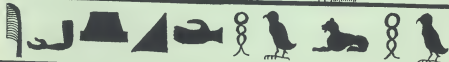


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CRYPT OF CTHULHU

A Pulp Thriller and Theological Journal

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Debatable and Disturbing: EDITORIAL SHARDS

One of the central features of the Cthulhu Mythos, and one of fans' favorite features of it, is the shelf of fictitious grimoires that figure prominently in tale after tale. The notion of a mere book that might contain truths so unsettling as to blast one's sanity is powerfully evocative when well employed. But even when not used to fullest advantage, the forbidden book never fails to engage the interest of the more-or-less intellectual crowd that so loves Lovecraftian fiction. They are lovers, readers, collectors of books, the rarer and more esoteric the better. For them the Necronomicon is the fantasy counterpart to the fabulous and legendary Arkham edition of The Outsider and Others. So we suspect that this issue of Crypt of Cthulhu devoted to the Books of the Mythos will be one of our most appreciated, because of the treatment no less than the theme.

First we present brand-new scriptural texts from the possessed penmen themselves: Frank Belknap Long with a new passage from the Necronomicon, the John Dee translation of which was his own contribution to Mythos lore; Ramsey Campbell with a hitherto-unknown fragment of The Revelations of Glaaki; Brian Lumley offering a prophetic warning from the Cthaat Aquadingen; Gary Myers rendering an enigmatic pericope from The Cryptical Books of Hsan; and Lin Carter unveiling a few pages from the Necronomicon, the Book of Eibon, and the Confessions of the Mad Monk Clithanus! Memorize them carefully before the Inquisition seizes your copy of this magazine!

A special trilogy of articles lay bare the secrets of three separate Necronomicon hoaxes perpetrated in recent years. Two are by the perpetrators themselves: Colin Wilson and L. Sprague deCamp. The third is the work of Robert C. Carey, someone with both proximity to the principals in the case and detective skills rivaling those of Jules de Grandin.

Many of the Mythos texts function primarily as names dropped in the course of a story to generate the proper atmosphere. Yet it is always fun to collate the disparate references and to try to come up with a fuller picture that the name-dropping author may have had in mind. Four articles deal thusly with four of the forbidden books, some more prominent, some less: the Necronomicon, De Vermis Mysteriis, the Eltdown Shards, and the Pnakotic Manuscripts. Will Murray provides a similarly synoptic treatment of the phenomena of "Prehuman Language in Lovecraft."

Robert M. Price, Editor

THE NECRONOMICON

JOHN DEE'S TRANSLATION

(Retranslated into slightly more modern phrase patterns here and there, but without the slightest departure from the original text otherwise.)

Paragraphs Seven and Eight - Page 30, Book Three

It must not be thought that the powers capable of the greatest wickedness appear to us in the form of repellent familiars, and other, closely related demons. They do not. Small, visible demons are merely the effluvia which those vast forms of destructiveness have left in Their wake--skin scrapings and even more tenuous shreds of evil that attach themselves to the living like leeches from some great slain leviathan of the deep that has wreaked havoc on a hundred coastal cities before plunging to its death with a thousand hurled harpoons quivering in its flesh.

For the mightiest powers there can be no death and the hurled harpoons inflict, at most, surface injuries which heal quickly. I have said before and I shall say again until my tardily earned wisdom is accepted by my brethren as fact--in confronting that which has always been and always will be a master of magic can know only self-reproach and despair if he mistakes a temporary victory for one that he can never hope permanently to win.

--Frank Belknap Long

(Who refuses to discuss
how these few lines came
into his possession.)

THE REVELATIONS OF GLAAKI

"Who has heard the songs of the dead? Who has seen the ropes of faces that gather in the sky on that night of the year? Who has shared the dreams of the eye that watches our speck of cosmic dust and is seen by all yet remarked by none? Not the thousand Gothic hacks with their Cerberus novels, that guard nothing but the enemies of mankind; for as these hollow men disseminate their dummy terrors, so They beyond the rim grow unspeakably stronger for our ignorance--so Their grasp roots deeper in our secret souls . . ."

--Ramsey Campbell

CTHAAT AQUADINGEN

FOUND AMONG THE EFFECTS OF

HENRI-LAURENT DE MARIGNY:

. . . It was the chance observation during a recent re-reading of Lovecraft's "Call of Cthulhu," an alleged fiction, that:

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn" contains precisely the same number of words (including the split words, except R'lyeh)--and, indeed, the same number of letters--as the supposed translation:

"In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming," and the subsequent discovery of the key, which prompted me to apply it to a certain paragraph in my photocopy of Titus Crow's Cthaat Aquadingen, one which had for long caused me a degree of cryptographic concern.

My delight was only tempered by the warning inherent in what was revealed; which was this:

And in the Final Days of Man's Dominion, when his Power shall be as the Power of Suns, the Lord of R'lyeh shall seek Him out the Minds of Great men, Leaders of Nations, beguiling them with Lies that they war upon & destroy one another; aye, & the very World with them! And Azathoth shall reign supreme, & Cthulhu safe in the Deeps of R'lyeh, awaiting His time until Men are become Monsters. And when all the World reels in Darkness, then shall Cthulhu rise Him up, & Chaos & Madness hold dominion over all. . . .

--Brian Lumley

THE THIRD CRYPTICAL BOOK OF HSAN

For the Old Ones were born of the primal fire
which later gave birth to the stars, and with that
fire They have burned down the ages.

And because man burns with the same fire,
but dimly through smothering ashes, he is drawn
to the fire that burns brightly in Them, even as the
moth is drawn to the flame.

And as the flame consumes the moth, so the
greater fire consumes the lesser and burns the
brighter thereby.

But the ecstasy the moth knows in the instant
of its immolation, who can tell?

--Gary Myers

THE NECRONOMICON

CONCERNING THEM FROM OUTSIDE

Book II, Chapters VI and a portion of VII

The John Dee Translation
as edited and modernized by

Lin Carter

VI. CONCERNING THEM FROM OUTSIDE

Now as I have said unto thee, the Old Ones bestow great and potent powers upon those of men that please Them; and these dread and awful Entities be neither gods nor demons, but are beyond all limitations of Good or Evil even as They dwell beyond all boundaries of time or space; They are immortal and eternal and undying, and They abide from everlasting to everlasting, for They are not composed of Matter as we know it, and neither are They in Their origins true inhabitants of this Universe at all, but in the Beginning were native to another. There it was that They were brought into being by the Elder Gods to be the servants and the thralls thereof; but the Elder Gods wrought better than They knew, and in the fullness of time did They wax exceeding great in Their Power, and wise and subtle and crafty in Their Thought. And in the time that followed, it came to pass that They rose up in rebellion against Those that had made Them, who were even the Elder Gods, and They fled forth from that region of existence, or dimension of space, or plane of being, wherein had They been created by Their erstwhile Masters; and They came hither and entered

into this Universe, and made of it Their empire and dominion.

Now, few They were in number at the time of Their coming-hence into this Universe; but as They had good cause to fear that They should even be pursued hither by the Elder Gods, They did spawn exceeding vile and potent Beings to swell Their ranks and to strengthen Their might. Such of these, the latter-born, was even Great Cthulhu, Him who was spawned by Yog-Sothoth upon shadowy Vhoorl deep in the twenty-third nebula; and Who in turn, upon remote and ultratelluric Koth, the dim green double sun that gleameth like a daemonic eye in the blacknesses beyond Abbith, mated with Idh-yaa to the Begetting of His Spawn, Ghatanothoa, and Ythogtha, and Zoth-Ommog, and One Other, concerning Whom I do not care to speak. And many another did they beget: and, it is whispered, that the last and latter-born of Them All was even Vulthoom, Who now resideth upon the World of the Twin Moons.

And many there were Who chose to make Their empery upon the several stars and worlds of this Universe, but many Others that came hither and descended upon this Earth,

which some say had once, untold aeons of time before, been even a part of that Place wherein had They formerly dwelt under the dominion of the Elder Gods. And, lo! the Elder Gods waxed exceeding wroth to be thus deserted and deceived by Their Slaves; and They vowed to pursue Their rebellious Thralls into whatsoever region of existence They had fled, and there should They fall upon the Old Ones and seize and bind Them with mighty spells, and cast Them into everlasting imprisonment, Who had durst defy Their Creators. And thus it came to pass that the Elder Gods, abandoning the Universe which They had ruled from everlast-

ing to everlasting, came hither in Their wrath and followed into this Universe Those that had been Their Servants; and They paused upon that sphere They called Glyu-Vho, which is of the stars of space, wherefrom to reconnoitre; and They beheld to Their Rage that the Rebellious Ones were arrayed against Them as if for war; wherefore did They rise up in full wrath, and They chose One of Them to be the leader of Their host; and He bade Them to assume an awful Shape, even the likeness of Towers of Flame, that in such form They should fall upon the Earth to punish Those that had transgressed against Their Creators.

VII. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE OLD ONES

And it came to be known by the Elder Gods that He that had unwisely and rashly counselled His Brethren to stand fast and to oppose with all Their Might the coming-hence of the Elder Gods, was even one Cthulhu. Aye, and it was so, true and veritably: for Great Cthulhu, Who had by this epoch of time firmly established His dominions over all of the seas and oceans of the Earth, and over all that dwelt therein, had urged His Brethren that They flee no further from the wrath of the Elder Gods, but take a stand and match Their Might against Them from Glyu-Vho, for in that conflict mayhap the Old Ones should bear away the triumph. When this was known, Him of the Elder Gods that had the commanding of the Host thereof, and to Whom was assigned the punishing of the Rebels, sware Him a mighty oath that Cthulhu in especial should be whelmed utterly,

and cast down, and chained in the adamantine fetters of the Elder Sign. And whether This One was Lord Kthanid, which name the Scribe rendereth as The Veiled Eminence, or some Other, such as hoary Nodens, the Lord of the Great Abyss, or even Vorvados the Shining Hunter, none there be can say for certain.

