthur's father, who escaped. Everything about the family's past suggests that something is wrong with the family (Adam fears this when he is shown his family history by Michael, XI.507-14), and Arthur learns at last that he is descended from a strange species of white ape. Staggered by the revelation, Arthur, the last of his line, pours gasoline on himself and sets himself on fire. (I wonder if Lovecraft had Frankenstein's Monster's fate in mind when he wrote that. Adam and Eve thought of this way out too, X.999-1002.)

The horrors of "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth" are directly linked to a given family's history: to the Whateleys and their traffic with Yog-Sothoth and the Marshes and their dealings with the Deep Ones, the first on a simple domestic level and the second on a wider canvas, extending further in time and involving numerous families. Certain unknown quantities in both stories are matters of family history, such as the identity of the horror preying on Dunwich, its relationship to Wilbur Whateley, and the identity of its father. In "Innsmouth," the narrator uncovers not only the horrific family histories of the townsfolk, but also his own. The narrator of "The Call of Cthulhu" is also brought into the framework of horror by his initial delving into family history: "My knowledge of the thing began in the winter of 1926-27 with the death of my grand-uncle . . ."

The great family history revealed at the end of Paradise Lost is one of a caring and sympathetic Creator who offers the hope of future salvation in a universe run ultimately for the good. This could be contrasted to the revelation of all Earth's history (a large "family,"

true, but in a sense still a family) received by the narrator of "The Shadow out of Time," Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee. His mind replaced in his body by one of the Great Race of Yith, and his mind inhabiting the cone-shaped body of a Yithite hundreds of millions of years B.C., Peaslee learns of the fate of Earth and life in the solar system and the place of man in space and time from the other captive minds in the Yithite city:

> There was a mind from the planet we know as Venus, which would live incalculable epochs to come, and one from an outer moon of Jupiter six million years in the past. Of earthly minds there were some from the winged, star-headed, half-vegetable race of paleogean Antarctica; one from the reptile people of fabled Valusia; three from the furry prehuman Hyperborean worshippers of Tsathoggua; one from the wholly abominable Tcho-Tchos; two from the Arachnid denizens of earth's last age; five from the hardy Coleopterous species immediately following mankind . . .

Man in Lovecraft's "Mythos" is neither the only nor the most important of intelligent species to live on Earth, will not last forever, and certainly has no claim to special treatment from any "God" or other power in the universe. The furry Hyperboreans had a god, but they are no less dead than the serpent people are or the human race will be in the end. This kind of end to a family history (extinction: large-scale in "The Shadow out of Time," small-scale in "Arthur Jermyn") is also suggested in Paradise Lost. Shown the race's future by the Archangel Michael, Adam believes everyone destroyed in the Flood:

> Let no man seek
> Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall
> Him or his Children, evil he may be sure,
> Which neither his foreknowing can prevent,
> And he the future evil shall no less
> In apprehension than in substance feel
> Grievous to bear . . .
> (XI.770-76)

The shoggoth and Azathoth, two others "Not ti'd or manacl'd with joint or limb," hearken with "hideous suggestiveness" to entities described by Milton. In At the Mountains of Madness, our heroes find themselves on the wrong side of a shoggoth:

> the nightmare, plastic column of fetid black iridescence oozed tightly onward through its fifteen-foot sinus, gathering unholy speed and driving before it a spiral, rethickening cloud of the pallid abyss vapor. It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train—a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and unforming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling front . . .

Blackly iridescent and covered with eyes, the shoggoth might almost be a demonic version of the chariot of paternal deity:

> Flashing thick flames, Wheel within Wheel, undrawn,
> Itself instinct with Spirit, but convoy'd
> By four Cherubic shapes, four Faces each
> Had wondrous, as with Stars their bodies all
> And Wings were set with Eyes, with Eyes the Wheels . . .
> And from about him fierce Effusion roll'd
> Of smoke and bickering flame, and sparkles dire . . .
> (VI.751-55, 765-66)

Both chariot and shoggoth give off light, push smoke and vapor from themselves and are covered with

eyes, but while the shoggoth drives out of an abyss, the chariot of paternal deity drives the rebellious angels into an abyss. In addition, the angels—as evidenced by Satan's size-changing (Book I) and transformations into birds and serpents—are just as "plastic" as the shoggoth.

The "dark unbottom'd infinite Abyss" of Chaos in Paradise Lost, which is alluded to directly in "Dagon," and the court of Chaos may be the inspiration for the "vast unplumbed abyss of night . . . Ultimate Chaos, at whose center sprawls the blind idiot god Azathoth, Lord of All Things" in Lovecraft. Milton's "Anarch old," Chaos, dwells in

> a dark
> Illimitable Ocean without bound,
> Without dimension, where
> length, breadth, and heighth,
> And time and place are lost;
> where eldest Night
> And Chaos . . . hold
> Eternal Anarchy, amidst the
> noise
> Of endless wars, and by confuslon stand . . .
> (II.891-97)

True, Lovecraft's Anarch writhes to the noisome piping of amorphous flute-players, not the noise of "endless wars," but compare his description of Azathoth's domain to Milton's: "Out in the mindless void the daemon bore me,/Past the bright clusters of dimensioned space,/Till neither time nor matter stretched before me,/But only Chaos, without form or place./ Here the vast Lord of All in darkness muttered / Things he had dreamed but could not understand." ("Azathoth," Fungi from Yuggoth).

The theme of the biblical story of the Fall, and one of Lovecraft's favorite themes as well, is that knowledge is dangerous. In Paradise Lost the knowledge given by the fruit of the forbidden tree results in the decay of Eden and the promised eventual death of Adam, Eve, and all their progeny. In the Cthulhu Mythos all the gathering of knowledge is evil and ultimately destructive:

> The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light . . .

This is the last link in a chain begun at the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden: the only gift knowledge brings is that the universe is larger and more malevolent than you had ever dreamed and because you have that knowledge, you no longer have any protection. "I do not think my life will be long," says "The Call of Cthulhu"'s narrator. "As my uncle went, as poor Johansen went, so I shall go. I know too much, and the cult still lives. Peaslee's experiences in "The Shadow out of Time" scar him because of what he knows and which he can only bear by thinking it false: "After twenty-two years of nightmare and terror, saved only by a desperate conviction of the mythical source of certain impressions, I am unwilling to vouch for the truth of that which I think I found in Western Australia on the night of July 17-18, 1935."

No one can say that H. P. Lovecraft accepted the mythos behind Paradise Lost; he didn't. But John Milton is a powerful literary force, and his work is well-known. As Lovecraft wrote to J. Vernon Shea, "As for Milton—I don't see how you . . . can argue away the distinctive charm of a large

part of his work. He has the power of evoking unlimited images for persons of active imagination, & no amount of academic theory can explain that away" (SL IV, 158). That Lovecraft was such a person of active imagination cannot be disputed.

NOTES

[1]August Derleth, "The Cthulhu Mythos" in Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos, Vol. I, August Derleth (ed.) (New York: Beagle Books, 1971), vii.

[2]H. P. Lovecraft, The Best of H. P. Lovecraft (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 87, 132; John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, Merritt Y. Hughes (ed.) (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), 222. All further Milton citations from this volume.

[3]Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Guber, "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve," in The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 213-47.

THE MIGRATION OF BIRDS

By Frank Belknap Long

(The United Amateur, March 1922)

In the Autumn of the year, when the decay of things is imminent, and when the face of the moon is as pallid and bloodless as the visage of a corpse, I ofttimes sit by a little window opening on the summer sea and watch the migration of birds. They come from all parts of the world, these birds, aye, even from that ultimate dim Thule which the Romans knew but dared not mention, and they bring with them the strange, pungent odours and secret essences of distant lands.

The parrakeets are the first to arrive. Their bills are black, their plumage iridescent, and they scream in the moonlight. They are talkative, vulgar, aristocratic. How I hate them! They are like spoilt children crying over a broken doll. But they tell me something of the equator, something of red and gold on blue, something of naked black men sitting cross-legged and pensive under the hot tropical sun, something of huge, waving palms and gigantic Lianas, and something of the turbulent, green, ever-restless Spanish Main, and so I tolerate them. And you would too, O my reader, because Dreams are of more value than oriental jewels.

But the parrakeets pass quickly. They dislike our cold northern clime, and pine for the delights of the soft South. Their breasts are full of vague longings and inarticulate, unborn desires; and in their eyes there is a vision of other places, far, outlying immensities of land, and ocean. And so they pass quickly.

And then in the pale twilight of an ancient November eve come flocking the swarms of flamingoes. They are pinky pale and older than the flood. For always have flamingoes come up from the South in the Spring, and returned in the Autumn; and if you have not seen them, you are a fool. The flamingoes are wise with the wisdom of ages, but they are eternally young. You remember that glorious fountain of youth and gold which Ponce De Leon sought in the dawn of the world? The flamingoes have found it, and every year they return to bathe and gambol in its mystic waters. Every year they sink their great, pale plumes in its gentle waters, and arise refreshed and reincarnated. But the flamingoes also long for the tropics, and for the flush of dawn on peaks divine. And so they follow the parrakeets to the warm South.

The geese are cold and unemotional, and arouse no visions. They have always suffered from ennui, and the world is little with them. Perhaps in their youth they have tasted of many pleasures, and now suffer from the boredom of satiety.

(continued on page 47)

Charles D. Hornig, Esq.,
137 West Grand St.,
Elizabeth,
N. J.

August 7 [1933]

Dear Mr. Hornig:-

Congratulations on your appointment with Wonder Stories! You surely did walk into a surprising piece of good fortune. Wish I could call on Farnsworth Wright and come away with a regular job—which heaven knows, I need badly enough! I'm sure you'll find your new work eminently congenial.

Glad to hear of the coming change of the Fantasy Fan to the weird field. I may send some articles on weird fiction for your approval. Back in 1926 I wrote a short history of weird fiction which appeared in a privately printed magazine. Would you care to serialise such a thing if I could dig up a copy to lend? (I couldn't spare one permanently.) I would in such a case bring the text up to date by mentioning things published since it was written.

I suggest that you have reviews of important weird books as they appear.

By the way—Knopf lately asked to see some of my stuff with a view to book publication, though I don't believe anything will come of it. Similar requests by Putnam's and then Viking came to nothing in the past.

Best wishes and renewed congratulations.

Yrs. most sincerely,

H. P. Lovecraft

COMMENTARY by S. T. Joshi

It is amazing what a few sentences can tell us. This postcard from Lovecraft to Charles D. Hornig, editor of The Fantasy Fan, shows that the idea for serializing a revised version of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" came from Lovecraft, not Hornig. Hornig had evidently only asked Lovecraft to contribute random articles on "weird fiction"; Lovecraft felt that this was as good a time as any to revise his long essay.

The subsequent history of the project is well known, and is spelled out in my essay, "On 'Su-

pernatural Horror in Literature'" (Fantasy Commentator, Winter 1985); but I'd like to augment and clarify some of my remarks. Lovecraft, as he notes in the postcard, sent Hornig an annotated copy of the Recluse text; this copy probably included both corrections written directly on the pages of the magazine plus separate sheets for lengthier additions. Most of the additions took place in chapters VI, VIII, and IX. I had thought that Hornig retained this copy of The Recluse and eventually passed it on to Willis Conover for his aborted serialization of the essay in Science-Fantasy Correspondent; but Sam Moskowitz pointed out to me—and this postcard confirms—that Hornig ultimately returned the copy of The Recluse and that Lovecraft then handed it to Conover in 1936.

It must be admitted that Lovecraft's revisions for The Fantasy Fan are inadequate at best and bungling at worst. Lovecraft had begun to keep a list of works he wished to mention in a revised "Supernatural Horror in Literature" almost as soon as the Recluse text was printed; his list of "Weird Items to Mention" at the back of his commonplace book includes such things as short stories from Joseph Lewis French's Ghosts Grim and Gentle (1926), Herbert S. Gorman's The Place Called Dagon (1927), Leonard Cline's The Dark Chamber (1927), and other contemporary works. But the additions are sporadic and actually damage the unity of the work; the inclusions of these very recent works are not made with any sense of their historical importance (and this, after all, is the focus of the entire essay), and there is really no reason why Lovecraft should have felt the need to be so "up to date" in a work of this kind. Most remarkably, Lovecraft made no additions to the one section of his work that has the most critical value: the final chapter on the "Modern Masters," Machen, Dunsany, Blackwood, and M. R. James. True, James wrote no horror tales subsequent to 1925 and Lovecraft did not seem to care much for such things as Machen's The Green Round (1933) or Dunsany's later novels; but one would suppose that here, if anywhere, Lovecraft would be concerned to trace the development of these important contemporary fantaisistes.

Finally, it is a little-known fact that the Fantasy Fan text of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" embodies revisions found in no other text. For example, in the section on Hawthorne, the reference to "the modern writer D. H. Lawrence" was altered to "the late D. H. Lawrence," since Lawrence died in 1930. These and other revisions from all the relevant texts of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" are now embodied in my edition of the essay in Dagon and Other Macabre Tales (Arkham House, 1986).

THE POOL

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISION - SYNOPSIS

By H. P. Lovecraft

B. For a new suggestion as to a different beginning for the tale, see top of sheet IV. This mode of beginning can be used no matter what plot-variant you decide to follow.