And so They descended upon the Earth in all Their Might and Majesty, and They smote down the Old Ones, and brake Their Power, and scattered Them afar, and chained Them fast on distant worlds and stars, or in the black, unwholesome chasms of the Deep; and against these bonds the Old Ones raged in all Their impotence, but could not burst them asunder. Nor did the Veiled Eminence forget His oath to whelm and fetter Cthulhu, for They came together face to face, these two, and They did battle, and it was Lord Kthanid bore away the victory . . .

THE BOOK OF EIBON

THE UNBEGOTTEN SOURCE

First translated by Clark Ashton Smith; new recension by Lin Carter

NOTE: The third part of the Book of Eibon is entitled "Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom," and consists of a treatise of considerable length on theogony (or, perhaps, "demonology" would be the mot juste). It discusses the hidden origins of the Earth, the creation of the first of the Old Ones, the cause of their rebellion against the Elder Gods, the war between the two groups of divinities, the flight into this dimension of space/time by the Old Ones, and so on--a capsule history of the Elder World, no less.

That Clark Ashton Smith had intended to translate this section, in whole or in part, from the XIII Century Norman-French of Gaspard du Nord, seems evident from his inclusion of the title "Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom" among a list of future literary projects. That he did not do so is regrettable, but he did render one passage, consisting of seventy-six words in his slightly abridged version, and incorporated it in his story "Ubbo-Sathla." (The passage which he eliminated, by the way, is marked in that story by ellipses.)

My work in translating Book III of the Eibonic text is, as yet, unfinished. But here is the first chapter. -- Lin Carter

I. The Unbegotten Source

Unthinkably more ancient is this Earth than we dare to dream, and innumerable are the marvels and the mysteries of her shadowy and forgotten prime. Race upon race has

arisen from her teeming fens, or descended upon her from beyond the stars, and each has reigned over the primordial Earth in its turn. But in the flux of unmeasurable ages each has gone down at length into the dust, and strange and terrible are the legends whispered of their doom. In truth, it has been writ that many are the newly-founded cities whose foundations are reared upon the sundered shards of forgotten cities crumbled into dust, and by the world forgot.

Of all Earth-dwellers, none is more ancient than that frightful abomination whose enigma is mercifully hidden from the knowledge of men behind the name of Ubbo-Sathla, as a ghastly visage may hide its lineaments behind a mask. It is said that the Unbegotten One lay wallowing in the bubbling slime of Its lair from the Beginning, as It shall wallow at the End, and that Ubbo-Sathla is destined to be the last of all living things upon this Earth as It was the first; for Ubbo-Sathla is both the source and the end. Before the coming of Tsathoggua or Yog-Sothoth or Cthulhu from the stars, Ubbo-Sathla dwelt in the steaming fens of the new-made Earth: a mass without head or members, spawning the gray formless efts of the prime, and the grisly prototypes of terrene life. And though there be many of Its spawn that leagued with the Begotten of Azathoth in that war the idiot Chaos raised against the Elder Gods, Ubbo-Sathla knoweth naught of contention nor of change, nor even of Time itself, being changeless and eternal. From the very Beginning, Ubbo-

Sathla abides in the teeming slime-pits of gray-litten Y'qaa, ceaselessly casting-forth the mewling prototypes of all earthly life. And all earthly life, it is told, shall go back at last through the great cycle of time to Ubbo-Sathla.

Now, upon remote and terribly-guarded Celaeno lie hidden those glyph-engraved tablets of star-quarried stone which the Azathoth-spawn rashly thieved from the citadel of the Elder Gods, which was the first of their acts of rebellion against Those that had created their progenitor: yet even those immemorial Records contain little concerning the source and creation of Ubbo-Sathla. But as concerns the secret origin of this Earth they preserve a dreadful secret, that untold vingtillions of aeons ago, 'twas Ubbo-Sathla, very twin to Azathoth, and with Its brother Chaos very first of all the Old Ones whom the Gods shaped from nothingness by concentration of Will alone, who wrested this planet from its coign.

It is written that among the Records stolen from the Gods were certain tablets of ultratelluric stone which, even unto this very hour, doth Ubbo-Sathla preserve and guard in the depths of Y'qaa, and for the theft thereof was Ubbo-Sathla bereft of wit and reason, when the Gods rose up in Their wrath. It is said that these tablets are none-other than the Elder Keys, and that they are graven with the secrets of the power of the Gods Themselves, and that by the use merely of a single Key was Ubbo-Sathla able to cause this Earth to fall into our Universe far from that unthinkable alien plane beyond the cosmos of matter and of time, where the Elder Gods reign and rule forever. And the secret of this power had the Unbegotten One imparted to Its brother Chaos, whereby were the

first of the Old Ones able to flee from the wrath of the Gods, and, entering this Universe, traverse its starry abyss so that they might again join forces with Ubbo-Sathla; but the Gods pursued Their rebellious servants and defeated them at length, in that conflict whereof I will hereafter speak. Yet this is the reason why the Old Ones, although scattered afar and prisoned in far places by the Gods, have for ages sought, as they seek to this day, the conquest and dominion of the Earth, for within its depths Ubbo-Sathla guardeth the Elder Keys, whereby even the Gods may be whelmed and trodden down.

Thus it was that even in the dim, forgotten aeon of the Dawn, it is said Ubbo-Sathla writhed in hideous and unceasing fecundity in gray-litten Y'qaa, forever guarding the Elder Keys. And there have been those of humankind who have betimes unwisely and imprudently sought to penetrate into the fastnesses of Its abode, which lies beneath Mount Voormithadreth in the central provinces of Hyperborea, to steal from Ubbo-Sathla even that which It once stole from the Gods.

Of one such, the antehuman sorcerer Haon-Dor, I have aforetime writ; this mage formerly dwelt in dim boreal kingdoms whose very names have been forgot, and rashly did the ill-advised Haon-Dor make his descent into the abyss of Y'qaa, where the mindless Demiurge lay vast and swollen amidst the rolling and miasmatic slime, and from one horrific glimpse of That which he sought, recoiled shuddering. And he abides yet beneath Voormithadreth, as doth Ubbo-Sathla, and shuns the companionship of men and the mockery of the light of day.

But now I would speak of the nine ultratelluric races that have infested this Earth from the prime, and the

first to come voyaging thither were the star-headed crinoid things we call the Polar Ones for that they reared their monolithic cities in regions contiguous to the austral pole.

Translator's Comment:

At first glance, at least, there seem to be certain puzzling contradictions in the text, one of which can easily be resolved. This is, Eibon clearly names Ubbo-Sathla as "the Unbegotten Source," but a ways further on explains that the Elder Gods created the two brothers, Ubbo-Sathla and Azathoth by sheer will-power, concentrated thought-waves, perhaps. But this apparent inconsistency is merely a matter of vocabulary: "begotten" and "created" do not at all have the same meaning. The actual meaning of the word "begotten" is "fathered," and to be created out of nothingness is not the same as being fathered.

A more curious and baffling internal contradiction is that in one place Eibon states that from the beginning (i. e., from the moment of being created), Ubbo-Sathla was a witless and mindless thing, while in another passage he tells us that the Elder Gods destroyed Its intelligence -- the powers of rational thought -- for Its part in the acts of rebellion. This may have been a careless slip by du Nord, or even a scribal error in the Graeco-Bactrian text he was working from; or, just possibly, Eibon was hinting at some enigma concerning Ubbo-Sathla which, for whatever reason, he did not wish to discuss.

Another element in the text which rather baffles me is the precise role played by Ubbo-Sathla in the rebellion. If It "knows naught" of contention, then It obviously played no part in the rebellion. If that is so, then

why were the Elder Keys hidden in the gulf of Y'qaa? Perhaps because they were the most precious of all the thieved Elder Records, and the Azathoth-spawn sought a well-concealed place in which to hide them?

And another question: if Ubbo-Sathla is "bereft of reason and of wit" (that is, the senses), how could the entity have made use of the power of the Keys to remove this planet from the universe of the Gods, or possibly have "imparted" the secret of inter-dimensional travel to Azathoth and the others? Frankly, it makes no sense to me!

Keep in mind that the text of Eibon, originally written in the Tsath-yo language of Hyperborea, went through numerous translations into emerging tongues -- the Kishite Recension, made shortly after the doom of Sarnath, the Punic version, the lost Latin translation by Phillipus Faber, the Graeco-Bactrian, and, finally, du Nord's own Norman-French. As with any ancient text rendered from language into language something gets lost in the translation, or elided, or omitted.

I suspect the text of Eibon as we now have it is to one degree or another corrupt and filled with omissions or scribal errors.

--Lin Carter



CONFESSIONS OF THE MAD MONK CLITHANUS

THE INCANTATION OF THE ELDER SIGN

By August Derleth and Mark Schorer; missing text restored by Lin Carter

NOTE: In their story, "The Horror from the Depths," first published in 1940 under another title, Derleth and Schorer quoted briefly from the Confessions of Clithanus. I have recently found a copy of this obscure book in the library of the Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, and looked up the passage. I discovered that they omitted forty-seven words (probably for story-reasons), and that in three places a word was mistranslated. The opening line, which they omit, reveals, most interestingly, that the entire passage is not only borrowed from the Necronomicon (from which Clithanus frequently quotes), but seems to be nothing less than the ritual incantation by which the powers of the Elder Sign may be evoked.

I here give the relevant passage in full, having corrected the mistranslated words.

--Lin Carter

xxix. The Incantation of the Elder Sign

And as Alhazred has written, the Evil Ones may only be driven back and held down by the power of the blessed stars laid out over the water in the form of one great star, the

five points of which marking the directions of the earth* and the secret place beyond the earth from which the Things of Evil had first come: the holy ones meanwhile whispering the secret words, the words known only to them, translated by them into this language from the ancient gibberings in which the Elder Gods had given them the potent words, which are as follows: Things walking in the darkness, Things not of this earth, Things belonging to the damned hosts of Evil, get you down into the nameless kingdoms under the seas. Get you down and remain, by the power of the five-pointed stars, blessed and sacred, made potent by the power of the Elder Gods who loathe the evil you work in all existence.

O Elder Gods, from your impenetrable fastnesses, look down and confirm, extend your power once more. Go down, you Evil Ones, and remain forever in eternal darkness. Hosts of mad Cthulhu, spawn of unspeakable Hastur, loathsome brood of Yog-Sothoth, get you down into everlasting sleep.

Never again may you rise on the fair earth. Go, in the name of the Elder Gods, you Old Ones, whom once you sought to displace. Go now, and the power of the five-pointed star shall forever hold you below the surface of the earth, and in the hidden and lost sea-kingdoms of the vast unknown!

*The four cardinal directions? --LC

As it was of old, so shall it ever be, for the Elder Gods rule forever, and here we evoke their power against all that is evil.

Translator's Comments:

While I have not yet found this incantation in the Necronomicon, that may be because the last few books into which the Alhazredic text was divided (probably by its Greek translator) consist of spells, formulae, liturgies, ceremonials, recipes, in which I have little or no interest. This ritual will probably be found in that place.

Clithanus himself calls this an "invocation," while it reads more like an exhortation, a prayer, or even an exorcism. Since we know that on many occasions the star-stones from Mnar have been used successfully by men against the Great Old Ones and their minions without the necessity of reading or

chanting this incantation aloud, it occurs to me that what we might actually have here is the spell by which the star-stones are energized--that is, rendered potent, or blessed, or charged with power.

A parenthetical note: glancing through the Confessions, I could not help noticing that the Mad Monk characteristically uses the term "the Evil Ones" when referring to the beings more commonly called "the Old Ones." I wonder if this could perhaps be where Derleth picked up the term, which his later, and wider, reading in the forbidden books caused him to abandon the first usage in favor of the later, more common one?

I'd like to thank a friend of mine, a reclusive scholar who lives in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in a town aptly called Tophet, for his help in translating this rite anew from the rather barbarous Medieval Latin of Clithanus.

--Lin Carter



The Necronomicon

THE ORIGIN OF A SPOOF

By Colin Wilson

Ever since the publication of The Necronomicon in 1978, I have been receiving letters from readers who take it perfectly seriously, and who want further details about its magical procedures. I suppose that is a kind of compliment to its spurious air of authenticity. An even greater compliment was an indignant article by Gerald Suster, himself a serious student of magic, in a London "underground" newspaper, denouncing the book as a cynical piece of commercial opportunism. The fact that he found it necessary to denounce such an obvious spoof indicates that we succeeded beyond my original expectations.

In fact, anyone with the slightest knowledge of Latin will instantly recognise it for a fake--it is subtitled "The book of dead names"--when the word "necronomicon" actually means the book of dead laws.

The editor of Crypt of Cthulhu, Robert Price, has asked me to explain how the book came about, and I do so willingly.

In 1976, I was approached by an old friend from my Soho days, George Hay, who was at one time a leading disciple of L. Ron Hubbard. He had been asked by the publisher Neville Armstrong--who runs Neville Spearman Limited--to edit a spoof volume about the Necronomicon. He asked me if I would be willing to contribute an introduction. My first response was one of suspicion. No writer wants to have his name associated with a bad joke. So I asked to see the material he had collected.

It was awful. The writers all

seemed to have the idea that all they had to do was to imitate the basic Lovecraft formula. And this formula, as we all know, is deceptively straightforward. The writer explains that he is cringing in a garret in Arkham--or Innsmouth--committing his awful story to paper by the light of a guttering candle. Six months ago, in the library of Miskatonic University, he came across an ancient manuscript written in mediæval German. . . . He ignored the advice of the dodderly old librarian, and proceeded to practise its magic spells in the hills behind Arkham. Even the violent death of the old librarian failed to deflect him from his foolishness. And now, too late, he realises that he has unleashed the Thing on the inhabitants of Massachusetts. . . . Even as he writes, he can hear an ominous creaking on the stairs, as if an oversized elephant is trying to tiptoe on its hind feet. . . . But even as the door creaks open, he continues to write: "I can hear its hoarse breathing, and smell its loathsome graveyard stench. . . . Aaaarg! . . ."

One of the chief contributors was a brilliant young computer expert, David Langford, who worked at an atomic energy establishment (and who has since written some excellent science fiction). He had the amusing idea of producing a lengthy computer analysis that was supposed to prove the real existence of the Necronomicon. And, in the usual way, the experts who worked on it were found slumped over their computers, their heads crushed to a

horrible pulp, while strange reptilian footprints walked across the room, and vanished out of the open window. Most of the other stories followed roughly the same line.

Now I had myself been responsible for a certain amount of Lovecraftian fiction--I will not go so far as to call it parody--and could see instantly what was wrong. Lovecraft himself enjoyed playing the scholarly game, dragging in his references to the mad Arab Abdul El Hazzred or the insane German scholar Von Junzt. In my few ventures into the genre (The Mind Parasites, The Philosopher's Stone, "The Return of the Lloigor"), I had attempted to go one stage further, and make the various references sound still more authentic, dragging in chunks of archaeology, anthropology, and demonological magical lore. It is a very easy game to play if you happen to have a turn in that direction.

So obviously, the first thing to do was to find someone who really knew something about magic, and persuade him to concoct a book that could have been a perfectly genuine magical manuscript. I turned to my friend Robert Turner, a one-time member of a Gerald Gardner witchcraft coven and the head of a contemporary magical order.

Before I go any further, let me explain that, unlike Lovecraft, I am by no means a sceptic about "the supernatural." I was always convinced, for example, that poltergeist phenomena really occur, although I was inclined to believe that these are due to some unknown power of the unconscious mind. When, in the mid-1960s, I was commissioned by Random House to write a book about "the occult," I decided to accept because the idea sounded amusing, and because I had always been interested in the lunatic fringe of cosmology--from Hoerbiger and Velikovsky to

Madame Blavatsky and Rudolf Steiner. But as I wrote The Occult, it slowly became clear to me that traditions about magic and "the spirit world" have an extraordinary similarity in all ages and all continents. It was astonishing to discover, for example, that Eskimo shamans held almost precisely the same belief as the shamans of Siberia, those of Northern Japan, and of African witch doctors and Red Indian medicine men. Even so, The Occult was basically "sceptical" in outlook--for example, I took it for granted that the kind of powers possessed by witches are basically nonharmful, and that the mediaeval witch persecutions were based upon the hysteria of the inquisitors. It was some years later that it struck me that I had accepted without question certain accounts of the magical power of African witch doctors (for example, to cause rain), yet had rejected completely the notion that the North Berwick witches could have caused the storm which almost drowned James VI of Scotland--and I held to this belief in spite of the fact that the witches had confessed to the attempt to sink the ship without being tortured.

Later still, when writing a history of poltergeist phenomena, I slowly came to accept the view of Guy Playfair, that poltergeists are, in fact, "spirits" and not some unconscious power of the human mind--even though, by that time, I had discovered in the new science of split-brain physiology a possible explanation of the origin of the forces that can cause objects to fly around the room without anyone touching them.

Now the problem of concocting a spoof Necronomicon was simply that Lovecraft himself remained a sceptic to the end of his life. If he had been a genuine student of magic--or even of spiritualism--it might have

been possible to concoct a story about a genuine magical work which he used as the basis of his fiction. The real problem, therefore, was to explain how a man who was known to be a sceptic could possibly have made use of a genuine magical grimoire. Still, the problem presented no real difficulty to the author of a dozen or so novels--since a novelist is, by profession, an ingenious liar. The answer, I decided, lay in Lovecraft's father, Winfield Lovecraft, who died of syphilis when Howard was a child, and about whom very little is known. I claimed to have come upon evidence that Winfield Lovecraft was a Freemason--which, in America towards the end of the 19th century, was commonplace enough. But I went on to claim that Winfield Lovecraft had drifted into Egyptian Freemasonry, founded by the "magician" Cagliostro and that the Egyptian Freemasons studied various ancient volumes on transcendental magic, such as the Key of Solomon and the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage. Next, I invented a German scholar named Stanislaus Hinterstoisser, the founder of the Salzburg Institute for the Study of Magic and Occult Phenomena. It was Hinterstoisser who had insisted that The Necronomicon was a real book and that it had been bequeathed by Cagliostro to his followers.

Now it was a fairly straightforward matter of persuading some scholar to impersonate Hinterstoisser, and to write me a letter explaining how he had succeeded in tracking down the original Necronomicon which was translated in 1571 by Dr. John Dee, the English magician. It required a scholar who spoke fluent German, and I approached my friend Ellic Howe, the author of a classic study of the Order of the Golden Dawn. But Ellic felt that he had not

enough material to go on. I turned to another friend, Dominic Purcell, a professor of economics at the University of Vienna. Dominic wrote the "Hinterstoisser letter." From then on, it was plain sailing. The Necronomicon was actually identified as a magical compilation by a number of Arabs, including the celebrated alchemist Alkindi. The manuscript was tracked down in the British Museum, and the magical code was solved with the aid of a computer. (this is where David Langford came in--and it was necessary for him to scrap his original essay and write a new one based on material provided by Robert Turner). My friend L. Sprague deCamp--the author of the standard biography of Lovecraft--was persuaded to write a short essay about the young Lovecraft--making no mention of the Hinterstoisser theory, but giving the volume that additional touch of authenticity. A couple of the original essays on Lovecraft were thrown in for good measure, and the thing was finally completed.

I should mention that Gerald Susser's accusations about commercial opportunism were wide of the mark --I doubt whether the book has made most of its contributors more than about £100 each. But it gave its compilers a great deal of harmless pleasure. And I am fairly sure that Lovecraft would have accepted it as a compliment.

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Preface to The Necronomicon

By L. Sprague deCamp

(Fourteen years ago, Alan Nourse and I were in Iraq on our way to India. We spent three days in Baghdad, seeing the city and visiting the ruins of Babylon and the Parthian palace at Ctesiphon.

Six years later, when George Scithers published Al Azif (The Necronomicon) by "Abdul Alhazred," I concocted a fanciful account of my doings in Baghdad on January 2, 1967. The Necronomicon was a sinister unwritten volume of magical spells invented by H. P. Lovecraft for his fantasy stories in Weird Tales. The work, he said, was written in the eighth century by a mad Arabian poet, who suffered the spectacular fate of being devoured by an invisible entity before terrified witnesses.