The pool in this story had better be one of the few remaining rests betwixt the upper world of life & the fabled under world of the dead (others elsewhere on the globe can be hinted at). Use the Graeco-Roman conception of the world of shades—cf. AEneas's descent into Hades in the 6th bk. of the AEneid, & Ulysses' in the 11th book of the Odyssey. It must always have existed—hence it would be well to carry back the legendry & whispers to the very earliest times—Roman & Gallo-Druidical pre-Roman, with hints of primordial Cro-Magnon & Neanderthal ages behind even these. Let it be known that buildings on this site have been destroyed horribly & inexplicably whenever persons living in them or issuing from them have actually sought to descend into the pool & plumb its mysteries. You might hint that these destructions coincided with attempts so determined as to have been successful for one or two participants, though most perished in the catastrophe. This is the legend. In order to keep the tale well motivated, do not fail to connect all destructions of buildings, & all kindred disasters, with especially determined attempts to enter the pool. Let the carved lintel be from a Gallo-Roman villa of (say) 100 A.D.—its inscription might well be:

STVLTI. VNICI. STAGNVM. ADEVNT.

NAM. IN. IMO. INTERITVM. PESTEMQUE. LATITANT.

Anglice— FOOLS. ALONE. THE POOL. APPROACH.

FOR. IN. ITS ABYSM. ANNIHILATION. AND A CURSE. LURK.

In all the old legendry there must be numerous accounts of strange persons & shapes who have sought to enter the pool—especially strange beings, as distinguished from the local inhabitants who were moved by mere curiosity. These strangers must have displayed a desperate determination, purpose, & secret knowledge wholly alien to those of the natives. Now as to what those beings are—it will not do to have them merely the unburied dead; for if all unburied dead lingered above ground in a kind of half-life, there would be legions of them wandering about, so that they would be no rarity. Indeed—there would be, by this time, (considering the vast hordes killed & left on battlefields) more of these "undead" in the world than there are living persons! Let us, then, seek to narrow the field & find a special class of person who, upon dying, is forbidden to enter the nether world. At once it occurs to us to use the celebrated witch-cult as a basis of selection. But how? First, though, let us account for the extraordinary precautions taken to guard the pool—precautions not likely to have been taken against any small class of beings. Here we come back to your idea of the unburied dead. Let it be, then, that all unburied dead are forced to remain above ground in the form of spectres or wraiths—not in actual bodily form—& that the pool is guarded in order to exclude these shades from the nether world of the dead.

You can suggest this in hinting of the old legendry—speaking of rumours of vast armies of ghosts (battlefield dead) congregating about the pool at certain times (especially Walpurgis & All-Hallows), but always dispersing in disappointment. Living beings who from curiosity attempt to penetrate the pool are always found hideously & inexplicably mangled. They never disappear. Make this plain, since at the last you will want to use the disappearance of the boy & stranger as an indication that they have successfully passed through, except in half-hinted cases of success, which always involve widespread destruction for those who assist—to the destruction of all housing buildings. The peculiar strangers—"undead"—who storm the pool are always beaten off with horrible suffering, largely a psychological suffering from the sheer sight of the guardian thing (cries heard, etc.) but are not killed or mangled because they are not living bodies in the strictest sense. Thus we have three classes of would-be entrants to the pool:

(a) shades of the unburied dead, always* beaten off
(b) living beings—killed & mangled* (though their shades later go through, after burial)
(c) the "undead"—beaten off* with suffering but without bodily form.

*i.e., if you decide to adhere to your original intention of having one or both pass safely through.

And now—who are these "undead"? Well—here's a suggestion. It is an actual legend—indeed, probably a ceremonial fact—that a member of the loathsome mediaeval witch-cult was always buried face downward for certain occult reasons, whenever anyone knowing of his membership could arrange to be on hand & see that the provision was carried out without exciting the suspicions of survivors. Now would it not be a good idea to have your half-dead people witch-cult members who had not been buried face downward? Of course, you can vary all this as you wish—but you can easily see why an unusual & restricted class is needed. This class would naturally tend to be of just about the size you assume when you include certain seers, magicians, etc., in it. All members would necessarily have strange powers & properties—not only because of their anomalous position betwixt life & death, but because of their membership in the witch cult. It may be assumed that they still cooperate with the cult, & take part in its infamous Sabbats. You can find out all about this cult in "The Witch-Cult in Western Europe," by Margaret A. Murray, which is in the main reference department (not circulation) of the 42nd St. library. Of the various "undead" of Central France, most know of the pool's properties, & refrain from making attempts upon it. From time to time, however, bold exceptions occur; giving rise to many picturesque legends. These may be noted with especial frequency after the battle of Poitiers—when among the slain & unburied soldiers were, presumably, many members of the witch-cult. Occasionally the wandering "half-dead" seek the aid of actual living beings in forcing an entrance to the nether world, whilst at other times they marshal the unbodied shades in the region. The present tale concerns an attempt of the former kind.

II.

In my opinion the tale had better be rewritten from the start, intensifying the abysmal antiquity of the pool legends, & embodying scraps of hinted legendry in accordance with the plot finally decided upon. The strange archer, who intends to use the boy as a decoy in his attempt to enter the nether world, ought to be a more definitely sinister & evil figure than in the existing version. Atmospheric touches suggesting this abnormal age & ambiguous state should be added, & the boy should fear him at

the same time that he is fascinated by him. The stranger should play upon the boy's plainly visible curiosity regarding the pool. Incidentally, it ought to be made clear just why the "undead" are so anxious to get down below when they seem to be well off enough up here. You might have their upper-world, post-mortem existence a painful one—at least at times. Possibly they have to exist half of each year as werewolves or something like that. Or on the other hand, it may be that their new half-dead state gives them information of marvellous pleasures they are missing in the nether world. Perhaps their upper-world life is one of utter boredom, owing to the loss of some essential life-property corresponding to the traditional "soul." At any rate, they want to get down very badly, & the old archer thinks he can use the boy as a means. If I were writing this tale, I'd have the boy hideously killed (as the inn is destroyed) by the nameless Guardian of the Pool (or as a sacrifice to lure the thing forth) (whose nature, as manifested by previous killings, reported glimpses, building-destructions, trails & prints in the vegetation, etc., etc., may be hinted at in the early legends) whilst the "half-dead" archer slips into the abyss. It would, though, be quite permissible to employ some subtler decoy-stratagem & have the boy safely accompany the stranger into the nether world. At any rate, make it clear that the total disappearance of any being near the pool is a possible indication of safe & miraculous passage to the nether regions. Not positive, tho', in case you wish to introduce the ironic touch of having the archer fail. One thing—you must use more subtlety in describing what the boy glimpses when he climbs out over the pool & looks down. This is a superlative high spot, & needs the greatest possible care in development—emphasis & detail as well as subtlety. Remember that what the boy sees is part of an age-old nether world, through which move the forms of those who have entered it ever since the beginning of life on this planet. Clearly, it is superficial & unconvincing to confine a first glimpse to a group of mediaeval horsemen. What is seen under this aperture is merely a small area of the nether world, & the figures crossing this area must be curiously mixed & derived from all preceding ages—ape-man, Neanderthalers, Cro-Magnons, other primitive men, animals recent & extinct, Mongoloids, Gauls, Romans, Franks, Frenchmen, armies of every kind. Naturally, only a chance fraction of this subterraneous population will cross the limited field of vision during any given short period, but this fraction must be varied enough in race & period to be representative of the whole population. On account of recent large battles, of course, mediaeval soldiers will be quite numerous—but there have been other, older battles, & of them vast evidences must remain. Your series of successive heavens might eliminate some warriors, but I am skeptical about the effectiveness of this idea. Would you have this merely the first of a series of worlds like a set of Chinese boxes, with everyone finally dying into other inner realms? That, of course, would eliminate older denizens—but the idea looks a bit cumbrous to me. Assuming a steadily cumulative population, local civilians would probably outnumber warriors despite the great battles occurring in the region. But at any rate, what the boy sees in his first, random-timed glimpse must not be any specially appropriate pageant. It must be simply a cross-section of the ordinary life of this part of the nether world. The sight had better be described slowly & impressively—for the various objects will unfold themselves to the watcher very gradually. The whole visible area is vague, distant, & half-veiled in obscurity. It is a kind of queerly exotic landscape, like nothing ever seen in the upper world of the living. Finally one or two figures move across it—figures so strange that the boy gasps in surprise. Perhaps they are Roman legionnaires—perhaps a family of ancient Gauls—perhaps a knot of Aurignacian or Mousterian primitives--perhaps

Gallo-Roman civilians—perhaps Teutonic Franks—perhaps monks, soldiers, or other mediaeval personages. A goodly variety of different types belonging to widely different ages ought to float silently across the field—unless, of course, you use the multiple-heaven idea. The boy, naturally, is half-stupefied with wonder—an emotion you must bring out clearly. Finally you can have him see a knot of Poitiers warriors—or whatever type of sight is most significant in the light of the ensuing narrative. Don't fail to emphasize the unusual conditions of vision—the vertical perspective whereby the watcher is looking down on the heads of the nether-world denizens. If you like, you can have this slightly modified by some queer refractive property of the waters—for of course they are no ordinary waters, since they remain thus suspended betwixt two realms. You might barely suggest the disquleting presence of yawning black gulfs extending laterally into the earth from the submerged walls of the pool—the presumable abode of the Guardian of the Gate. Pile on plenty of colour & wonder, & let the astonishing nature of the spectacle be reflected in the boy's reaction to it.

III.

This brings us to the point where your ms. leaves off. Now let us see if we can form a good synopsis of events to follow.

Obviously, the boy's curiosity is whetted to a supreme degree, & he overwhelms the stranger with questions. The stranger, answering these, (& here you have a chance to tell more about the nether world & the conditions of entering it) sees in the boy a good means of effecting an entrance; hence leads him on to the greatest possible extent. The story he tells is something which was barely hinted at in the ancient legendry, (you can insert some glancing allusion to it earlier in the tale, when first discussing the legends, if you wish) & which concerns the very, very few persons or shades or "undead" who actually did penetrate successfully to the nether world. These cases of success were invariably accompanied by the destruction of all living human beings who aided, & of all buildings—& even trees & other vegetation—near the pool; but the stranger does not tell the boy of these drawbacks. You can hint them, though, so that the reader can understand the final climactic catastrophe without subsequent explanations. It is well to end a tale on a high note, without the dragged-out piecing-together of threads which always suggests anticlimax. On general outline, the stranger's plan can well be just as you proposed—i.e., to have the Nameless Thing lured out of the pool so that one or more beings can enter the nether world unscathed before it returns to its guardianship. And your idea of having a sacrifice the lure is likewise a good one. Now what about details—the exact nature of the sacrificial lure, etc.? Well—let us see what would naturally appeal most to a hideous & titanic Elemental bound to a stern guardianship under the earth. This being may be presumed to be of the sort habitually frequenting the awful Sabbats on the lonely hills at Walpurgis & Hallowmass. Yet it is perpetually denied the privilege of participating in these Sabbats, because of the necessity of guarding the gate during such events. Indeed, the guarding has to be all the more rigorous at Sabbat-time as compared with other times, for there are then stirring the greatest possible numbers of uncanny beings who would jump at the chance of entering the nether world in the absence of a sentry. All the old legends speak of the increased presence of monstrous shades around the pool at Walpurgis & Hallowmass. The Nameless Thing, then, is avid for unmentionable Sabbat-rites which it is habitually denied . . . a circumstance which the strange archer fully realizes, & of which—with the boy's help—he is determined to take advantage. In developing a plan he is cautious in what he tells the boy. A human sacrifice is really

needed, but he tells the boy a goat is what must be offered. This seems simple, since there are many fine goats among the varied livestock around the inn. Roughly summarized, the stranger's plan is to assemble the ghosts & undead of all the neighbouring countryside at some time other than Hallowmass or Walpurgis, when the Thing will be off its guard & free from the inhibitions which keep its half-brain alert at such seasons. Its attention is to be aroused by a celebration of the most shocking & hideous pseudo-Sabbat ever held in France . . . a pseudo-Sabbat in which there will not be one living participant except the boy destined for the sacrifice. The way to tell all this—since there will be no principal survivors left above ground—may be difficult, but there are methods of circumventing the obstacle. For one thing, you might boldly break the "classical" rule of transmission & let the reader share the literary omniscience of the author, as Poe does in the "Masque of the Red Death"—of which there are no survivors. Better, though, to leave a human link. Of course the stranger has told the boy to reveal the plan to no one, but you might have the command broken in the case of a particularly discreet playmate—who, in addition to his discretion, is too frightened to repeat the tale until after the catastrophe. If you use this device, you can speak of his fright—how he shunned his little friend of the inn after hearing the monstrous tale, & how his fright (having been noticed & connected with the catastrophe) led to his being later questioned & forced to divulge what he knew. But there is a third alternative, also. Of course the ghosts & undead summoned to this hellish pseudo-Sabbat (you can call it an "Estbat," which was the actual name applied to irregular convocations of the witch-cult. Sabbats, in the true sense, occurred only at Walpurgis & Hallowmass. Estbats were largely business meetings, but there were also rites—so you can safely use the name) would naturally expect to share the archer's entrance to the nether world—this being indeed the inducement which brought most of them. [The reason they had not tried this very method oftener was that it had seldom occurred to them. Also, the human sacrifice had to be voluntary, or at least not resistant. It would not do to sacrifice a captured mortal. Victims, to be effective, must be voluntary—or else, as in the present case, secured by trickery. Still more—perhaps the method is sometimes tried, but frustrated because of the Thing's wariness. It has not much brain or memory, but just enough to retain a few impressions occasionally.] However, it would be natural for the deceived Monster to see through the trick & get back to its post before all of so vast a throng of ghosts and undead could pass into the pool. Thus we may assume a certain number of Estbat-participants to have been left disconsolate in the upper world—shut out at the last moment—& to have told their tale later on to certain mortals whom they met by night in lonely taverns.