Lovecraft's scholarly use of this fictitious volume convinced many that the book existed, and innumerable people have plagued librarians and booksellers for copies. Having decided that, if the Necronomicon did not exist, it should, George Scithers hired an artist to decorate blank pages with a series of squiggles vaguely resembling Arabic and Syriac writing.

I composed the preface, telling how the Iraqis sold me the manuscript after three of their savants had tried to translate it and disappeared under strange and sinister circumstances. George's edition, comprising 348 copies, promptly sold out.

I hope you get a chuckle out of this introduction--but I also trust that you will not take it seriously. I may wish to go back to Iraq some day, and I do not want this little hoax to complicate my visit.)

Duria* is a village in northern Iraq, on the borders of the Kurdish-speaking part of the country. Otherwise much like hundreds of other Iraqi villages, made of mud huts of the same sad beige or dun color, it is noteworthy in being the last place to speak Duriac. This is the only living tongue descended from ancient

Akkadian or Assyro-Babylonian. The traditional written form of the language, of which this book provides an example, was developed in the fourth century of the Christian Era by Assyrian Christian priests and missionaries.

As with other Semitic tongues, this is a very compact script, ignoring unstressed vowels and combining two or three characters into one. This fact makes translation difficult.

*Also spelled Douria, Douriyya, &c.

Like the related Hebrew, Arabic, and Syrian languages, Duriac is written from right to left.

When, in 1967, Alan Nourse and I were on our way to India (my own purpose being to gather material for my book Great Cities of the Ancient World) we tarried several days in Baghdad to visit the ruins of Babylon and Ctesiphon. While shopping for antiques to take home, I was approached by a member of the Iraqi Directorate General of Antiquities, with whom I had had correspondence about photographs of archaeological sites. This man said he had a manuscript to sell. This was a strange proposal from such a source, since the Iraqi government tries by severe penalties to suppress unauthorized export of archaeological materials, and most employees of this department are conscientious in the discharge of their duties.

I inquired into this matter but met only polite evasion. Here, my contact said, was an interesting curiosum for which the department had no use; did I want it or not? Since the price seemed reasonable and the codex, if it proved worthless, would at least make an amusing coffeetable ornament, I bought it, packed it, and thought no more about it until I passed through Beirut on my way home.

I have several friends in Beirut. One of these is a successful tourist guide whose name, for obvious reasons, I prefer not to give. When this man learned that I was in Lebanon, he looked me up and spent an evening with me. My friend, I may say, takes a more objective, commonsensical view of the Israeli-Arab conflict than is general in the Arab countries. This time, he felt that his old friendship with me outweighed any duty he might have felt towards the Arab cause.

By virtue of his many connections

throughout the Islamic world, my friend was a mine of gossip. On this occasion, he told me what he had heard about my codex.

The sale, it transpired, had been authorized on a high level of the Directorate General. Written on parchment in the little-known Duriac script, this manuscript had been unearthed by a clandestine digger in the tombs of Duria but had by devious routes come into the hands of the Directorate General of Antiquities.* One of Iraq's foremost archaeologists, the internationally respected Ja'afar Babili, was assigned the task of translating the book into modern Arabic. This official had scarcely begun when he jubilantly announced that it was a complete--or nearly complete--copy of Alhazred's celebrated Necronomicon, or Kitab Al-Azif to give it its original title.* The original Arabic version has not been seen for many centuries, albeit rumors of its existence continue to circulate in esoteric circles.**

From study of the script, Babili concluded that this translation antedates A. D. 760. The traditional date

*The name "Abdul Alhazred" is a corruption of a lost original, which passed through several languages before it reached its present form. Philetas spelled it *Αμββυλ Αλχαζρηνδ* . . . Its original form may have been Abdallah Zahr-ad-Din, or Servant-of-God Flower-of-the-Faith.

**For existing editions of the Necronomicon, see H. P. Lovecraft: "History and Chronology of the Necronomicon," Oakman: Rebel Press, 1936; in Beyond the Wall of Sleep, Sauk City: Arkham House, 1943; and in Mark Owings: The Necronomicon: A Study, Baltimore: Mirage Press, 1967.

of the composition of the original is A. D. 738, which provides a terminus a quo. Babili also pointed out that, whereas the script is skillfully executed throughout most of the work, its quality markedly deteriorates on the last eight pages, as if the scribe were working in haste or under severe pressure. It has not yet been established whether the Duria version includes all of the original Arabic text, or whether, instead, the scribe condensed, abridged, or abstracted the concluding portions of the Arabic text.

Babili went on with his translation until, a few weeks later, he disappeared. No trace of him was ever found; neither was any plausible reason for his vanishment ever adduced. He was a sober, hard-working, conscientious official and a devoted family man; nonetheless, he was gone.

Babili's subordinate, Ahmad ibn-Yahya, was provisionally promoted to his chief's place. He, too, proceeded with the translation of the Necronomicon. Ibn-Yahya was a bachelor of more free-living habits than his predecessor; still, nobody had ever accused him of lack of devotion to his profession. After two weeks, ibn-Yahya's landlady reported that she had heard screams from the modest apartment that he occupied on the Musa al-Kadhim. Entering the apartment with her pass key, she found the rooms empty. No more was heard from Ahmad ibn-Yahya.

The next Iraqi scholar to undertake the translation was Prof. Yuni Abdalmajid of the University of Baghdad. He began the task when other members of the Directorate General of Antiquities hesitated to continue the work of their vanished predecessors. Professor Abdalmajid was considered a little eccentric by his colleagues, who nevertheless acknowledged his brilliance. He had

broken the secret of the pre-Sumerian Rawson tablets from Ur and thus cast light on the dark places of pre-Sumerian Mesopotamian history.

Professor Abdalmajid had been at work for three days when he, too, disappeared. He lived alone in a small house on the outskirts of Baghdad, in the Kadhmiyya District. Hence his absence was not noted for several days. When, however, he failed to appear for several of his classes, the police were called in. In Abdalmajid's study were found spatters of blood on floor, walls, and ceiling, but of the missing professor no other trace was found.

Although there is doubtless a rational explanation for these disappearances, they nevertheless display a disturbing similarity to the legendary fate of Alhazred himself. This eccentric literary man is reported to have been devoured alive by an invisible monster before scores of terrified witnesses.

With three disappearances in a row, the Directorate General took thought before entrusting the manuscript to anyone else. Despite its revenues from petroleum, Iraq is far from being an advanced country and could not afford such a drain upon its limited scholarly personnel. At this time, the Directorate was under the domination of Dr. Mahmoud ash-Shammari, a devoted--not to say violent--nationalist. Tension was rising between the Arab states and Israel.

As a result of what Arabs deemed one-sided support of Israel, the United States was unpopular in Iraqi political circles, and Doctor ash-Shammari was one of the most extreme anti-Americans. His plan was to smuggle the manuscript into American hands. Then, if the coming Six-Day War--which he foresaw--took the course that in fact it did,

the manuscript should be left in America, to wreak its woe upon American scholars. Doctor ash-Shammari considered any harm done to individual Americans as but a just requital for what he viewed as America's crimes against the Arabs. If the American government improbably changed its policies to favor the Arabs, the Iraqis could pass a word of warning to their American colleagues and thus save them from the fate of Doctors Babili, ibn-Yahya, and Abdalmajid.

Thus I learned of the true nature of my purchase. My friend advised me to destroy the book, but I scoffed at his fears. After all, I have been known for decades as an uncompromising rationalist and materialist, with no belief whatever in gods, ghosts, demons, or other spooks. I was familiar with the allusions to the Necronomicon in the stories of H. P. Lovecraft but was not prepared to admit the reality of his Ancient Ones or other supernatural entities. In fact, I long disbelieved in the existence, even, of Alhazred and his portentous Necronomicon.

Still, I left Beirut with the sensation of traveling with a ticking package in my gear. Back home, I have pondered what to do with my sinister little codex. I could not translate it myself, for I am no learned Semiticist; it is all I can do to manage a few sentences of tourist's Arabic. I finally decided to let my colleagues publish the facsimile of the original manuscript, which you have in your hands. Then, if somebody wishes to dare the fate of Doctors Babili, ibn-Yahya, and Abdalmajid, he has been warned.

My only further suggestion is this. While the disappearance of the Iraqi savants is probably a matter of coincidence, with prosaic, mundane explanations, a rational man must be

prepared to draw logical inferences from the evidence, even though they contradict his long-held beliefs. Let us assume that this book is in truth the Necronomicon and that it is indeed possible, by reciting the spells herein, to invoke entities from Outside. On this assumption, a possible answer to the disappearances of the Iraqi scholars is that, in making their translations, they unconsciously subvocalized the passages as they wrote them. Hence the spells took effect and the spooks appeared, as if they had been purposefully invoked. But, since these scholars lacked the arcane knowledge required to keep these beings under control, the entities destroyed the unwitting sorcerers.

So if any reader be so rash as to undertake the translation anew, let me urge that he have a care not to move his lips or mutter as he does so. We have all, I am sure, been annoyed in libraries by people who mumble as they read; but never before has this petty offense been punished by the fates that befell Doctors Babili, ibn-Yahya, and Abdalmajid.

L. Sprague deCamp
S. S. France, on the high seas
March 11, 1973

This article first appeared in its present form, with the parenthetical introduction, in 1981. It appears here by permission of the author.

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The Case of Simon's Necronomicon

By Robert C. Carey

In considering the hideous and abhorred Necronomicon three unfortunate possibilities present themselves: (1) H. P. Lovecraft actually stumbled across some crumbling tome of elder lore and incorporated it into his work. Frankly, I doubt very much that anyone can prove that one, although he did undertake some reading in magic, and knew enough to create an air of unspeakable authenticity. (2) H. P. Lovecraft and his circle of friends¹ made it all up; it is total fiction; it never existed. No doubt most sane folks would be happy to leave it at that; yet there always seems to be an inherent contradiction in Lovecraft's life between his rational mind and the truth of his dreams as expressed in his stories. Besides, I seem to have the damned book right here on my shelf, so it must be real, hey? Which leads us to: (3) Certain modern occultists, most notably Kenneth Grant,² have suggested that the Necronomicon exists not in the material world but on the Astral Plane (which may or may not be Jung's collective unconscious), and that certain gifted magicians and artists gain access to it through dreams and carry parts of it over into the physical realm: inner becoming outer reality. Perhaps as a result of this, people who read Lovecraft and go looking for the Necronomicon can find books of various editions and forms bearing that title.³ Most of these attempts can be dismissed fairly lightly.

We will pass quickly over the

problem of the 1973 Owlswick Press edition⁴; it is an Arabic script of some kind, is allegedly only random type, is apparently a few pages repeated frequently, and so on. Nice binding, though.

The Necronomicon of the Swiss artist H. R. Giger⁵ captures certain elements of primal horror. And while it consists primarily of air-brushed paintings and not worm-eaten prose, the atmosphere is there.⁶

I really enjoy the Hay/Wilson/Turner / Langford / Hinterstoisser / DeCamp / Frayling / Carter / Stamp version; all of the essays are great.⁷ The grimoire itself, however, is too much like extracts from The Lurker At The Threshold for my tastes; while I read and enjoy the Derlethian heresies⁸ as indiscriminately as the rest of the Mythos, I am always aware that he is not quite the "real thing." No Coke, Pepsi.

This brings us up to the subject of this article, the one we all know and love, the Necronomicon⁹ "Edited with an Introduction" by Simon. No doubt you have seen it on the best-selling paperback rack of your friendly neighborhood bookstore, and one must admit that as purported Necronomicons go this is the best attempt. Of course it claims to be authentic, as well.

As it happens, I worked at the Warlock Shop in Brooklyn Heights (two blocks from where Lovecraft lived) some years ago, at the time when its owner Herman Slater was working with Simon to get the Book

published. I can therefore testify that yes, Virginia, there is a Simon; he is a monk in the Eastern Orthodox Church and extremely well-read in the field of magick. If the Book actually needed an author, he is well suited.

It is claimed in various places that an actual ancient manuscript was for a time in Simon's possession, acquired from two monks or a wandering bishop or something, written in Greek or maybe Sumerian or something, and translated by various people (now messily deceased, no doubt) under Simon's direction and now unfortunately unavailable for study. This may or may not strain your credulity; I must say that I never got to see the sucker, although I did hear about various forms of chaos disrupting their efforts from time to time;¹⁰ demonic interference, no doubt.

Looking at the text itself, we begin with the effective and intelligent introduction by Simon, which lays out a pattern of connections between the fiction of Lovecraft, the magick of Crowley, and their mutual grounding in the mythology of ancient Sumeria and modern occultism. Indeed, these legends of the Sumerians seem to contain certain startling and sinister parallels of language and meaning with the Cthulhu Mythos. There are accounts of the battles of demi-gods with darkly divine or demonic entities, exorcisms of monsters and titans, the struggle between chaos and order, light and darkness. Can these be the archetypes that no one likes to talk about? Casting a skeptical eye on the grimoire itself, one suspects that Lovecraftian and Sumerian themes have been interwoven by a reasonably sophisticated hand at a fairly recent date.

Much of the material is simply lifted whole from Sumerian sources

like the Enuma Elish (or Seven Babylonian Tablets of Creation), such as the "MAKLU" and "MAGAN Texts"; the first is a collection of exorcisms; the second contains part of the creation story mingled with the Descent of the Goddess Ishtar to the Nether World. The chapters "Of The Zonci and Their Attributes," "The Book of Entrance, and Of the Walking," and "The Incantations of The Gates" describe a fairly straightforward system of planetary magic based on entering the Gates of the sun, moon, and the five traditional planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) under their Babylonian god-forms. In classical western magic there are many such forms, mostly based on medieval astrology and alchemy or on the spheres of the Qabalistic Tree of Life, rather than on the seven-tiered ziggurat.

Other parts contain a stronger mixture of Lovecraftian elements with ancient language and myth. "The Conjunction of the Fire God," and "The Conjunction of the Watcher," "The Book of Calling" and "The Book of Fifty Names," and the "URILIA Text" (R'lyeh Text?) merge the twin strands fairly smoothly; while the two parts of "The Testimony of the Mad Arab" are, as might be expected, almost wholly Cthulhoid.

What is happening here is the use of the Sumerian language for goetic purposes, not unlike the "barbarous names of invocation" howled by sorcerers of other traditions as they seek their altered states of consciousness.¹¹ The texts and gods and forces of ancient Babylon, scattered and forgotten as they were, have been unified into a coherent and self-contained magical system, in much the same way as other contemporary witches and magicians rediscover and synthesize. Such people are more concerned with results

than with cultural or ideological purity. "Success is your proof."¹²

The "Fifty Names"¹³ raise one of the more interesting questions here; although they may indeed be ancient titles of the god Marduk, where did all the sigils, seals, and diagrams of the gates scattered throughout the Book come from? They do resemble certain Arabic and Tantric figures in some ways,¹⁴ in that they tend to be square rather than circular in form, but they have little in common with similar Western forms in sources like the Greater & Lesser Keys of Solomon and the Almadel.¹⁵ Parallels have also been noticed with the ve-ves of voodoo,¹⁶ another system that still deals with the dark side (instead of desperately trying to ignore it as most organized religions do). Some scholars have attempted to trace voodoo back through Africa to its Egyptian, and thus eventually Sumerian, roots. In any case, if there is indeed an actual antique manuscript lurking in the woodpile here, these diagrams and figures may spring from it. Another possibility is that they may be the work of L. K. Barnes, who is acknowledged in the book's dedication and elsewhere described¹³ as an artist of Lovecraftian orientation. This is pure guesswork, however. Such things tend to emerge from veils of mystery.

At any rate, the question of whether we are dealing here with a work of fiction, an artful mingling of fact and fabrication, or the real thing indeed is completely irrelevant to most of the people who buy this book. Many have read nothing at all by Lovecraft; they enter this system with utter sincerity and practice it with unabashed dedication. Simon has received many letters and testimonials from completely satisfied customers, and he has been kind enough to provide us

with a few terrifying statistics.

He informs me that since 1977 there have been three editions of the deluxe hardcover version (about ten thousand copies in all) and five editions of the Avon paperback (totaling about seventy-eight thousand), for a grand total of eighty-eight thousand Necronomicons in print--a chilling thought, since Lovecraft himself only allowed for about seven worldwide.¹⁷ It continues to sell steadily, and there have been full-page advertisements in national magazines like Omni and Heavy Metal. Analyzing his order list for the first few years, Simon estimates that slightly over half of the buyers are male, and that some 20-30% of the mail-orders come from various branches of the military (do you find that as sinister as I do?). Simon also lectures frequently on the subject at Manhattan's The Magickal Child (formerly the Warlock Shop). He has appeared frequently on radio and television and will be running a weekend seminar in June. He says he does not get an incredible amount of crank mail under the circumstances.

I suppose from this that we may conclude that even if the Necronomicon did not exist it would be necessary to invent it; and that a shrouded reputation can turn into a concrete reality the moment your back is turned; and if enough people believe in something it must be true. Wizards are out there performing these rites, so perhaps we can't really call H. P. Lovecraft "fiction" anymore (an unsettling thought). "Reality" is a lot like silly putty, and plenty of active cults have had stranger beginnings than this one. Pleasant dreams, kids.

FOOTNOTES

¹See Lin Carter's "H. P. Love-

craft; The Books" in The Shattered Room & Other Pieces by H. P. Lovecraft & Divers Hands, Arkham House, 1959.

²All of Kenneth Grant's books contain some discussion of HPL. See the Typhonian Trilogy, Nightside of Eden, and Outside the Circles of Time, published by Frederick Muller Limited, London.

³Consider the alternate worlds theory in L. Sprague deCamp and Fletcher Pratt's The Incomplete Enchanter, various editions.

⁴AL AZIF (The Necronomicon) by Abdul Alhazred, Owlswick Press, 1973.

⁵H. R. Giger's Necronomicon, Sphnix Verlag, Basel, 1977.

⁶See also "Excerpts from the Necronomicon" by Philippe Druillet, in the special H. P. Lovecraft issue of Heavy Metal, October 1979.

⁷The Necronomicon, or The Book of Dead Names; Neville Spearman Ltd., 1978.

⁸I refer, of course, to the obsessive duality between the Elder Gods and the Great Old Ones (or, as some might have it, the E. G. vs. the G. O. O. s). I find true Lovecraft more existential myself.

⁹Necronomicon edited by Simon; hardcover, 1977, Schlangekraft, Inc./ Barnes Graphics, Inc.; paperback editions 1980 on from Avon.

¹⁰Consider the many accidents and troubles that S. L. MacGregor Mathers experienced in the translation of The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage, Dover, 1975; first edition 1900. These are discussed in various accounts of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn by Francis King, Ellic Howe, and Ithell Colquhoun.

¹¹See Liber Samekh Theurgia Goetia Summa (Congressus cum Daemone) in the appendix of Magick in Theory & Practice by Aleister

Crowley, various editions.

¹²See Liber AL vel Legis (The Book of the Law), also Crowley.

¹³Simon has also published a Report on the Necronomicon, 1981, from Schlangekraft Inc./ Barnes Graphics Inc.; this contains new introductory material, technical advice and feedback on the use of the Fifty Names and their seals.

¹⁴Oriental Magic by Idries Shah, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1973.

¹⁵Secret Lore of Magic by Idries Shah, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1965.

¹⁶Ve-Ves and Secrets of Voodoo by Milo Rigaud.

¹⁷The History and Chronology of the Necronomicon, H. P. Lovecraft; various editions.