It would be a fine & supremely ironic touch to have the old archer himself —instigator of the whole business—among the "undead" ones left out.

IV.

If you use this third method, or indeed in any case—you might have the tale begin rather differently—letting the whole subject be brought up in a conversation between a mysterious stranger & yourself in some lonely French inn at the present time. The stranger is one of the old undead participants in that bygone Estbat, perhaps—ironically—the archer himself —who has not yet succeeded in getting into the nether world. You might begin the tale by having yourself seated as a traveller, in the very inn concerned—that is, one of the later inns built on its site. You notice the old lintel from the ancient Gallo-Roman villa, which seems, somehow

to be miraculously preserved through all calamities, wonder whether it is really a Roman survival, idly translate the inscription, & feel curious about the pool described. You ask the landlord, but he crosses himself & says little. Then you try to go through the door—having gathered that the pool lies beyond. At this the landlord stops you, & tells you a jumble of hideous legends dating from the earliest times to the present. He does not go into details, nor need you set down anything save the general hints suggested at the beginning of this outline. [However—if you use the playmate method of telling the boy's story, you can have this case come up very impressively. The landlord selects this to tell in full, because the boy dwelt in this very place, & was one of his collateral ancestors. You can easily devise a start for this sub-narrative. The landlord can say, "Yes, Monsieur, & more—there was, in the old time, one from this very Inn . . . or the inn that was here . . . who tried to go into the pool, but men never saw him again. There were rumours—& people shivered at what he had told one of his little playmates. In the end there came a night when the inn was full of strange guests from unknown places—& the next morning there was no inn, nor any who had slept there, nor any of the trees & growing things that had stood nearby —only a heap & tangle of crushed things without life." With this start, the landlord tells the tale as far as the revelation of the archer's plan to sacrifice a goat & slip with the boy into the nether world—as far, that is, as the boy had told his playmate. The landlord adds the common report—of the destruction, & how the playmate was questioned; supplying certain conclusions of his own. Don't try to use his own words, for pseudomediaevalism is hard work. Say "The tale told by the landlord was a strange one indeed, & I listened raptly as the dim candles of that ancient tap-room guttered in disquieting blasts of night-wind. The way to the pool, he said, led from the back door of the inn out into the humid greenery of the forest—etc., etc., etc." When the landlord is through, & goes away to attend to various tasks, a mysterious stranger sidles up to you & says he has overheard the tale. He can tell you more. He is a man of bizarre & disquieting aspect—so much so that you had noticed him before in the dimly lighted inn. He seems to know an abnormal amount about bygone times. He begins abruptly—"There was more than most people know. It was no goat that was sacrificed. Do you think a goat would have drawn the Thing forth, or that all the wraiths of the countryside would have come for the mere killing of a goat? I have heard things repeated from very strange sources—listen, Monsieur!" He supplies what the landlord has been unable to tell, & only at the very end (cf. Dunsany's "Poor Old Bill" in "A Dreamer's Tales") do you suspect, by elimination, that he must be one of the "undead" Estbat-participants himself. All this digressive material within these brackets implies your use of the second or playmate device of narration, supplemented by the Estbat-survivor device. Forget it if you intend to use the third device alone.] If you do intend to use the third device alone, have the landlord's information stop with frightened & whispered generalities. There is no more for him to tell unless he has heard from some special source of the boy's wish to enter the pool, & of the real significance of the archer. Lacking such information, this particular calamity would not seem greatly different, in public retrospect, from others. Of course, undead survivors of the hellish Estbat might have told others long ago, & thus divulged the inside tale to general knowledge, but I think it would be more effective & dramatic to have it otherwise. In this case, let the stranger overhear your colloquy with the landlord, & approach you after the latter departs. He strikes up a conversation displaying uncanny acquaintance with the remote past. "Why," he says, "there was a boy from this very inn—or the inn that was here—who tried to go into the

pool, but men never saw him again. There were rumours—but I can tell you more! I've never told anyone before—but I know. You are very interested in these old things are you not? Then listen."

As in the case of the landlord—if you had him tell the tale—don't try to use the stranger's own words. Use the same device you would use with the landlord—saying: "The tale told by the queer stranger was a bizarre & frightful one indeed, & I listened raptly as the dim candles guttered, etc., etc., etc." Have the ending climactic, & (as in the bracketed alternative) do not have the nature of the unwholesome narrator divulged except by elimination at the very end. Of course, you don't have to use this device of having the tale told to you by landlord or stranger or both—but I think it greatly increases the effectiveness of the whole business. Likewise, you don't have to have the boy sacrificed. You could manage to let the goat do, or use some drugged human being other than the boy. But all the same I think the boy is the logical victim, & I think it would be a neat bit of cosmic irony if his sacrificer—the old plotting archer himself, were among the left-behind—& the final narrator of the story. Your idea, of course, has hitherto been to have the archer a less malign character than I envisage him—but you must remember Montague Rhodes James's warning (& Blackwood's occasional pathetic examples) as to the feebleness of benignly supernatural stories. If this is a horror-story, make it so! If not, you'll have to follow the Barrie tradition & abide by the results! Some—like E. M. Forster in "The Celestial Omnibus" —can get away with such wild whimsicality without being too utterly namby-pamby, but all that stuff is outside any province of mine.

Well, let's see where we are now. We have discussed the main probable trend of the plot, & the best ways of getting this to the reader. Now let us see how we can develop the final climactic episode—the hideous Estbat & the entrance of the monstrous celebrants to the nether world; preferably with the old archer ironically left behind to tell the tale in later centuries.

The archer has asked the boy to help—under the impression that a goat is to be sacrificed. On the day preceding the appointed night the inn fills up with mysterious strangers who impress the local people as oddly as the archer himself did, & who are long afterward talked about. Never before has the inn been so full—but some of the strangers tell a tale of a great religious pilgrimage. However, the alien, unholy, & unearthly aspect of the pseudopilgrims is not lost upon the local people, & is remembered by them in their gossip after the inn & all its tenants have disappeared. That evening, at the direction of the archer, the boy drugs (harmlessly, he is assured) the food of his parents & indeed of all the living human tenants of the inn, so that the night may be free for the celebrants of the awful pseudo-Sabbat or Estbat rites. The rites themselves are held in the woods, betwixt the pool & the inn, & are begun at midnight after all the people are drugged & asleep. A huge rock has been rolled to the top of a woodland knoll to serve as an altar, & the fattest he-goat from the inn's farmyard has been brought as a sacrifice. The aspect of the strange "undead" as they issue from the inn's rear door or troop from other parts of the forest is monstrous & panic-breeding in the extreme—& still more hellish are the shapes of unbodied ghosts & nameless Sabbat-elementals that answer the occult summons of the archer & materialize out of the circumambient air. It is all the archer can do to keep the boy from screaming aloud, but he finally succeeds. In describing the nameless beings & rites of the Sabbat you can use your own imagination—pieced out by descriptions in the previously mentioned Murray book, or by the descriptions & illustrations in Lewis Spence's "Encyclopaedia of Occultism"—which you can find on the open shelves of the

South Hall (western wall) at the 42nd St. library. Go the limit—do in prose what Clark Ashton Smith does in water-colours. Probably you know as well as anybody else how to suggest half-amorphous, tentacled things with rugose heads, semi-proboscises, miscellaneous bulging eyes at various anatomical points, & other choice nightmare characteristics. You might include our old friends Alabad, Ghinn, & Aratza. Let Spence or Murray suggest the Estbat or pseudo-Sabbat ritual, & be sure to include a chant designed to tempt the Pool Thing forth. Let the goat be sacrificed with much ceremony—the odour of fresh blood envoking hordes of bat-winged elementals from the black woods. At this point the boy expects to see the Pool-Thing—but the archer knows that the right kind of blood-smell has not yet appeared. Use your judgment about the sacrifice of the boy —about the most effective amount of horror-increasing reticence to use. When that is over, the actual climactic moment comes. A sickening bubbling in the pool which makes even the ghosts & ghouls & undead & obscene morbidities stop aghast in their chanting, & huddle behind the trees as far as possible from the altar & the dripping things upon it . . . a wheezy snorting . . . a pushing upward of the earth as the present silt-coated banks meet the passage of a shape too vast for their compass . . . and then . . . & then . . . great Sathanas! Samaël have mercy . . . IT . . . IT . . . what is it? . . .

Some of the monstrous celebrants flee insanely into the haunted night at the very sight of IT . . . throwing away their chances of nether-world entrance rather than risk the madness which another look would bring. Dark Abaddon, what an Entity! Not quite matter, not quite gas, not quite fire, not quite aether . . . jellyfish, worm, octopus, lizard, bat . . . brother of Great Cthulhu, Cousin of Chaugnar Faugn . . . Elephant or Cyclops? Gorgon or Hydra? And vaster than St. Peter's Cathedral in Poitiers . . . Ia! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young! The Black Goat of the Woods With a Thousand Young! N'ghaa . . S'habb! Yrrr . . hha . . H'na . . gggll . . . [The next day, appalled by that scene of devastation, people told of the hideous sounds which had disturbed their dreams, notwithstanding the remoteness of the spot.] There was a rending & crashing of great trees, & a floundering as nameless nostrils sought blasphemous blood. But It never spoke,

VI.

for It had no voice. Hideous & unmentionable urges seemed to fight with implanted destructive commands within Its hazy half-brain. It floundered betwixt the altar & the near-by inn, & wiped out the latter & all its occupants with a blow from one of Its gelatinous brown tentacles. Then the great descent began—& all the ghouls & ghosts & undead & abnormalities which had not fled in fright began to crowd into the pool in a turbulent stream. They would leap in, & seemingly plunge downward through the water for an infinite space, finally floating out into the air of the nether world & landing safely on the mystic soil. All the entities fought desperately for a place in the mad exodus, but at last they saw The Thing turn about & flounder back toward the pool with a new air of determination. The chance was gone. Only a few more reached the beckoning water before the sniffing & wheezing & floundering drew perilously near. The rest, disappointed, fled precipitately into the depths of the black oak forest (including, if you adopt a new ironic touch, the old archer who had planned the whole thing. But do not reveal this until the final climactic moment. He was so busy directing his scheme that he was left behind.)

That was all. The next day local people found the inn & all its inhabitants gone, & all the neighbouring vegetation monstrously mangled and

devastated. It was not merely crushed, but seemed to be eaten, burnt, or dissolved to a semi-pulp by some unknown & inexplicable corrosive agent. No one who had slept in the inn was ever seen again. Landlord, boy, archer, guests, pilgrims—all vanished. Though (the strange narrator hinted as the candles flickered near their sockets) among the "undead" there are rumours of those who, in later centuries, climbed out over the pool on the branches of new trees that had grown to antiquity there, & saw within its depths an alluring nether world [whose denizens including one strangely like the bygone archer they had known, unless (as I hope) you adopt the ironic touch of having the archer himself left out—making him the present stranger-narrator].

Well—that'll do for one session! I suppose the foregoing is rather confusing, but I don't see how it can be otherwise when we've not yet decided on just which plot-variant to use. You can regard all this as mere conversation touching on the general theme & turning up fresh ideas at random, from among which you are at liberty to select a quota to suit yourself—arranging & developing them as you choose. Personally, I favour the most horrible version—with the sacrifice of the boy, & telling of the whole tale to yourself by the undead stranger (if not the old archer himself, a friend of the old archer, to whom the latter had given all particulars when inviting him to the Estbat) in the uncanny, candle-lighted inn where the ominous blackened lintel towers with its ancient Roman warning. When the tale is over you can have the stranger glide out through the forbidden rear door under the ominous lintel. As he glides, you add a bewildered query as to how he knows all this—to which he replies in some subtle climactic way which clearly shows him to be the old archer himself. To atone for the chaos of the foregoing, I will prepare a synopsis of the version I prefer. You can substitute & modify, etc., at will, & if you like, I'll discuss the matter further. In case of such discussion, please return this comment in order to refresh my memory.

N.B. It may be assumed that the archer did not return to the region of the pool for long centuries. Perhaps he is just back—& about to make another attempt to enter!

THE POOL

Author travelling near old Poitiers puts up at strange old rural inn which takes his fancy. Notices ancient Latin lintel inscription & asks landlord about it. Landlord is frightened & evasive—hints old legends—fate of the curious, etc.—(here tell as many as possible & prepare the background) tells of successive destructions of many inns, & stops author when he attempts to go through door. Author returns to his table. For some time he has noticed a stranger of peculiar & disquieting aspect, whose talk of old times with various guests holds an element of abnormal familiarity. Stranger, having overheard colloquy with landlord, approaches & begins to tell story of boy & inn & archer & pool to author.