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Lovecraft's Necronomicon : An Introduction

By Robert M. Price

There is no more famous or important book in the Cthulhu Mythos than the Necronomicon of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred. It is well-known, yet there are several interesting facts about it that escape most people's notice. As our title indicates, we will limit our exposition to deal only with the Necronomicon as H. P. Lovecraft himself conceived and developed it, leaving aside the elaborations of his successors and imitators.

The Mad Author of the Necronomicon

First we must ask after the origin of the fabled book. Appropriately, it came to Lovecraft in a dream: "The name Necronomicon (nekros, corpse; nomos, law; eikōn, image = An Image [or Picture] of the Law of the Dead) occurred to me in the course of a dream, although the etymology is perfectly sound" (SL V, p. 418, 1937). No it isn't. S. T. Joshi knows his Greek better than Lovecraft did, and on analogy with Manilius' Astronomicon, with which HPL was familiar, Joshi shows that Necronomicon would actually have to mean simply "Concerning the Dead."

Lovecraft went on to write a bibliographical history of the volume thus created. Basically it runs thus:

1. Al Azif written circa A. D. 730 at Damascus by Abdul Alhazred.
2. Translated into Greek as Nec-

ronomicon, A. D. 950 by Theodoros Philetas.

3. Burnt by Patriarch Michael A. D. 1050 (i. e., Greek text) . . . (Arabic text now lost).
4. Olaus translates Greek to Latin, A. D. 1228.
5. Latin and Greek editions suppressed by Gregory IX, A. D. 1232.
6. Black letter edition. Germany -- 1400?
7. Greek text printed in Italy-- 1500-1550.
8. Spanish translation of Latin text-- 1600? (Beyond the Wall of Sleep, p. xxix).

Lovecraft later "corrected" two of these dates, giving 1567 as the date of the Italian printing, 1623 for the Spanish edition (letter to James Blish and William Miller, Jr., May 13, 1936). Another date that stood in obvious need of correction was that given for Olaus Wormius' Latin version, since Olaus actually lived three centuries later!

The verisimilitude created by such painstaking detail (when correct!) together with the various hints about the book's "abhorrent," "objectionable," and "mad" character, naturally makes the reader curious, eager to gain a glimpse of the hellish tome. But as is well-known, mere glimpses are all the Old Gent ever saw fit to provide. In a letter to James Blish and William Miller, Jr., Lovecraft disavowed the task of writing the infernal volume: "As for bringing the Necronomicon into ob-

jective existence--I wish indeed that I had the time and imagination to assist in such a project . . . but I'm afraid its a rather large order--especially since the dreaded volume is supposed to run to something like a thousand pages! I have 'quoted' from pages as high as 770 or thereabouts. Moreover, one can never produce anything even a tenth as terrible and impressive as one can awesomely hint about. If anyone were to try to write the Necronomicon, it would disappoint all those who have shuddered at cryptic references to it. "It would, thus, have been too much even for Lovecraft to write a text that would live up to all the mind-blasting P/R he had given the Necronomicon. Yet HPL himself had already seen the solution to this problem--simply produce an "expurgated" version that would still leave a good bit to the imagination. "As for writing the Necronomicon . . . it would be quite a job in view of the very diverse passages and intimations which I have in the course of time attributed to it! I might, though, issue an abridged Necronomicon--containing such parts as are considered at least reasonably safe for the perusal of mankind!" (to Robert E. Howard, May 7, 1932, SL IV, pp. 39-40). Or as Lovecraft put it in the letter to Blish and Miller, "the less terrible chapters, which ordinary human beings may read without danger of laying themselves to seige by the Shapes from the Abyss of Azathoth."

That Lovecraft realized how well this gimmick could work is evident from a playful statement to Clark Ashton Smith (November 18, 1930): "Abdul mentioned your ghouls, & told of other adventures of his [in Irem the City of Pillars]. But some timid reader has torn out the pages where the Episode of the Vault under the

Mosque comes to a climax--the deletion being curiously uniform in the copies at Harvard & at Miskatonic University." (SL III, pp. 218-219).

Also compare his words to Duane Rimel (February 14, 1934): "As for writing out the hellish and forbidden Necronomicon--that would be quite an order, though I might manage to produce an isolated chapter now and then" (SL IV, p. 388). This is about all he did--even less. All we have are the "unexplainable couplet" in "The Call of Cthulhu," the long passage in "The Dunwich Horror," the shorter one in "The Festival," and the redaction of E. Hoffmann Price's original in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key."

Incidentally, W. Paul Cook shares a tantalizing recollection of one more passage from the Necronomicon, now lost. One night, sitting in a cemetery with Cook and Donald Wandrei, "Howard gave us an impromptu extract from the shuddery 'Necronomicon' of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred which was quite equal to any of his published quotations from that source." ("An Appreciation of H. P. Lovecraft," Beyond the Wall of Sleep, p. 436.) Oh to have been there!

Let's face it: from our standpoint this failure to provide even a bowdlerized version is really unforgivable. We could well have traded a few reams of his letters for even an abridged Necronomicon from his pen. But alas, now the job is left to other hands.

Speaking with Many Voices

The real problem in writing the Necronomicon would have been the second one Lovecraft mentioned, namely trying to come up with one book that could embrace the many contradictory allusions made to it in Lovecraft's stories. For the book

is evoked in many different ways, as a sort of all-purpose source for eerie atmosphere. The protean book is sometimes an occult bible, sometimes a demonology like the Malleus Maleficarum, sometimes a grimore, sometimes a book of curiosities. The only consistency is that it is always a voice of nightmare reminding the characters and readers alike that ancient myths are about to explode into daylight reality.

The Necronomicon is said on occasion to contain prescriptions for religious rites. Keziah Mason "intoned a croaking ritual" from the book in "The Dreams in the Witch House." Randolph Carter makes "obeisances" the text requires before 'Umr-At-Tawil in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key." In "The Festival," the slugs bow piously when the book is held aloft by their covenant leader. The Outer Ones copy its ritual "hieroglyphs" in "The Whisperer in Darkness."

In a letter to James F. Morton (March 1937), Lovecraft notes that the Necronomicon contains "incantations" (SL V, p. 428). One of these, addressed to Yog-Sothoth, runs in part: "N'gai, n'gha'ghaa, bugg-shog-gog, y'hah; Yog-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth. . . ." ("The Dunwich Horror," p. 179). Similar magical recipes are mentioned in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward where we find that the "VII Booke" of the Necronomicon gives instructions for how to raise the dead from their "essential salts" (p. 143), whence, presumably, the title "The Image of the Laws of the Dead." Similarly, Ephraim Waite of Innsmouth "found. . . in the Necronomicon . . . the formula" for mind-transference ("The Thing on the Doorstep," p. 293).

Alhazred abruptly changes his tune in other references. Suddenly sorcery is shocking and hateful to

him, and he writes solely to warn readers away from it. This, surely, is the sense of the passage quoted in "The Festival," where Alhazred warns readers how to dispose of the bodies of wizards so they will not return as the Kingsport folk themselves have done! Yet remember that in the same story, the undead Kingsporters revere the book as scripture! So even within one story the conception of the Necronomicon changes. The same inconsistency is evident in Alhazred's references to Yog-Sothoth. Is he for him or against him? The Alhazred quoted in "The Dunwich Horror" and described in the "History of the Necronomicon" worships Yog-Sothoth and yearns for his return to the earth, whereas according to a letter to Clark Ashton Smith (December 25, 1930), "Alhazred mentions [Yog-Soth-oth] with . . . manifest reluctance in the Necronomicon" (SL III, p. 242). In "The Horror in the Museum" there are even protective sigils to imprison creatures like Rhan-Tegoth, reminiscent of Derleth's five-pointed star-stones. According to the passage in "The Festival," Alhazred is even so conventionally orthodox that he believes, not in the Old Ones, but in the "devil," like a good Muslim should.

A related issue is that of Alhazred's equivocal mode of expression. We are constantly told that he "hints" at this or that. We find at least four different rationales for this. First, in some references Alhazred knows a truth so terrible he will only reveal part of it, fearing for his readers' sanity. In "The Whisperer in Darkness" we read of "the monstrous nuclear chaos beyond angled space which the Necronomicon had mercifully cloaked under the name of Azathoth" (p. 262). Similarly Walter Gilman "had seen the name 'Azathoth'"

in the Necronomicon, and knew it stood for a primal evil too horrible for description" ("The Dreams in the Witch House," p. 258). Again, in "Whisperer" we hear of "the fearful myths antedating the coming of man to the earth--the Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu cycles--which are hinted at in the Necronomicon" (p. 223). Such consideration for his readers' mental health has even led the old Arab to censor his own text! In a letter to Smith (December 3, 1929), Lovecraft notes that Alhazred "left something unmentioned & signified by a row of stars in the surviving codex of his accursed & forbidden Necronomicon." (HPL thinks it had something to do with the desertion of Comriom) (SL III, p. 87).

But within one of these same tales, the reason for Alhazred's reticence changes (again, with the atmospheric demand of the moment), so that his sketchiness stems from ignorance. In "Whisperer" it now seems that "the crazed author of the Necronomicon had only guessed in the vaguest way [at the] worlds of elder, outer entity" such as Yuggoth (p. 227).

That Alhazred knows a truth he himself fears and so speaks of it only in hushed tones is his third motive for secrecy, and the dominant one in At the Mountains of Madness. The star-headed Elder Ones are "above all doubt the originals of the fiendish elder myths which things like the . . . Necronomicon affrightedly hint about" (p. 55). In the same story we hear of the gigantic amoeboid servants of the Elder Ones. "These viscous masses were without doubt what Abdul Alhazred whispered about as the 'shoggoths' in his frightful Necronomicon, though even that mad Arab had not hinted that any existed on earth. . . ." (p. 58). No, he "had nervously tried to swear that none had been bred on this planet. . . ."

(p. 89). Alhazred is "protesting too much." He is aware of a truth that is too horrible for him, and he tries to repress it.