The story of the boy, inn, archer, & pool, told (as begun in original ms.) by stranger, with uncanny evidences of "inside knowledge [due to fact that he is really the old archer himself]. Boy, long ago, longs to plumb secrets of the pool, which is entrance to nether world [give details of guardianship & describe undead!]. Archer, longing to reach nether world, plans to use boy's curiosity as a tool. Arranges hellish Estbat or pseudo-Sabbat to lure guardian Monster forth, summoning ghosts &

undead, telling boy to drug everyone in the inn on the appointed night. Intends to sacrifice boy, but tells latter a goat is the victim. Undead arrive as pilgrims, living humans are drugged, Sabbat-rites are started betwixt inn & pool. Goat sacrificed. Boy sacrificed. IT flounders forth & wreaks devastation. Many of the hellish celebrants succeed in entering pool, but some are left behind & flee into forest. Among these, it appears impossible to deny, is the stranger now telling the tale, but he does not at this moment admit that he is the old archer who planned it all & sacrificed the boy. Indeed, he only darkly implies (& that as late as possible) that he is an "undead"-cult member at all. (He has tried all along to convey the idea that [words missing].)

Aftermath remarks by stranger-narrator, perhaps elicited by puzzled questions of author. What the local people found the morning after the horror—inn gone—forest, etc., crushed—all persons with the inn missing. Also—remarks about possible later glimpses (by undead or others) into nether world. Author still bewildered by curiously "inside" nature of tale, as stranger rises & glides to the ominous door under the lintel. (Landlord & others busy elsewhere & not looking. Anyway, taproom is virtually deserted because of late hour. Stranger unlatches (or unbars—evidences of fear & precaution on part of inn-builders desirable) rear door & stands on threshold as author, following him across the room, presses final & insistent questions as to how he knows so much. Then—as a climax—stranger gives hints unmistakably implying that he is the archer (use great care & cleverness devising ways to hint [words missing]) & glides out into the haunted night, shutting & latching the door after him. Author does not follow. Use your judgment about suggesting possible future attempts of archer to enter nether world.

NOTE: Be very adroit in describing witch-cult phenomena—do not refer to cult like modern anthropologist for remember that the stranger who tells the secret is a member anxious to conceal as much as possible. Have facts contained in elliptical half-hints—"They who gather on the hills" —"They who sacrifice to the goat"—"They who follow the Black Man." Use "they," because the stranger in speaking tries not to admit that he is one of them.

APORIA AND PARADOX IN "THE OUTSIDER"

By Donald R. Burleson, Ph.D.

H. P. Lovecraft's "The Outsider" carries as its central thematic content the notion of self-awareness, the mythic heroic quest for self-understanding. Whether viewed as an allegorical figure making the journey through the Jungian psyche to find wholeness (see Dirk Mosig's "The Four Faces of the Outsider," in Darrell Schweitzer [ed.] Essays Lovecraftian, 1976) or as the embodiment of some other critical precept, the narrator, the Outsider himself, clearly quests for self-knowledge in his perilous climb up the "black ruined tower," his sojourn across open countryside to the "venerable ivied castle," and his apocalyptic moment at the mirror. But in terms of a deconstructionist reading of the logic of the tale, he opens, in discovering his nature, a Pandora's box of interwoven paradox.

Superficially, the text draws a strong contrast between the Outsider and the revelers in the castle. The "merry company" consists of normal, living people whose contrast with the carrion horror that the Outsider finds in the mirror could scarcely be more pronounced. Yet it is a common circumstance in the self-deconstructing function of texts that such apparently bipolar differences must become dismantled by other, more subtle, less dismantlable differences, differences not between the two sides of the bipolarity, but ways in which each side of the biopolarity differs problematically with itself; indeed, in such analysis, superficial differences can continue to appear to be real only by suppression of those more internal differences by whose uncovering they are dismantled. Such is the case with the Outsider and his "merry company."

A primary source of contrast resides in the very question of self-discovery. The Outsider, upon touching the mirror, comes to an understanding of his own nature; it is significant that he is the only figure present to find such understanding—no doubt every person in the hall has looked in the mirror and known the face staring back to be his or her own, yet the revelers, by this act, learn nothing of importance about themselves. They have not climbed the frightful stone tower into the moonlight; they have not earned self-knowledge. The Outsider's experience is one of learning; the revelers, who become "a herd of delirious fugitives," have no mental experience at all except primal reactions out of fear. And yet we may ask whether each of these characterizations is not alloyed with aspects antithetical to itself.

The Outsider, though reaching a new self-awareness, a "single and fleeting avalanche of soul-annihilating memory," does so only to lose it the next moment: "I forgot what had horrified me, and the burst of black memory vanished in a chaos of echoing images." He is still sufficiently in possession of his former mentality to return to his trap-door and try to open it, to return to his customary life, and it is only upon finding this return impossible that he adopts his "new wildness and freedom." In his actions subsequent to the revelation at the mirror, the text self-subverts its theme of the Outsider's acquisition of self-understanding, and proceeds to self-subvert even the self-subversion in portraying the Outsider's adoption of his new life, albeit under duress. The partygoers, on the other hand, who learn nothing from the mirror, perhaps do learn something from the experience on another level; they must have seen in the Outsider what he has seen in himself:

an "abhorrent travesty on the human shape"—and at least at some unconscious level they must know that the Outsider is what they themselves will become in the dissolution of the grave; they find thus a species of self-knowing to which they can respond only by fleeing, fleeing in effect from themselves. Thus one finds ambiguities on each side that complement ambiguities on the other. To the extent that the Outsider learns less of himself than might be supposed and the revelers lack self-discovery, the Outsider resembles the revelers; to the extent that the Outsider does, after a fashion, find self-understanding while at least some implied self-understanding must filter through to the revelers, the Outsider again resembles the revelers. The difference between the two is imbued with complexities arising from the way in which the Outsider differs from himself, and the way in which the revelers differ from themselves, in mutually complementing heterogeneity.

But further questions arise in terms of whether the Outsider <u>is</u>, or whether he remains, an outsider. On a level too symbolically significant to be dismissed as merely the level of word-play, it is not without importance that after the Outsider's appearance in the great hall, it is he who remains inside and the revelers who are outside. To the extent that the Outsider has, after a fashion, achieved self-awareness, the suggestion is that he has become an "insider," as it were; and to the extent that the "merry company" has failed to achieve any new self-awareness, they have become outsiders, still

unfamiliar with the selves they might have come to know, separated from themselves, banished from the lighted arena of knowledge. Again, the text has essentially subverted itself in this special symbolism, suggesting a reversal of roles or characterizations. Yet these ambiguities interweave with those previously mentioned, in that there is still a question as to whether either the Outsider or the partygoers does attain self-knowledge.

In considering these matters, one finds one's discernments drawn into aporia, or irresolvable alternation—the heterogeneities of reading oscillate against one another in logical loops of vibration that are set ringing by the touching finger at the mirror. But it is important to realize that such paradoxical content, far from detracting from the "value" of the text, stands as necessary to its functioning. The denouement of "The Outsider" would be a wholly different text, one not so rich in interpretative potential, without the fabric of paradox woven in. The reader is as embroiled in aporia as is the Outsider himself; indeed, in a sense, the reader becomes the Outsider by reading the tale. The whole content of the Outsider's experience at the mirror is no more or less uncertain than is the question of our knowing ourselves with any completeness. It is the nature of indwelling paradox that whole knowledge and certainty are not to be. One suspects that, like the Outsider, we all of us oscillate continually between self-knowledge and darkness—and that at some points of this oscillation, darkness and self-knowledge are one and the same.

AT THE HOME OF POE

By Frank Belknap Long

(The United Amateur, May 1922)

The home of Poe! It is like a fairy dwelling, a gnomic palace built of the aether of dreams. It is tiny and delicate and lovely, and replete with memories of the sere leaves in November and of lilies in April. It is a castle of vanished hopes, of dimly-remembered dreams, of sad memories older than the deluge. The dead years circle slowly and solemnly around its low white walls, and clothe it in a mystic veil of unseen tears. And many marvellous stories could this quaint little old house tell, many weird and cryptic stories of him of the Raven hair, and high, pallid brow, and sad, sweet face, and melancholy mien; and of the beloved Virginia, that sweet child of a thousand magic visions, child of the lonesome, pale-gray latter years, child of the soft and happy South. And how the dreamer of the spheres must have loved this strange little house. Every night the hollow boards of its porch must have echoed to his footfall, and every morn the great rising sun must have sent its rays through the little window, and bathed the lovely tresses of the dream-child in mystical yellow. And perhaps there was laughter within the walls of that house, laughter and merriment and singing. But we know that the Evil One came at last, the grim humourless spectre who loves not beauty, and is not of this world. And we know that the house of youth and of love became a house of death, and that memories bitter as the tears of a beautiful woman assailed the dreamer within. And at last he himself left that house of mourning and sought solace among the stars. But the house remains a vision out of a magical book; a thing seen darkly as in a looking-glass; but lovely beyond the dreams of mortals, and ineffably sad.

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WEAVEWORLD - CLIVE BARKER. Due out in mid-October and will be available as a limited edition, this is the book every horror fan has been waiting for. The limited will have a slipcase, leather binding and marbled endpapers (or so I'm told) and should be around 450 copies. I will take written advance orders for both trade and limited editions and may have to ask for money in advance. SERIOUS ORDERS ONLY PLEASE. PRICE WHEN AVAILABLE.

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EDGAR AND HELEN

An Imoginary Romonce

By Brett Rutherford

1
They walk the sunlit avenue, the parasol
concealing her face as she says,
"How grand
you have come all this distance to see me."
She wears a dress imported from France,
confounds him with a hauty roseate scent.
"I will not permit you, of course,
to fall in love with me."
He grips
the black valise. His hands turn white
as sheafs of poems tumble out
under the feet of Sunday crowds.
"Alas," he says, picking them up,
searching her eyes as she stoops to help,
"If such were possible, then—
Then it is already *too lote.*"

By chance she finds the poem inscribed to her
I sow thee once—once only

She reads it and averts her gaze,
pretending to favor a floral display.
The suitor knows he has pleased her.

In the strange rooming house he broods
as unrelenting opiates of memory
draw moonlight houris in Helen's form.
He thinks of how he can win her,
sway her will with his eloquence,
his life and poems at her feet,
merge with her gentle bookish life,
take her back to his humble cottage
or *stoy* in this love-charmed Providence.
He dreams of the thousand ways he will love her.

2
Moon and the tallow flames of candled glass
conceal her features but reflect his tears,
his wild-eyed deafness to her final refusal.
"Friend always
will I be, in the chastest manner. No more,
yet no less than a sister can I be to you."
He rages at the insults of Helen's mother,
how Helen were better dead than married
to a godless drinker of the Plutonian lees,
chills at the echo of her sister's chatter,
the gossips and slanderers anonymous,
who wrote the warning letters to Helen—
damn them all who would thwart his happiness!

She wears her heavy cloak against the cold,
on top of that a black, superfluous shawl,
as if to italicize her widowhood.
"I love you,
Helen, as I have never loved before.
Our poems speak the truths you would deny."

"Do not torment me with vows of love—"

"You torment *me,*" he stabs, "with beauty,
with scintillant brilliance of eye and mind,
with promises a suitor cannot mistake,
nor chaste propinquity requite."

He takes her frail, cool hand, cups it in his.

Her profile is cold as Athena, her eyes
turned inward in agony, in thought
of the aged mother, the invalid sister,

the imminence of her uncertain
health.
"Neither by word nor glance, nor
yet by deed,"
she answers him, withdrawing her
palm
from the heat of his impetuous
grasp,
"must you ever show that you love
me.
I cannot be torn from my place and
time.
We are poets. Our words have
loved,
but we are separately doomed to
solitude.
I cannot bear your loving glances."

Coffined in his sleepless rooms,
he poisons himself with laudanum.
He thinks of the thousand ways he
will kill her.
He sees her ravaged on a river-
bank,
imprints on her breasts of a legion
of rapists.
He sends a gibbering orangutan
to stuff her corpse up the nearest
chimney.
He bricks her in with her poetry.
He puts her mother beneath the
pendulum
(the more she talks, the faster it
falls).
He sets her sister adrift in a raft,
circling the Maelstrom ominously.
A raven persists on her window
ledge.
The Red Death comes to Benefit
Street.

At vision's height he dresses and
walks
the darkened brick alleys of Provi-
dence.
He climbs the steep hill to her
corner,
spies the darkened windows above.
He will stand here till dawn,
deceived by the rustle of curtain,
the imagined flickerings of candles,
the creak of floorboards and stairs,
the glint of moonlight on door knob.
The clean sunrise will banish him,
burning away his ardent love,
his ineffectual revenge,
leaving him an empty vessel again,
drifting from this friendless seaport,
south, to court a darker mistress,
a veiled widow who refuses no one,
and whom no one ever leaves.

THE MIGRATION OF BIRDS

(continued from page 28)

But they cast not a glance at my little window, but with inflated pinions and half-closed, sleepy eyes pass quietly over the laughing waters.

The last to arrive are the birds of ebony. The moonlight pláys sadly upon their black plumage, and is seen reflected in their great, pale yellow eyes. How strange the moonlight looks when seen in their sad, watery, yellow eyes. They are birds of ill-omen forever croaking Nevermore. And it is a fitting end. Let us pull down the heavy black shade, and retire from the window. The migrations are over, and the cold sere winter is at hand. Let us light a little fire, and dream by the fireside. Let us dream of the equator, of the warm South, of the sunny, of the happy South. Yes, let us dream.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Grue Magazine #4 (Hell's Kitchen Productions, P. O. Box 370, Times Square Station, NY, NY 10108), $4.00 (checks payable to Peggy Nadramia).