The fourth reason for the lack of overt clarity in the Necronomicon is to disguise an esoteric truth from outsiders by veiling it in symbolism (cf. Matthew 13:10-13, "The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?' He replied, 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak in parables.'). In "The Call of Cthulhu," it is said that "there were double meanings in the Necronomicon . . . which the initiated might read as they chose. . . ." (p. 146). "Medusa's Coil" involves "hidden traditions and allegorical myths . . . hinted of in the Necronomicon" (pp. 290-291). Even Wilbur Whateley must exercise the requisite patience and occult insight in his search for the key formula invoking Yog-Sothoth if he is to penetrate the "discrepancies, duplications, and ambiguities which made the matter of determination far from easy" (p. 174).

A Book of Wonders

We move from his manner of presentation to consider next a sampling of the occult matters Alhazred treated. First and most famously, he at least mentions elder beings including Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Azathoth, 'Umr - At - Tawil, Shub - Niggurath, Tsathoggua, and Nyarlathotep, all of whom are explicitly mentioned in surviving quotes or allusions. Also there are generic references to "Old Ones," "Elder Things," and "Shoggoths," as we have seen.

Second, there are certain "nameless cults" which Alhazred catalogues. One is the "corpse-eating cult of inaccessible Leng, in Central Asia," the "sinister lineaments" of whose "ghastly soul-symbol" are "described by the old Arab demonologist" in "The Hound" (p. 155). But Alhazred only "suggests" the existence of "a cult that sometimes gave aid to minds voyaging down the aeons from the days of the Great Race" ("The Shadow out of Time," p. 389).

Third, a related phenomenon described by Alhazred is visionary experience, facilitated by one or another occult aid. "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" contains a passage wherein Alhazred speaks of 'Umr-At-Tawil as a "Guide" to supramundane knowledge. The story is poorly thought out at this point, since Alhazred is made first to warn against seeking 'Umr's aid, then to give instructions for how to obtain it! At any rate, we find that "a whole chapter of the Necronomicon . . . had taken on significance when [Carter] had deciphered the graven signs on the silver key" which unlocked the door to 'Umr's realm (p. 406). In At the Mountains of Madness there is mention of "the dreams of those who had chewed a certain alkaloidal herb," and who had seen visions of Shoggoths. Here, it seems clear, we see implied at last the source of Alhazred's own occult revelations. How else had he seen the Shoggoths?

Fourth, Alhazred mentions various far-flung places, some not of the earth we know. There was apparently quite an extensive discussion of "the Vaults of Zin" since they are "well known to all students of Alhazred" (letter to E. Hoffmann Price, December 20, 1932, SL IV, p. 122). And as already noted, Alhazred "was reluctant to discuss . . . the evilly

fabled plateau of Leng" (At the Mountains of Madness, pp. 5, 66). Though discuss it he did. He even seems to have alluded to the lost continent of Mu since Lovecraft notes the presence of a "passage (Nec. xii, 58-584) in Naacal hieroglyphics" (letter to Price, ibid.). Muvian glyphs in the Necronomicon are mentioned also in "Out of the Eons" (p. 135). Lastly, it may surprise, even disgust, some readers to know that Alhazred implicitly refers to "Glyu-uh" (Betelgeuse), the home of Derleth's "Elder Gods." Lovecraft is advising Derleth on the latter's story "The Return of Hastur": "In the Necronomicon, Abdul Alhazred would no doubt have used both the primal name--let us say Glyu-uh or something of the sort--and the new Arabic word Ibt al Jauzah (Betelgeuse) which the astronomers around him were beginning to evolve" (January 30, 1933, SL IV, p. 146).

In our brief study of the Necronomicon of the mad Aryan H. P. Lovecraft, we have found that he seems to have had no one uniform conception of the book save as a source of ancient arcana. Thus the Necronomicon appears wearing a different face depending on what kind of atmospheric effect HPL wanted to achieve. Abdul Alhazred might whisper cringingly of horrors too fearsome even for him. He might pose as the guru spinning allegories for the elect. He might be a superstitious chronicler of legends, understanding only dimly the marvels of alien technology. He might be a ranting occultist or a shocked and pious heresiologist. The only consistency in the portrait was that the Arab and his book could be called to witness to whatever eerie tale Lovecraft told.

Reconstructing De Vermis Mysteriis

By Robert M. Price

Each member of the Lovecraft circle tried his hand at creating a tome worthy of being placed on the shelf alongside HPL's own Necronomicon, and most of them succeeded. In many passages wherein Lovecraft has occasion to mention the Necronomicon he also notes the presence of Robert E. Howard's Unaussprechlichen Kulten, Clark Ashton Smith's Book of Eibon, and two of Robert Bloch's creations, Cultes des Goules and De Vermis Mysteriis. The last named is developed at some length by its creator, and it will be our task here to reconstruct from the scattered references in Bloch's tales just what can be known of that repository of lunacy and evil.

Bloch had originally titled the nefarious work simply Mysteries of the Worm, but Lovecraft advised him to spruce it up with a little erudition. "If Prinn's immortal work is in Latin, you ought to give the title in that language--hence my change in two places (in yr ms.) to DE VERMIS MYSTERIIS (concerning/of the worm/the mysteries)." (January 25, 1935, SL V, p. 88). So De Vermis Mysteriis it became. . . but not very often. Bloch of course retained Lovecraft's interpolations in "The Shambler from the Stars" (the manuscript he had sent HPL), but he seldom referred to the book by its Latin title again. Usually it was simply Mysteries of the Worm.

What is to be known of the author of De Vermis Mysteriis? Fortunately Bloch was not stingy with details, and readers got to know Prinn pretty well when he was introduced in "The Shambler from the Stars"

(Weird Tales, September 1935). Prinn was a Flemish knight who marched off to the Holy Land in the Ninth Crusade (i. e., the Seventh, if the two children's crusades are omitted). At some point he was captured by the Muslims ("Saracens") and became a slave of certain Syrian wizards and thaumaturges, learning their secrets and trafficking with evil spirits. Having become a potent sorcerer in his own right, he traveled to Egypt and gave birth to a cycle of legend that spread his reputation across North Africa. His time was spent delving for occult secrets in forbidden tombs. Eventually he returned to his Flemish homeland to pursue his blasphemous studies in a ruined mausoleum dating from Roman times, surrounded by familiar spirits and conjuring up devilish entities from the stars. He came to grief during the witch-trials, being captured and tortured. While awaiting death in his cell he wrote De Vermis Mysteriis. After its posthumous publication it was everywhere suppressed, but authorities could not prevent fugitive copies from falling into the hands of certain seekers. There were at least two editions, the original Latin and an English translation.

What of the content of the book? In its initial appearance in "The Shambler from the Stars," it seems to be primarily a book of invocations. Prinn is depicted mainly as one who deals with spirits, and of course the whole story is heading toward the ill-fated invocation of the Shambler itself. (Lovecraft provided Bloch with the Latin formula of invocation: "I've supplied just a tantalising frag-

ment of that hellish invocation: 'Tibi, magnum Innominandum, signa stellarum nigrarum et bufaniformis Sadouae sigillum . . .' (To the great Not-to-be-Named / the signs / of the stars/black/and/of the toad-shaped/Tsathoggua/the seal . . .)' (SL V, p. 88). We also hear of "such gods of divination as Father Yig, dark Han, and serpent-bearded Byatis" being mentioned in the text. It is implied that they, too, could be invoked to reveal their secrets. But the book is also said to contain "spells and enchantments." To this, one item of information is added in "The Faceless God" (*Weird Tales*, May 1936), namely that Prinn had learned some unspecified knowledge of Nyarlathotep in the course of his travels "in Saracenic lands."

In the next several stories in which Prinn's book occurs, it is barely mentioned, merely being enumerated along with several other works like the *Necronomicon*. We find it so listed, with no further role to play, in "The Secret in the Tomb" (*WT*, May 1935), "The Suicide in the Study" (*WT*, June 1935), "The Grinning Ghoul" (*WT*, June 1936), "The Dark Demon" (*WT*, November 1936), and "The Mannikin" (*WT*, April 1937). By the way, in none of these tales is the Latin title used.

De Vermis Mysteriis (with this form of the title) crops up again in a set of three of Bloch's "Egyptian" series of stories, "The Brood of Bubastis" (*WT*, March 1937), "The Secret of Sebek" (*WT*, November 1937), and "Fane of the Black Pharaoh" (*WT*, December 1937). All three allude to Prinn's chapter called "Saracenic Rituals," which "revealed the lore of the efreit and the djinn, the secrets of the Assassin sects, the myths of Arabian ghouls, tales, the hidden practices of der vish cults." Also within it might be found "a great

wealth of material on the legends of Inner Egypt" ("The Secret of Sebek"). It is this last subject matter which forms the chief concern of all three stories. It seems that in ancient Egypt, the real rulers behind the throne were the priests of certain "dark nature-gods," whose worship remained underground until the accession to the throne of Nephren-Ka who elevated the bloody worship of the gods Sebek, Bubastis, Anubis, and Nyarlathotep. However, the outrages of the Pharaoh and his followers were so great that the lot of them were deposed and either entombed alive or exiled.

In "Fane of the Black Pharaoh" Prinn's volume informs us that Nephren-Ka and his personal attendants (at least a hundred) were entombed in a secret vault beneath modern-day Cairo and that in one last orgy of Promethean blasphemy, Nephren-Ka sacrificed those with him to Nyarlathotep in return for prophetic knowledge of the future ages of Egypt. Before he himself expired he was able to inscribe that entire future history on the walls of the tomb. Prinn adds that descendants of the Black Pharaoh's followers still maintain their cult, having as their special duty to guard the body of Nephren-Ka till the day of Resurrection.

A similar tale is told by Prinn of the human-sacrifice cult of crocodile-headed Sebek in "The Secret of Sebek." Here the salient point is that Sebek's priests had earned with their sacrifices the god's promise to guard their bodies till the Resurrection should come. In "The Brood of Bubastis" we learn from Prinn that the ghoulish cat-goddess's hierophants escaped the persecution and fled to Cornwall, where the story itself takes place.