This latest fine-looking issue of one of the new small press horror magazines features a number of interesting items, including stories by Wayne Allen Sallee, who recently had a story in Year's Best Horror XV, and Wilum Pugmire, who recently had a story in Cutting Edge. There are poems by Denise Dumars and Joseph Payne Brennan, and art by Crypt regulars Lance Brown, Allen Koszowski, Peter H. Gilmore, Jim Garrison, Chris Pelletiere, and others.

FROM THE VAULTS OF YOH-VOMBIS

By Lin Carter

Materials Towards a Theory that COINCIDENCE is either a Powerful Force of Nature, Hitherto Unrecognized as Such, or the Interactions with Human History of a Mischievous and Demiurgic Intelligence of Superhuman Power

Fourteen years before the Titanic, on its maiden voyage, struck an iceberg on an April night and sank, with the loss of some fifteen hundred lives, a minor American science-fiction writer named Morgan Robertson published (in 1898) a story in which a super-liner on its maiden voyage struck an iceberg one night in April and sank, with the loss of fifteen hundred lives.

Robertson's invented super-liner displaced 70,000 tons, was 800 feet long, carried three thousand passengers, and was powered by three propellers (sheer fantasy, at the time of writing).

Fourteen years later, Titanic was launched. It displaced 66,000 tons, was 828 1/2 feet long, carried two thousand, two hundred and twenty-seven passengers and crew, and was powered by three propellers.

Titanic sank with the loss of 1522 lives.

Robertson's imaginary liner sank with the loss of 1500 lives.

He called his ship Titan.

* * *

"Coming events cast their shadows before."—Goethe.

* * *

At the first hour of the Liberation of Paris near the end of the Second World War, the first Allied tank entered Paris through the famous Porte d'Orleans.

It was through that gate that the victorious Napoleon had entered Paris at the head of his conquering army a century or more before.

The driver of that very first Allied tank was M. Henri Rathenau.

His uncle, Walther Rathenau, had been the first citizen of Paris to fall victim to the Nazis when Hitler took Paris some years before.

Perhaps Goethe knew what he was talking about.

* * *

The school exercise-books of the young Napoleon are preserved. The very last of them ends with this unfinished note: "Saint Helena, a small island—"

It was in guarded exile on that small island that Napoleon ended his days.

* * *

Dante, in the Divine Comedy, gave an exact description of the Southern Cross, a constellation that is invisible in Europe (for that matter, in the entire northern hemisphere), and a constellation which no traveller in Dante's time could ever possibly have seen.

* * *

M. P. Shiel published a story in which an organization of military structure, composed of monstrous and sadistic criminals, ravished a future Europe of his imagination, purging it of those of "inferior blood." His story was entitled "The S.S."

It was published in 1896.

* * *

Marxism was first implanted, and flourished mightily, in the soil of Russia—the one country which Karl Marx himself predicted would prove impervious to his theories.

* * *

An irregularity of three seconds in the orbit of Mercury sufficed to destroy Newton's theory and to justify Einstein's.

As Newton had predicted.

* * *

Swift, in his "Voyage to Laputa" published on October 28, 1726, described the sizes, the distances from their primary, and the periods of rotation of the two moons of Mars with such incredible accuracy, that when the twin moons were actually discovered one hundred and fifty-one years later, in 1877, by Asaph Hall, the astronomer, realizing the fact of this incredible coincidence (his phrase), was seized with utter panic (again, his phrase), and impulsively named the moons Phobos and Deimos . . . Fear and Terror.

One cannot quite imagine Hall's emotions, on later computations, realizing that the periods of rotation of the Martian moons, which Swift predicted, are not only unknown in astronomy, but contrary to ballistic theory. He also is reported to have been alarmed to realize that the moons seemed to have appeared "quite suddenly"—they were somehow not visible on the very night before he discovered them, at least not to observation by a telescope much more powerful than the one with which, a night later, he saw them.

Many years later, Robert S. Richardson of the Mount Palomar Observatory remarked on this, perhaps whimsically, that "maybe they just weren't there, the night before Asaph Hall saw them."

* * *

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT TODAY

"Truth never prevails in history; but her adversaries always perish in the end."

--Max Karl Ernst Planck

* * *

"We are living at a time when history is holding its breath, and the present is detaching itself from the past like an iceberg that has broken away from its icy moorings to sail across the boundless ocean."

--Arthur C. Clarke

* * *

"By 'Beauty' I mean that which seems complete. Obversely, that the incomplete, the mutilated, is the ugly. But this is untrue. The Venus de Milo, to a child, is ugly, for it lacks a head and arms. When we adjust to her completeness . . . she is beautiful. More, she is Beauty."

--Charles Fort

* * *

"If I make a mistake, I conclude that, after all, I exist: for only he that does not exist cannot ever make a mistake."

--St. Augustine

* * *

"Lavoisier proved meteorites cannot exist by stating: 'It is impossible for stones to fall from the sky because there are no stones in the sky.'

Simon Newcomb proved that it would be impossible for airplanes to fly since an airship heavier than air was an impossibility.

So it goes on."

--Pauwels & Bergier,
The Morning of the Magicians

* * *

"The nomads in the desert have seventeen different words for sand, and every one a curse."

--Sir Richard Francis Burton

* * *

Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair is the fall of songs
When the singer sings them.

Still they are carolled and said,
On wings they are carried
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

* * *

"It's a question of energies, really. Where do creative energies come from? If one has them, how does one best use them? When they run down, how does one recharge them? It's a joyous problem. It's also a responsibility, you see, all by itself. I guess, a primary responsibility. And one just can't be totally responsible for everything. Few master chefs take out the garbage. The day just isn't that long. No one's energies are that great."

--Gregory Mcdonald,
Fletch's Moxie (1982)

"Moxie, do you think there are different rules for creative people?"

"Sure. There have to be special rules for being that alone."

--Ibid.

* * *

(GOOD epigraph for a work of horror fiction):

Every night and every morn
Some to misery are born.
Every morn and every night
Some are born to Sweet Delight.
Some are born to Sweet Delight,
Some are born to Endless Night.

--William Blake
Auguries of Innocence

* * *

If ever I should write an autobiography (which I certainly never will, writers' autobiographies degenerating as they do into simple matters of "and then I wrote—"), I should call it All I Could See From Where I Stood. A marvelous title for something of an autobiographical nature . . . it comes from a remarkable poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay, a poem of which I have long been perhaps inordinately fond—

All I could see from where I stood
Was three tall mountains, and a wood.
I turned and looked the other way,
And saw three islands in a bay.

The world sloped off to either side
No wider than the heart is wide.
And up above me stretched the sky,
No higher than the soul is high . . .

Yet all I saw from where I stood
Was three tall mountains, and a wood.

* * *

Some years ago I compiled a list of my favorite living writers. The list ran as follows: Georg Luis Borges, Leigh Brackett, Italo Calvino, Agatha Christie, Avram Davidson, George Macdonald Fraser, Fritz Leiber, John D. MacDonald, Dr. Seuss,* Jack Vance, P. G. Wodehouse.

. . . I was about to type up the list for my column, when I realized that a few of the writers listed above had died since I first put this list together. Then I relaxed; and smiled, knowing that it really didn't matter. At any given moment in history, 99.9 percent of the best writers are dead ones.

* * *

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue, remembered hills,
What spires, what farms, are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And will not come again.

--A. E. Houseman

* * *

"I don't believe in hell. I believe in Unemployment, but I don't believe in hell."

--Tootsie (the film)

* * *

"No man can ever say that his has been a successful life."

--T. H. White

* * *

"It is the thing we don't expect that usually happens."

--L. Frank Baum
The Emerald City of Oz

*Eyebrows will lift and skeptics will opine that the Guru is losing his marbles, listing a "children's writer" Dr. Seuss on his list of favorite living writers. But Dr. Seuss is the finest living Nonsense poet, with the death of Walt Kelly, and has mastered Surrealism in pop illustration to a degree we have not seen since George Herriman drew "Krazy Kat"—and long may he wave!

--Lin Carter

. . . Moxie, do you think there are different rules for creative people?
. . . Sure. There have to be special rules for being that alone.

And some are born for Endless Night.

THE KEEPER AT THE CRYPT

By Carl T. Ford

Welcome back to the dark and dreadful dimensions of the Lovecraftian gaming world. It has been suggested that this column should attempt to do a little more than merely inform readers of new Call of Cthulhu releases, and, perhaps, try to pull the attentions of those ghouls who don't usually devour the gaming side of the Lovecraftian league.

Many Lovecraftians remain, sadly, a little stuck in the swamps of serious study and have been known to sneer their fangs at those amongst us who gather in black catacombs, around a candlelit tabletop and play out a series of adventures based on Lovecraftian lore.

However, once they too have dabbled their tentacles into the rulebooks, such Cthulholds have been known to change their stand on the matter. Gahan Wilson once gave Call of Cthulhu a splendid write-up in a Twilight Zone article, and so did reviewers of the game in past editions of Nyctalops and our very own Crypt of Cthulhu.

So, in an attempt to preach to the unconverted, I'd like to give readers a brief synopsis of the very first Cthulhu scenario which I had the misfortune to investigate. The adventure was entitled "Brimstone at the Club of the Black Arts," a short plot written by a pal of mine, on a grey winter day a few years back.

The plot went something like this . . . My character, a full-time journalist for The New York Times was called upon to investigate the recent disappearance of a fellow writer, who was engaged in helping a certain author compile a book on dubious cults. She was last seen visiting the author, David Lynse, at his home in the shadowed district of Arkham two weeks previously and had failed to contact the Times or her family and friends since.

The game began with a series of investigations into the background of David Lynse at various libraries in the area. We managed to uncover a few vital facts which were to later help us with our enquiries. Lynse had for several years been a popular compiler of tomes concerning witchcraft and the black arts; some of these works had been originally written in England and spanned the past twenty years. Obviously, Lynse was quite an authority on the subject. Looking up a volume of Who's Who, we were surprised to learn that Lynse had left Britain amid controversy concerning a series of "blasphemous" scenes involving "devil worship" where it was claimed several members of his cult were never found again. Hmm, I thought, they've been murdered by Lynse and perhaps used as sacrifices. A little more investigation led us to the home of Lynse.

From the moment we arrived at the Manor, nothing seemed to go as planned. The Keeper running the game constantly kept us on our toes giving us a scare a minute. In the gardens, we spied a tall, gaunt-looking butler in the act of burying a large shaggy, black dog. The house seemed to be filled with guests, well versed in occult lore—obviously, as far as I was concerned, none were to be trusted. Lynse, we were told, was away on business. We were led to our rooms, along cobweb-shrouded corridors and had to share a bathroom which played home for a couple of black rats.

Lynse's library housed a number of arcane tomes, none of which meant anything to my inexperienced investigator. Traces of dog hair were uncovered here and there, which led to me enquiring about the hound we had witnessed being buried in the yard. "A family

pet" we were informed "which had sadly been shot" following a severe case of distemper. That didn't surprise me: anyone spending a few nights in this place was bound to go crazy after a while.

That night I spent the evening watching the shadows in my room, not daring to close my eyes, lest someone creep in during the night and stick a rat down my pyjamas. Unfortunately, it had been a long day and I fell asleep counting black shaggy greyhounds jumping over hurdles.

The next morning I discovered that a message had been pushed under my door during the night, requesting a secret rendezvous at an inn five miles away. The strange scribbler informed me that he had some "information" which might help me with my enquiries. Could it be Lynse? Surely, the butler had seemed a little too helpful towards my plight of wishing to meet Lynse. Maybe Lynse wasn't responsible for my associate's disappearance after all. And there certainly seemed no evidence linking the author to black magic rituals, from the evidence uncovered following two rather daring searches of the house that later ensued.

I arrived at the proposed rendezvous and recognized a man from the house, who told me that Lynse had invited a number of leading writers with a vast knowledge of occult lore to help him prepare his new volume. This man had also noticed the disappearance of several guests recently, and he had also seen one of Lynse's jackets, covered in bloodstains, being disposed of by the butler on a bonfire, just the day before the man had announced that Lynse was away on business.

The scenario had taken on a different track of investigation. Lynse, I was certain, was now a victim of the macabre plot. I believed he was dead and that the old cliche "The Butler did it" was about to ring true yet again.

Further incidents over dinner and a mysterious occurrence overheard in a room down the corridor led us to search a guest's room, where we discovered a secret panel leading to a stairway to the cellars. The next two hours of play managed to unravel the mystery. But no, the Butler didn't do it. Lynse wasn't dead and neither was my journalist pal. It turned out that he was a lycanthrope in the Lon Chaney, Jr., mould. Once we began to piece together the shreds, the clues all fit into a perfect puzzle. The dead dog had in fact been a werewolf. A closer inspection of its body would have revealed a shot wound caused by the good old silver bullet. Earlier books written by Lynse on the subjects of Lycanthropy had failed to register strongly. We had been more interested in searching for clues connecting the whole thing to the workings of Cthulhu and co.

I've only blinked at the details of the whole plot. Needless to say, the likes of Cthulhu didn't pop up in the whole game, despite several "side-plots" thrown in to confound us. The game remained a very scary experience, though I must admit to not being able to convert my fear onto paper very well, in such a small account of the scenario.

What I have done, I hope, is let readers know that Call of Cthulhu isn't just monster bashing. During that whole game, none of the characters carried guns, and it wasn't a "Cthulhu monsters vs. investigators" scenario.

Next time someone says Call of Cthulhu is a silly game where Lovecraft's creations are described in pin-point detail with statistics, and where a Great Old One pops up in every game to frighten the life out of the players, you'll know better. The game, at its best, is about investigation and deduction.

ADVICE TO THE LOVECRAFT-LORN

LETTERS TO LIBIDIA

Dear Libidia,

I am a mite confused. Out here in rural North Central Massachusetts, a girl like me don't get to meet many eligible young beaus, so my kindly old paw has arranged a blind date for me. He sez this feller is not from around these parts "but between them" (paw's a great kidder). I know beggars can't be choosers, but I'm a trifle worried. Suppose he gits fresh on the first date? What should I do?

Lavinia W.
Dunwich, MA

Dear Lavinia,

Well, it certainly is refreshing to see that old-fashioned morals aren't a thing of the past! But, Lavinia, let me suggest that you trust your old dad. "Father knows best," you know! You may think of this as a simple date, but you never know what might come of it. I think you'll find that after this night on the town, the old adage "Every date is a potential mate" has taken on a whole new meaning. And one more thing, sweetheart, forget all that stuff on TV about condoms: the condom hasn't been made that could do much good here. Trust me on this one.

Libidia Gillman

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

(continued from page 68)

I agree strongly with Mr. Lotus' comments on Mythos fiction in the "Mail-Call" of #48, and would wish to see an issue of Crypt of Cthulhu devoted to fan Mythos fiction only if edited with the utmost ruthlessness, i.e., no stories printed because they were "pretty good" fan Mythos stories or "pretty good" fan Mythos stories. If a story is not worth printing simply because it is a good fan Mythos story, no amount of equivocation, no attempt to qualify its inclusion simply on the grounds of its source or intentions should be allowed. By the same token, no story, no matter how well written, should be published that simply paraphrases one already in the canon. Enough of this benevolent parasitism has been tolerated already. A shoggoth by any other name would smell as foul.

Please help me twist Harry O. Morris' arm until he releases a hardbound expanded edition of the excellent Songs of a Dead Dreamer by Thomas Ligotti. I have been afraid to enjoy my copy too much for fear it would disintegrate within a few years, and of what value would a limited edition rag be? Besides this, the book deserved wider circulation than 300 copies could possibly have given it.

--James Rockhill
South Bend, IN

No. 48 of Crypt was another excellent issue. I especially enjoyed the Thomas Ligotti story. Let's see some more of his work in the future.

--Thomas R. Hall III
Durham, NC

R'lyeh Review

Robert Bloch, Through Time and Space with Lefty Feep. Creatures at Large (P. O. Box 687, Pacifica, CA 94044), paper, 258 p. $12.95.

Robert Bloch, Midnight Pleasures. NY, Doubleday, hc, 177 p. $12.95.

(Reviewed by Stefan Dziemianowicz)

Some of Robert Bloch's dark fantasies bear a striking resemblance to his lighter ones. In terms of their delivery they set you up, throw a curve or two and knock you over with a punchline. You certainly wouldn't mistake the horror of stories like "Catnip" or "The Beasts of Barsac" for humor, but their ironic conclusions are as amusing as they are gruesome. This is such a recognizable trademark that Bloch used it on himself in "The Closer of the Way," a 1977 story that appropriates elements from "The Feast in the Abbey" to lampoon, among other things, his weakness for strong last lines.

A number of stories in this vein can be found in Midnight Pleasures, a potpourri collection of Bloch's contributions mostly to magazines and original anthologies of the last decade. On the darker side of irony, you have "The Night Before Christmas" and "Everybody Needs a Little Love." The latter, a story about a man and his mannequin, even begins with the narrator assuming what's happening is a joke, only to end up more serious than anyone could imagine—more ambiguous, too, since, for once, the clincher complicates more things than it clears up. For lighter fare, Bloch takes serious subjects like the violence-obsessed world of "Die-Nasty" and the self-absorbed society of "But First These Words" for a joy ride around the lunatic fringe.

The rest of the stories are a roundup of Bloch's usual suspects—fading movie types, valueless kids, psychoanalysts—that line up a little more one way or the other along the bias. "Picture" and "The Spoiled Wife" are played strictly for laughs, dealing respectively with why you should always take the devil at his word and Robert Bloch titles literally. "The Rubber Room" and "Nocturne" are plunges into psyches that could use a little housecleaning. The most interesting story is "The Totem Pole," a 1939 Weird Tales piece that is neither great nor terrible. It has been reprinted only once before, as one of four stories in Sea-Kissed, a British paperback that beat The Opener of the Way into print.

Of course there are Robert Bloch stories that defy you to take them seriously, none more so than the Lefty Feep series. Their titles alone—"Son of A Witch," "Jerk the Giant Killer," "Time Wounds All Heels"—warn you that Bloch is going for something a little lower than the throat: the rib.

Bloch's hapless (and luckless) gambler, whose taste in business associates is as bad as his taste in clothing and who is such a happening guy that he never speaks in a verb tense staler than the present, first appeared in the April 1942 Fantastic Adventures. This was followed by sixteen consecutive encores, seven return engagements and a late '50s booking in a fan magazine. After nearly thirty years of silence, it was beginning to look like Lefty had gotten the hook for good, but no such luck. Lost in Time and Space with Lefty Feep collects the first seven Feep fantasies and adds a new one written especially for the book. Its long introductory interview is informative both with regard to the series and Bloch's writing for the pulps in general.

The stories have a formula no one can seem to lose the recipe for: Bob, the narrator, is trying to survive a typically toxic meal at

Jack's Shack when in straggles Lefty Feep, "the biggest liar in seven states." Feep proceeds to serve up his own Bull-Plate Specials (what might be best described as ham with corn, smothered in Runyon), in which he consorts with witches, wizards and weirdos about as effortlessly as he does with bookies.

Feep's adventures turn pre-existing tall tales into taller tales—Rip Van Winkle in "Time Wounds All Heels" and "Gather Round the Flowing Bowler," the Pied Piper in "The Pied Piper Meets the Gestapo," Jack and the Beanstalk in "Jerk the Giant Killer," the Midas touch in "Lefty Feep's Golden Opportunity," flying carpets in "Son of a Witch." There's really little plot to them. They're more a showcase for period slang, Bloch's ad copy wit and more groaners than you can shake a schtick at. The most unforgivable thing about them is that in every one Bloch takes you right up to the brink and leaves you hanging there just long enough to scream for the end. Then he uncorks a mordant pun, as though to say "You asked for it!"

The best of the batch is "The Weird Doom of Floyd Scrilch," probably because it's the one with the most original idea: Did you ever wonder why those trusses, hair restorers and gewgaws advertised at the back of magazines never work for you? It's because they're made for the average American, which neither you nor I are. Floyd Scrilch, on the other hand, is so average, that once they begin to work for him, he can't get them to stop.

But you really can't single out one Lefty Feep story. They have a cumulative effect on you that makes them hard to put down. Sort of like eating a bag of potato chips at one sitting: you know it's probably not good for you, but just try and stop. Those with restricted tastes, take heed—two more collections are planned.

Bates Motel, written and directed by Richard Rothstein, starring Bud Cort. (NBC TV-movie, broadcast July 5, 1987)

(Reviewed by Robert M. Price)

"Bloch must be talking to his lawyers right now," said my wife about forty minutes into this travesty. Bloch spoke prophetically last year, after the release of Psycho III, when he mused that eventually we would see Abbott and Costello Meet Norman Bates. On July 5, they met him. To Psycho fans, even fans of the Psycho sequels like me, Bates Motel has only the mild interest of, say, that old Saturday Night Live skit "The Norman Bates School of Motel Management," only this skit is nearly two hours long and doesn't feature Anthony Perkins. It is strictly Psycho marginalia.

Bates Motel is a direct sequel to Psycho, ignoring Psycho II and III, though features from both films are silently stolen. The intro sequence with dawn coming up behind the Bates house is right out of the intro of Psycho II, as is the Meg Tilly analogue. The averted suicide in the bathtub and the visiting party crowd come from last summer's Psycho III.

Norman Bates appears briefly in the film in a flashback sequence, played by someone who looks passably like the young Perkins. Twenty-five years later he dies with no explanation, having left the house and motel to an abused patricide he befriended in the asylum, who like Norman himself in Psycho II, is released and reopens the Bates Motel.

The movie makes other, pointless, changes in the Psycho mythos. Fairvale becomes Fairville, and Norma Bates becomes Gloria; the motel is loathsomely updated in a California hacienda-style.

To be fair, the movie has a decent plot-germ, though hardly an original one. Alex West, Norman's heir, gets a loan from a banker who obviously drools over the development possibilities of the land, opportunities Alex is sacrificing by not tearing down the motel and

building condos instead. Said greedy banker floats the rumor that old Mrs. Bates haunts the place, then proceeds to fake killings (no one actually dies in this would-be Psycho IV!), and at the last even masquerades as Mother. It's all a classic weird-menace strategem. But even this passable plot gets swamped by the show's innumerable weaknesses.

The humor doesn't fit; it would be painful to detail any of it. Three quarters of the way into it, a new subplot emerges, the attempted suicide, and gobbles up the show. At first this seems utterly unexplainable—until you realize Bates Motel is a failed TV series pilot! (You are never told this on TV; I only found out from TV Guide.) Suddenly it all falls into place: first we have to establish the frame for all the rest of the programs, the functioning of the motel under new and benign management, then we have to squeeze in a sample episode. In it a beautiful aerobics instructor (what else in a network TV production?) is rescued from suicide by a bunch of prom kids who turn out to be ghosts of suicides themselves. Thus the series Bates Motel would have been a kind of cross between Fantasy Island and Amazing Stories. Like the plot itself, this is blunderingly ill-conceived. A series set in Norman's stomping grounds just might have worked as an 80s version of the Addams Family: outright macabre comedy, not the typically hesitant, neither fish nor fowl, half-baked product of the nitwit networks. But don't kid yourself that the professional incompetents in network TV would've been able to pull that off decently either. Other unmistakable marks of the TV genre include an unbearable typical smart-mouth girlfriend character whom I kept hoping someone would stab.

I can only hope that if Anthony Perkins gets the itch to make Psycho IV he won't let this piece of junk stop him—and that he won't get Richard Rothstein to write it.

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

The last several issues of Crypt have been a delight, particularly the Kuttner issue. In regards to letters regarding the sad lack of a collection of Kuttner's best macabre tales, I hope that James Turner of Arkham House realizes such a book is long overdue, and that Arkham is perhaps the only publisher who could do it justice.

There are a couple of writers who seem (thus far) to be overlooked by your scribes, Donald and Howard Wandrei. Howard Wandrei, in addition to writing a number of very fine stories both under his own name and the name of H. W. Guernsey, was a remarkably skilled artist who Lovecraft thought highly of; Donald Wandrei seemed at the end of the 30s to be the heir to Lovecraft, Smith, and Howard as far as the readership of Weird Tales was concerned.

Early catalogues from Arkham list a number of projects from the bros. Wandrei, including "Time Burial" and "Orson is Here" by Howard, and "Colossus" by Donald, along with two collections of the art of Howard Wandrei. Perhaps these works still exist in the files of Arkham House, or perhaps the manuscripts have passed into the hands of private collectors. It is hoped that these have not, like the ms. of Smith's "Infernal Star," vanished forever . . .

--John Pelan
Seattle, WA

Crypt is grand reading material, the real Weird Tales of the eighties!

--Shawn Ramsey
Anderson, IN

I have found the reading of your magazine delightful and addictive. The essays and several of the letters in each issue prove stimulating. I especially appreciate seeing discussion of the essays in the "Mail-Call of Cthulhu." The fiction, I have already commented upon in a previous letter, but I should state that much of it, despite my complaints, is enjoyable and several stories were excellent.

In Lin Carter's description of Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural in his review of Alberto Manguel's Black Water he says: ". . . Great Tales was a superb compilation of classic horror, including absolutely every famous weird gem you ever heard of (from 'The Yellow Wallpaper' to 'The Yellow Sign,' and not excluding Lovecraft) . . ." Although the use of two "Yellow" classics as a frame to establish inclusiveness is strikingly effective, Great Tales contains neither tale. The phrase thus becomes ludicrous, unless Mr. Carter has in his possession a rare variant edition of this classic anthology. By Wise and Fraser's rather strict standards, "The Yellow Sign" would probably have been relegated to the category of many hundreds read, "many of them commonplace, many of them unfortunately sheer trash" mentioned in the "Introduction to the Notes."

Mr. Carter, your "Adult Fantasy Series" for Ballantine has to have been the greatest effort ever made to successfully bring quality fantasy before the public at large. I reread and treasure every volume I could find, despite the fact that I have found other editions of the same works. Thank you for calling attention to many works we may otherwise have missed, but please research such items as the quite acceptable older alternation of "i" for "j" and "u" for "v" used particularly in the Romance languages, before ridiculing the source of the pen name, Voltaire, as you did in Dragons, Elves and Heroes.

--James Rockhill
South Bend, IN

I found Crypt of Cthulhu a week

ago in London by chance. I'm a long-time-admirer of H. P. Lovecraft and his works and interested in all related material. Your magazine fascinated and amused me at the same time. I found it a delightful lecture and want to see more of it.

--Robert N. Bloch
Giessen, West Germany

I picked up Crypt #47 in Forbidden Planet. I read the Crypt on the train home, and almost flipped my lid upon reading Peter Cannon's "Bookshop" tale! When I got to the part where the cat flips the pages, I laughed out loud (no doubt drawing strange looks from the other passengers).

--Scott Briggs
Levittown, NY

My principal purpose for the penning of this pernicious palimpsest is to reply to Stefan Dziemianowicz's "Innsmouth Gold Revisited," which appeared in the Roodmas issue of Crypt of Cthulhu.

Although Mr. Dziemianowicz's estimation of my tale does not seem to be shared by those readers whose opinions I've heard, I find that I cannot wholly disagree with his major complaint: that the story did not "take us to a realm beyond human ken, one of approximations and fearsome descriptions that are all the more horrifying because they cannot be totally understood from a human frame of reference." He's right, in that regard. And, to that extent, I feel that his criticism of "IG" is justified. I think, however, that my perspective of an effective Mythos tale is somewhat broader than Mr. Dziemianowicz's. For me, the Mythos derives a great deal of its effectiveness from the idea that the human race is, for the most part, completely unaware that it shares its planet (indeed—the very cosmos) with a great variety of extremely secretive nonhuman beings, many of whom possess perspectives and attributes which seem to be positively godlike to those humans who have the misfortune to contact them. It is this element of humankind's ignorance which I tried to strongly communicate in "IG" and which, by readers' estimates, I was at least moderately successful.

I believe, also, that the Mythos cannot be so qualified that anyone can say just what it "should" be or do. The Mythos, like every arena of belief or expression, is plainly open to as many interpretations as there are interpreters, and the instillation of cosmic fear at the utter inconsequence and ultimate powerlessness of the human race is only one of the many legitimate objects of a Mythos tale.

I very much appreciate readers' defense of the "IG" story, as well as Mr. Dziemianowicz's thoughtful consideration of their opinions.

--Henry J. Vester III
Windsor, CA

Thanks for Crypt #48. On page 29, Carter derives "Thomyris, Queen of Scythia," from a forgotten poem by Swinburne. The original Tomyris (Herodotos, I, 205-14) was a Queen of the Massagetai, nomadic steppe-dwellers like the Scythians but living east of them, in what would now be the Kazak and Turkmen Soviet Republics.

When Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, had conquered Iran, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia, he undertook to conquer the land of the Massagetai also. Tomyris promised him that, if he insisted on invading her steppe, she would give him his fill of blood to drink. Cyrus captured part of the Massagetan army by a ruse, but in the end the nomads wiped out the Persian army. Tomyris fulfilled her promise by dunking Cyrus' head in a vat of blood.

According to Herodotos, the Massagetai, lacking iron, used weapons of bronze. They held their wives in common and, when their parents aged, respectfully sacrificed and ate them.

--L. Sprague de Camp
Villanova, PA

Lin Carter had some interesting thoughts on the origins of Irem in Lovecraft's stories. The direct source for Irem is entry 47 in Lovecraft's "Commonplace Book," obtained from the "Arabia" entry in his copy of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The legend of the destruction of the tribes of 'Ad and Thamood for their sins, obtained from the same encyclopedia entry, was Lovecraft's source for entry 48 in his notebook.

I don't know why S. T. Joshi thinks that "familiarity" with the titles of the Arkham House Lovecraft books might not be a factor in purchase of the books. Let's say that I had purchased The Dunwich Horror and At the Mountains of Madness in the last printings of the first editions. And let's say I was not especially interested in having corrected texts of Lovecraft's stories; I just wanted to have each Lovecraft story in some form or another. If Arkham House had redistributed the stories into different collections—arranged chronologically, for example, I might find that I couldn't acquire the Lovecraft stories I did not yet have by buying a single book. I could conceivably have to buy three new books to obtain the few stories I was missing, and having to duplicate the contents of the two volumes I already owned. There seems to be a good reason to reissue the books as the last of the old editions went out of print, at least from the point of view of the publisher.

Regardless of whether there are legal problems with the Lovecraft copyright, it is difficult to conceive how the contents of Dagon could be sequentially altered legally but the contents of The Dunwich Horror and At the Mountains of Madness could not. In any case, my review served to point out that there are still some irregularities in the Lovecraft reprints which have not been, or rather could not be, rectified in the light of recent scholarly discoveries. I don't think the factors, beginning in the 1940s, that affected the publication of Lovecraft's stories have much bearing on Joshi's or Arkham House's success in publishing Lovecraft's corrected texts. I merely wished to point out that the editorial hand of August Derleth continues to exert rather strong influence over publication of Lovecraft's work.

--David E. Schultz
Milwaukee, WI

After reading the very different reviews of From Beyond by Messrs. Hoffman and Dziemianowicz, I was sufficiently intrigued to see the film, having hitherto been satisfied with Lovecraft's original prose version. A viewing of the cassette plus a couple of re-readings of the text produced a few observations I would like to share with fellow Crypt readers.

First, I must now agree with what I first thought to be Hoffman's rationalization that the film's sex-perversion aspect was faithful in spirit to Lovecraft's portrait of the mad scientist. Though Lovecraft never would have thought of it, this quest along forbidden paths for every possible sensation is completely true to the character. I am only sorry there was no mention of experiments with hallucinogenic drugs, as this, too, seems natural.

Second, though of course Dziemianowicz is correct that the film is largely a supplement to Lovecraft's meager episode, really just beginning where "From Beyond" left off, I think I have spotted unintended signals in the text which may have inspired, in a kind of free-associational way, the film's expansions. As to the horrible transfiguration of Pretorious and his assumption into the "beyond" dimension, consider how Lovecraft's narrator describes Tillinghast (the film's Pretorious) as "so suddenly metamorphosed to a shivering gargoyle," "this shaking parody on man" (p. 92, new Arkham edition). Of course Lovecraft only means the mad scientist has been wasted by his mania, but perhaps the scriptwriter was inspired by these phrases to

make Pretorious into the shape-shifting monster we see in the film. Lovecraft actually does at one point intimate that there is a malignant "beyond" version of the scientist, when the narrator beholds "shining, revolving spheres" which "formed a constellation or galaxy" in the shape of "the distorted face of Crawford Tillinghast" (p. 95).

But surely the Barbara Crampton character is totally gratuitous? Well, yes, but I think I see her toehold in Lovecraft's text as well. Our scriptwriter may have run across these words and taken them rather wickedly in an unintended sexual sense: "That Crawford Tillinghast should ever have studied science and philosophy was a mistake. These things should be left to the frigid and impersonal investigator. . ." (p. 91). Voila: Ms. Crampton "investigates" the case and goes from horn-rimmed to horny, thanks to the "vibrator."

So perhaps the film From Beyond, while not exactly faithful to Lovecraft's original tale, may actually have been inspired by a detailed reading of the text to a greater extent than reviewers have yet noticed.

--Phinas Kornegay
Stump Swamp, NC

I fear that you and your equally illustrious readers have been the victim of an hoax: to wit, the purported passage from the Necronomicon presented by a certain Mr. Carter in the 48th number of your amusing journal. My reasons for recognizing the Falseness of it are these: Primus, that the writer seems to think that one achieves an "archaic" effect by using the wrong word, "bestride" when "astride" is meant, "didst" in the first person, etc. Both Dr. Dee and Alhazred (who was a poet of repute before he turned to the Elder Mysteries) were better, not to mention more grammatical writers than that. Secundus, that when the Yemenite (c. 750 A.D.) partakes of the Black Lotus and views the panorama of the Past, he sees the Third Crusade (late 12th century A.D.), over four centuries in his future. Surely that must have impressed you as curious, Mr. Editor, to say the least? And tertius that no such passage occurs in my use-proven and time-honored copy of the Necronomicon.

The careful scholar must reject the whole narrative of the Black Lotus out of hand, not merely because of (obvious) apocryphal elements, but because there merely seems to be no reason to accept it.

--Joseph Curwen

I can't say enough about the quality of your magazine which seems only to get better. It has filled up the holes in my reading over the last year; besides we "outsiders" have to stick together.

--Shawn Small
Sloux City, IA

In his "Notes" on ye translation of Dee's Necronomicon, Carter writes how members of ye Lovecraft Circle ". . . obviously had access to a copy of Dee's Necronomicon . . ." How can this be so? I always understood that one copy of this translation existed, and was given to Wilbur Whateley by his grandfather. If so, how could those other gents have access to it? If it never was translated, how did Lin Carter get ahold of it? Did he steal it from ye Whateley Farmhouse? Did Wilbur have it with him at ye scene of his death, and did someone get it then and, by means unknown, Carter discovered this and obtained it? I want some answers.

"Vastarien," literally, is a haunting tale. Ligotti is superb. His prose is beautiful, and his imagination unique. When I read something this wonderful, I want to think and work with all my might to, hopefully, produce a tale half as good.

I was amazed at Charles Hoffman's suggestion that "The House in the Oaks" should have been included in Baen Books' Cthulhu; but then I thought that perhaps a Der-

leth pastiche in a Howard book called Cthulhu wouldn't be so unsuitable. Such nonsense!

The issue reads very well, and I enjoyed ye diversity. I was thrilled to see yet another article on "The Hound," one of my favorite HPL tales. I also enjoyed the large number of letters published this time.

--Wilum Pugmire, Seattle, WA

Crypt of Cthulhu continues to be a marvel. Surely it will be looked back upon as one of the truly great Lovecraftian fanzines. But, for the present, another charming issue:

I read David Schultz's article on the "Black Magic" quote with great interest—particularly since it means I'm going to rewrite part of the editorial of the new Weird Tales, which mentions the older theory that the black magic quote is merely a misremembering (or deliberate distortion) of the Old Gent's letter to Farnsworth Wright, 5 July 1927 (#9 in Uncollected Letters). I hope we've finally tracked this elusive letter to its lair and staked it through the heart, once and for all. But Farnese's selective memory seems to fully account for everything, even more than Derleth's selective memory. This is truly the most widely-travelled misquotation since . . . well, maybe the famous last words of the Old Guard at Waterloo. ("The Guard dies, but it does not surrender." What they actually said was "Merde!")

To Peter Jeffrey, I offer my reading of "The Hound," which is what I call the Unified Fiend Theory—that the two graverobbers disturbed the grave of this sorcerer (the skeleton) and that all subsequent manifestations are merely forms or avatars of that sorcerer. Bats, hound, everything. All of them are but projections of his magic/mind. Which ought to teach folks not to steal from graves of sinister repute. Great for controlling juvenile delinquents too.

--Darrell Schweitzer, Strafford, PA

Say, that Lovecraft fella is not only alive, but quick on the draw. In Crypt #45 he not only spots a typo but ends up in the letter column in the same issue in which the typo appears. Impressive.

You continue to amaze me with your fine covers: Brown's unearthly mail-men (#46) and Eckhardt's bizarre pool-thing (#47) were excellent, not to mention Otto Bumberger's brooding view of the room in the steeple of the Church of Starry Wisdom (#48). Wow.

The fiction in issue #47 had some nice little tidbits in it, most notably the tales by Bloch and Cannon. As others have pointed out, "The Pool" telegraphed its ending well in advance. Lin Carter's "Behind the Mask" once again doles out the usual needless catalog of Mythos data, much to its detriment. Turning to Richard Tierney's Simon of Gitta tale, I found one brief passage oddly familiar; on page 32, the mad priest Argonius rants "He'll die before these eyes, and he'll know—he'll know—that it is I, Valerius Argonius, who has brought him to his doom!" Now compare Baron Harkonnen's raving speech from the movie Dune: "The Duke will die before these eyes, and they'll know—they'll know—that it is I, Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, who encompasses Dune!" Interesting parallel, right down to the final rhyme ("doom" and "Dune"). I got a kick out of it, anyway.

And let's just assume for a moment that Peter Cannon's story may have been true. Okay, we'll accept for the moment that such "impossible" titles as The House of the Worm and Shaggai and Others exist. But a new collection of T.E.D. Klein's stories? Get real! The guy only writes fiction during the light of a full moon (or so it seems), so how could he possibly come up with "a dozen tales" in the relatively near future—say the next three or four years (about the time it would take for the Campbell/King collaboration to appear)? And the story further loses credibility when the narrator refuses to pay a measly

$11.95 for this book! Any Klein book is a bargain at twice that!

(Just kiddin', all concerned. Cannon's story was very entertaining, and I'm sure that not a few fans were drooling over some of the imaginary titles on those shelves. Uh, Pete, just in case the story is true, you wouldn't be interested in xeroxing Shaggai, would you?)

One of the more heartening pieces in Crypt #48 was Eileen McNamara's article on the Lovecraft graveside memorial. I was pleased to see that HPL's beloved hometown recognized his passing on the 50th anniversary of his death. I was quite skeptical at first of Peter Jeffery's exhumation of "The Hound," as I had always thought it a pretty straightforward tale—the hound, the skeleton, and the bats were three independent entities. The hound killed St. John and returned the amulet to the skeleton, accompanied throughout by the bats. On rereading the tale though, it seems likely that the hound and the skeleton are somehow very closely related. Hmm... Schultz's expose on the probable origin of the infamous "black magic quote" was enlightening, to say the least. I think Don Herron (and/or Dick Tierney) may have been reaching just a bit with the "Ubbo-Sathla is us" business. (Of course, we "are" Ubbo-Sathla, but the initials are just a coincidence.) And I think I've figured out why the Necronomicon is such a fearsome tome (James Rockhill take note): if Lin Carter's "translations" are any indication, the Necronomicon is filled with utterly abominable, horrible, ghastly fiction. In the end-notes Carter has the gall to claim that this passage inspired stories by Lovecraft, Howard, Smith, etc. Not bloody likely. And here we go again with this abhorrent genealogical garbage—"the Gugs serve the Nameless Mist, son of Googolplex, late of the planet Ysxgythl, in the dimension . . ." Aaaaargh! Reading Thomas Ligotti's fine "Vastarien" after the Carter tale was a jarring experience. His is indeed a unique talent, though the tale itself brought to mind echoes of Chambers, Lovecraft, and Campbell. Very good.

From the looks of the R'lyeh Reviews it appears I'm going to have to do some hunting again. I disagree somewhat with Charles Hoffman's review of the REH Cthulhu collection. There is a strong sense of "otherworldliness" in "Old Garfield's Heart," if not "Pigeons from Hell." The inhuman heart of the Indians' "god of the hills," and the power that drives it both hint at something far beyond the ken of man. I also disagree with Hoffman's suggestion about including "The Black Bear Bites"; it has practically nothing to do with the occult, let alone the Cthulhu Mythos —the smugglers are merely using these trappings to hide their activities—and thus is wisely omitted from this collection. On the other hand, "The Dwellers in the Tombs" and "The House in the Oaks" are conspicuous by their absence. And finally, I agree with Richard Tierney's assessment of Fred Chappell's Dagon: despite a promising start the book seems to trail off about the time Leland kills his wife. Enthralling? Maybe. Cthulhu Mythos? No.

--Kevin A. Ross
Boone, IA

Personally, I would prefer to see most fiction, except possibly for such things as your special Campbell and Kuttner issues, in a title such as the Tales publication and Crypt left for nonfiction. I do enjoy much of the fiction, but, at the same time, I miss the articles when you have an all-fiction issue.

As to the derivation of Dagon, I suspect that such folk etymologies as Dagon from dag (fish) tend to have a greater validity in Semitic languages than elsewhere, but that may be merely a hangover from reading The Sufis by Idries Shah, wherein much is made of the meaningful relationships of words from the same roots in Arabic.

Then there's also the influence

of the word-conscious cabalistic tradition, even in biblical times (for example, Jachin and Boaz both enumerate to 79, whatever that may signify), but that subject is best avoided by those of us who nourish some faint hope of future sanity. If the name Dagon did not derive from dag and denote a fish-god, the average cabalist would be obliged to say that it did. He might cite as further "proof" the fact that Dagon and dagim ("fishes") both enumerate to 57, although that may be stretching it even for a cabalist.

If you want to follow the line of "reasoning" about dag, there's also the fact that dagah means "to increase or multiply"; that is, it has to do with fertility. The connection here is a little closer, since dagah is also used to mean "fish." Then there's dagan, "corn, grain, bread, nourishment," again connected to the idea of (agricultural) fertility. (It is inconvenient to have to mention that degel, with the same DG root, if it is a root, means "flag or banner.") In any event, I must admit the probability that the name Dagon had origins unrelated to the Hebrew language.

--David F. Godwin
Dallas, TX

So far, of what I've read of Crypt #48, my favorite piece has been Ligotti's "Vastarien." It was very like a darker version of Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath, with a less sympathetic protagonist than Randolph Carter. Like the Sunset City, Vastarien is obviously a world he created which yet somehow existed outside of his mind, a reflection of his memories of life (notably claustrophobic and self-centered) just as Carter's Sunset City was a development of his childhood memories. Hard to say whether the incident in the bookstore was what really happened or just Kerion's latest version of why he killed the dream-eater. A very good, spooky tale, easily a candidate for The Best of Crypt of Cthulhu if such a book is ever published.

Lin Carter's "Dreams of the Black Lotus," on the other hand, was merely a good, craftsmanlike story. Interesting concept, but I think Conan would disagree with Alhazred over where black lotuses really grow, and what they thrive on . . . swamp mud and the greenhouses of certain semideserted cities seem to do just as well as the slime of the proto-shoggoths. Carter's nostalgic evocation of The Wind in the Willows in his "Vaults of Yoh-Vombis" column was easily superior, as was his bit on fictional kings and his compilation of Lilliputian words and phrases (who'd want to go to Lilliput, however? It's interesting to read about, but I certainly wouldn't want to visit an island full of nasty, sneaky, three inch tall runts).

A close second to "Vastarien" was Peter F. Jeffery's "Who Killed St. John?." Exactly what the monster in "The Hound" was was always a bit hazy; Jeffery at least explores every possibility, and does it in a very entertaining way.

Don Herron's "The Unbegotten is Unforgotten" was also a piece which really deserved publication. One of Derleth's more unpalatable additions to the Mythos was his including the real origin of the Old Ones. Herron at least disproves Derleth's frankly disappointing theory.

--Charles Garofalo
Wayne, NJ

I am especially pleased to see David E. Schultz's article on the "Black Magic" quote. It is good to see this hoary matter finally traced to its source. No doubt this will be the last word on the subject, and about time too! No wonder poor old August Derleth grew angry when it was suggested that he'd made the thing up. He must have known that he hadn't—and yet, no doubt, was unable to trace its source. I imagine him searching through HPL's letters for the quote—but in vain. He knew the accusation was false, but could produce

no rebuttal. Now Lovecraft is vindicated, in that the nonsense about black magic attributed to him is shown to be the work of another. Derleth is also vindicated, in that it is now clear that he perpetuated no deliberate deception on the public. I have long found it hard to imagine Derleth stooping to such a thing, and yet I have felt that black magic was not in Lovecraft's line. It is exceptionally gratifying to see very gut feelings on the matter justified by this excellent piece of research.

I am surprised to see an appreciation of The Wind in the Willows (one of my very favourite books) in Crypt of Cthulhu. Lin Carter's phrase "one of the best books in the whole world" is entirely just. I do not mind admitting that the "Piper at the Gates of Dawn" chapter has repeatedly moved me to tears on numerous rereadings. If Mr. Carter's appreciation leads some of your readers to widen their literary horizons to include this masterpiece, this alone would amply justify this issue of your magazine. A word of caution to your readership may be in order, though. The text has now passed out of copyright, but not the illustrations. Re-illustrated editions therefore abound, but it is well worth seeking out a copy with the original E. H. Shepard illustrations, which delightfully complement the text. Some of the new illustrated versions are, frankly, a mess. Alas! The illustrator's art is no longer invariably what it was in 1908, when The Wind in the Willows first appeared. One other point that occurs to me is that I hope that Mr. Carter does not intend to subject this book to one of his ingenious pastiches.

--Peter F. Jeffery
Leicester, England

I always take pleasure in reading Crypt of Cthulhu, but the inclusion of a new Ligotti story considerably intensified my enjoyment of #48. Since reading Ligotti's "The Chymist" in Nictalops 16, I have admired his command of mood and atmosphere. Ligotti also appeared in two subsequent numbers of Harry Morris' magazine. Unfortunately, there have been no new issues of Nyctalops in the past three or four years, and I wondered where (if at all) Ligotti would resurface. Last year Silver Scarab's Songs of a Dead Dreamer. This year . . . Thanks, Bob. Only Lovecraft, Hodgson and M. R. James affect me as Ligotti does (perhaps, he's been sipping from the "six and three-quarter quarts" R. Alain Everts mentions in his recent monograph).

As to the argument concerning "potpourri" versus "theme" issues of Crypt of Cthulhu, I prefer both. I'm not all that big on the all-fiction issues; but I did enjoy the CAS, Robert Bloch and Ramsey Campbell specials. My advice is to continue as you have been. It's seen you through forty-eight Crypts, so far, hasn't it?

--Darwin Chismar
Anderson, IN

My favorite out of Crypt #48 was Thomas Ligotti's "Vastarien." That's the first thing of his I've read, and it lived up to all the praise you and Ramsey Campbell have heaped on him. Dave Schultz was admirably meticulous in "The Origin of Lovecraft's 'Black Magic' Quote." I would like to think that Derleth didn't accept Farnese's word as gospel out of malice, but that he was so happy to find something that supported his idea of what the "Cthulhu Mythos" was all about that he didn't even think to question it. But dammit, you don't set up the interpretive foundation of another author's works on hearsay! He should have checked his facts. In his book The Anxiety of Influence, Harold Bloom theorizes that poets and authors distance themselves from their mentors by unconsciously misreading them. Articles like Schultz's, and Dave Herron's "The Unbegotten is Unforgotten" make it seem like Derleth had enough anxiety of influence for two men.

--Stefan Dziemianowicz

I have been an ardent reader and collector of weird fiction for many years and I am specially interested in the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith and other Weird Tales authors.

Fortunately I obtained a copy of Crypt of Cthulhu #46 from a book dealer in London. It was the first issue of your journal that I have ever read. I appreciated highly the unpublished letters of Lovecraft to Vincent Starrett and Adolpho de Castro and the articles of S. T. Joshi and Will Murray ("Imaginative Allusions in Lovecraft's Letters"). I was delighted and stimulated to read more of Crypt of Cthulhu.

--Kalju Kirde
Goettingen, West Germany

I'm interested to note your new fiction orientation for Crypt. A somewhat risky step but I'm sure you can manage it properly. The Thomas Ligotti piece is a great "kickoff" item: Lovecraftian in a broad sense. I think HPL would have had high praise for Ligotti.

Also, I like Lin Carter's "Yoh-Vombis" column. Please continue it.

--Michael J. Lotus
Chicago, IL

A couple of comments on Crypt #45, which upholds your customary high standard of quality.

Will Murray mentions (p. 15) a reading of "The Rats in the Walls" on "an early, unnamed TV show" by

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"apparently no less than Orson Welles." I don't know about Welles, but I do remember hearing a reading of "Rats" on a Chicago TV station in 1953. The station (don't remember which one) carried a very odd program called "Faces in the Window," the brainchild of Ken Nordine, later an announcer for the Chicago Symphony broadcasts. The program came on after the late movie on Saturday, and consisted of a reading by Nordine of a weird story. I remember Balzac's "A Passion in the Desert" and Melville's "The Lightning-Rod Man," and of course HPL's "The Rats in the Walls." You never saw Nordine or a studio set or anything identifiable; the visual accompaniment to the reading was a shifting pattern of shadows and abstract shapes. Far from "destroy[ing] the intended mood," the swirling shapes had a hypnotic effect that intensified the impact of the story.

In the Notes to "The Lurking Beans," Jim Cort mentions a book called Human and Inhuman Stories, edited by Dorothy L. Sayers, and published by Harcourt, Brace and World in 1931. There was no such book. In fact, in 1931 there was no such publishing house as Harcourt, Brace and World. The 1977 Manor Books paperback of that title was simply a reprint of the final section of Sayers' classic anthology The Omnibus of Crime (1929). There have been several fictional treatments of the Sawney Bean story, including the novel The Flesheaters by L. A. Morse, a Warner Books paperback (December 1979) which has become moderately collectible because of its Frazetta cover.

I've especially enjoyed your revivals of early Kuttner stories, and hope for more of the same. Thanks for a consistently fascinating magazine.

--R. E. Briney
Salem, MA

Welcome back to Libidia Gillman!

Crypt #46, devoted to Lovecraft's letters was one of the very best tributes to HPL I have ever read and the best argument so far presented for devoting greater attention to the letters.

Mr. Murray's article, "The Man Who Edited Lovecraft" (in #48) filled me with frustration. How interesting and delightful it would be to read Lovecraft's comments and tirades against those who had adulterated his texts. How much may we have learned directly from Lovecraft's own hand about his concern for structural and atmospheric integrity? How explicit would he have been concerning textual variants? Alas, we will probably never know in this case beyond what he had written to other correspondents. This brief article in #48 made me wish again that you would devote more issues to the letters.

Thank you for publishing two perceptive articles devoted to "The Hound." The tale may be overwrought, but succeeds by an audacious piling of one horrific detail upon another. It reads as though Lovecraft, thumb poised not far from his nose, were trying to outdo Poe by ringing the changes on as many Continental horror motifs as one tale could hold without slipping into direct parody. Lovecraft's phraseology, as has been mentioned by others, even echoes Poe's in several places. Mr. Jeffery's analysis [in #48] of the ambiguous interrelationship of the tale's many supernatural elements and Mr. Mariconda's treatment [in #38] of the tale's debt to the French decadent movement help explain why this among the dozens of minor tales haunts the memory after many more polished tales have faded into oblivion. "The Hound" and another oft-abused Lovecraft tale, "The Statement of Randolph Carter" seem to take place in the same horror-locked world of the unconscious as "The Outsider." No amount of reference to the real world can disperse the darkness or terror of a mind trapped forever in its own nightmares.

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NEXT TIME . . .

We honestly thought we had brought you all of Ramsey Campbell's juvenile Cthulhu Mythos fiction in Crypt of Cthulhu #43 (The Tomb Herd). That issue contained all the stories written in the first flush of enthusiasm after Ramsey had read Lovecraft's Cry Horror! While attending the 1986 World Fantasy Convention in Providence, however, we heard Ramsey read some side-splitting sentences from an even earlier tale in which he had mentioned shoggoths. Before Ramsey read Lovecraft? You see, he had stumbled across an anthology containing Robert Bloch's "Notebook Found in a Deserted House," so he discovered, and wrote, Cthulhu Mythos fiction before he read HPL!

You can guess the rest: first we asked permission to publish the shoggoth story, but it turned out to be just one of a whole group of early stories (the others not Mythos, though). Then we managed to wrangle permission to bring you the whole thing. So rejoice, Campbell completists! Our historic fiftieth issue is the very first Ramsey Campbell story collection, hitherto unpublished: Ghostly Tales.

CRYPT OF CTHULHU

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