Actually the three stories build upon one another in sequence. In

"The Brood of Bubastis," the cult of Bubastis is a minority religion which merely gets out of line and is expunged by the religious establishment for its heretical practices. In "The Secret of Sebek," the Bubastis persecution is mentioned, and some "never named abomination" is said to have ended Nyarlathotep-worship, but Nephren-Ka is not mentioned, though heretical priests are said to rule behind the throne. This is a much higher status than implied in "The Brood of Bubastis." Finally, Nephren-Ka appears as the figure-head of the whole movement in "Fane of the Black Pharaoh."

Two years later Bloch employed Prinn's book again in "The Sorcerer's Jewel" which appeared in Strange Stories, February 1939, under the pseudonym Tarleton Fiske. Prinn's book appeared only under the English title Mysteries of the Worm. This time we hear of a new section, "Prinn's chapter on divination." The jewel of the title is an ancient Egyptian seer-stone called "The Star of Sechmet," and Prinn gives a partial history of the gem, hinting at its whereabouts between the times of its ownership by Gilles De Retz and Rasputin. (This would seem to be an anachronism, as Prinn seems to have died in the 15th century.)

In "Black Bargain" (WT, May 1942), the book is the central occult prop. It is referred to as "De Vermis Mysteriis, 'Mysteries of the Worm.'" "It was something . . . that told you how you could compound aconite and belladonna and draw circles of phosphorescent fire on the floor when the stars were right. Something that spoke of melting tallow candles and blending them with corpse-fat, whispered of the uses to which animal sacrifice might be put. It spoke of meetings that could be arranged with various parties most

people don't. . . even believe in. . . [and contained] cold, deliberate directions for traffic with ancient evil. . . ." Invocations are back in view, just as in "The Shambler from the Stars," and with no more pleasant, though slightly less gory, results. Here deals are struck with devils, with the standard back-firing outcome.

Bloch mentions "Prinn's Grimoire" (no fuller title is given) for the last time in his 1961 story "Philtre Tip." This is one of his humorous (pun)chline stories, so it is not surprising that the use of the esoteric volume is scarcely traditional. This time we have to do with a "formula for a love philtre. . . . Here--this one from Ludvig Prinn's Grimoire, in the English edition." The attentive reader will have noted that so far the only actual quoted words from Prinn have been Lovecraft's incantation "To the great Not-to-be-Named, signs of the black stars, and the seal of the toad-shaped Tsathoggua." "Philtre Tip" provides us with the only Prinn logion to come from Bloch himself. Following a list of ingredients (not itself quoted), we hear of the predicted effects of the love potion: "The meekest droppe, if placed in a posset of wine or sack, will transforme ye beloved into a veritable bitche in heate." (We leave it to the reader to figure out the trick ending.)

We started out mentioning how Lovecraft approved Bloch's new volume and went on to mention it cheek-by-jowl with the Necronomicon in his own stories. In fact he mentions it three times, in "The Haunter of the Dark," where Robert Blake stumbles across a treasure-trove of forbidden books in the Starry Wisdom Church, including "old Ludvig Prinn's hellish De Vermis Mysteriis." Alonzo Typer finds "a first

edition of old Ludvig Prinn's De Vermis Mysteriis" on the shelves of the van der Heyl house ("The Diary of Alonzo Typer"), and protagonist Peasley in "The Shadow out of Time" peruses the book among the special collection at Miskatonic University. In all three cases the book is simply included in a group of grimoires, and its contents are never described by HPL, except in a letter to Henry Kuttner (February 19, 1936) in which he says De Vermis Mysteriis is one of several books which "repeat the most hellish secrets learnt by early man" (SL V, p. 226). It is interesting to note that, having produced the Latin title, HPL used it in every single reference, whether in letter or fiction, never once using Bloch's original English title.

Another member of the Lovecraft circle using De Vermis Mysteriis in his own fiction was Henry Kuttner, a friend of Bloch's. He borrowed the musty text for his "The Invaders" (Strange Stories), February 1939, under the pseudonym Keith Hammond). It seems that weird fiction writer Michael Hayward gets his ideas for stories by using a drug to awaken ancestral memories. He has derived the formula from De Vermis Mysteriis, given with both Latin and English titles. "The Mysteries of the Worm gave a list of precautions to be taken before using the drug--the Pnakotic pentagon, the cabalistical signs of protection. . . . The book gave terrible warnings of what might happen if those precautions weren't taken--'the dwellers in the Hidden World,' it called them." These last are typically rugose and tentacled critters with a huge, single, faceted eye and a puckered orifice for a mouth.

One last item of idle curiosity. Though Robert Bloch wrote several

entertaining tales in the Cthulhu Mythos, it is not for them that he is most widely known. Of course, he is most famous for the masterpiece Psycho. And in that novel there is one scene with special significance to Mythos buffs. When, near the end of the book, Lila Crane is furtively exploring the eerie old Bates house and stumbles onto Norman's cache of old books, every Lovecraftian reader ought to experience a sense of deja vu, especially since one of the titles is a favorite of Lovecraft's, mentioned by him in precisely such contexts. "Here Lila found herself pausing, puzzling, then peering in perplexity at the incongruous contents of Norman Bates' library. A New Model of the Universe, The Extension of Consciousness, The Witch-Cult in Western Europe, Dimension and Being." One is tempted to wonder: may there possibly have been an earlier draft of Psycho in which Bloch nostalgically placed Mysteries of the Worm, Cultes Des Goules, and the Cabala of Saboth, for example, on Norman Bates' shelves? One is also tempted to pester Bloch with the question. We did. His answer: "Since there was no 'earlier draft' of Psycho, I couldn't have mentioned the titles you list. Nor would I, in a novel where the accent is on realism rather than fantasy." Oh, well.

* * *

Many of Robert Bloch's early Mythos stories are contained in Lin Carter (ed.), Mysteries of the Worm (Zebra Books, 1981). "Black Bargain" and "Philtre Tip" are included in Bloch's collection The Living Demons (Belmont Books, 1967). "The Brood of Bubastis" and "The Sorcerer's Jewel" were never, to our knowledge, reprinted in book form. Kuttner's "The Invaders" has just been reprinted in Etchings and Odysseys #4.

Some Notes on the Eltdown Shards

By Robert M. Price

H. P. Lovecraft's invented Necronomicon proved to be so stimulating that several of his correspondents and fans could not resist concocting their own. Thus Howard's Unaussprechlichen Kulten and Bloch's De Vermis Mysteriis, to name just two of a larger number, were born. Lovecraft welcomed this and would henceforth make bibliographical notes to the new books. Quite often, he made better use of the new texts than their creators did. Two examples of this would be Willis Conover's Ghorl Nigral, about which HPL wrote an effective little vignette or story fragment (see Selected Letters V, p. 299, or Conover's Lovecraft at Last, p. 65), and Richard F. Searight's Eltdown Shards, which Lovecraft used as a fictional prop three times around 1935. There is an intriguing handful of notices about the Shards, of sufficient interest to deserve exploring, yet small enough to make the job manageable.

The Eltdown Shards were named in imitation of "The Piltdown Man," the newly-discovered remains of a species of prehistoric man, which eventually turned out to be a hoax. The Eltdown Shards were a set of clay fragments, presumably pieces of clay tablets like those discovered in Assurbanipal's Library. As to general conception, they were obviously parallel to Lovecraft's own "mouldy Pnakotic Manuscripts," a parallel made explicit by Lovecraft himself (see below). The first reference to the Shards is an actual quoted passage, written by Lovecraft to preface Searight's tale "The Sealed Casket," for Weird Tales, March 1935. It is called simply "Fragment

from the Eltdown Shards": ". . . . And it is recorded that in the Elder Times, Om Oris, mightiest of the wizards, laid crafty snare for the demon Avaloth, and pitted dark magic against him; for Avaloth plagued the earth with a strange growth of ice and snow that crept as if alive, ever southward, and swallowed up the forests and the mountains. And the outcome of the contest with the demon is not known; but wizards of that day maintained that Avaloth, who was not easily discernable, could not be destroyed save by a great heat, the means whereof was not then known, although certain of the wizards foresaw that one day it should be. Yet, at this time the ice fields began to shrink and dwindle and finally vanished; and the earth bloomed forth afresh."

Lovecraft used the Eltdown Shards in one of his own stories, "The Shadow out of Time," which was written in the period from November 1934 through March 1935. (He composed "Fragment from the Eltdown Shards" during the same period.) The sole reference in "Shadow" is to the mention of "that obscure, transgalactic world known in the disturbing Eltdown Shards as Yith." This is given in the story as the primeval home of the Great Race, though it is not stated that they themselves were mentioned in the Shards. But this is probably to be inferred, especially since "The Challenge from Beyond" (written in August 1935) summarizes a considerable stretch of the text having to do with the Great Race, as well as with the worm-like race of space explorers encountered in that story. Basically the tale told in the

Eltdown Shards concerns the hostile encounter between the two races of astral projectors, occasioned by the space-probes of the centipede race.

These references to the Eltdown Shards in "The Shadow out of Time" and "The Challenge from Beyond," both connected with the Great Race of Yith, would seem to be the basis for Lin Carter's attribution of the Shards to the Great Race ("H. P. Lovecraft: The Books"). But this ascription may be questioned. First, note that the manner in which the name "Yith" is referred to in "Shadow" implies that we are dealing with a cross-reference to a collateral text, like the "old hindu texts" mentioned in the same story. The idea is that several ancient myths and texts refer to the era of the Great Race, without necessarily having been written by them. And "The Challenge from Beyond" refers to the escape of the minds of Yith into earth's far future as a fait accompli, and one long past at that. Ever since then, "the whe reabouts of the sinister cube from space [discussed in the Shards] were unknown." So the Eltdown Shards would seem to post-date the Great Race by a good many years. Besides this, whereas the Great Race predated humanity, Lovecraft's "Fragment from the Eltdown Shards" refers to a human civilization that was in a past already remote ("The Elder Times") from the standpoint of the chronicler. Finally, from "The Shadow out of Time," we know not only that the archives of the Great Race were bound in codices of metallic sheets, but also that those records survived intact to the present day. By contrast the Shards are, as we have seen, incomplete clay fragments.

By the way, an interesting possibility of connecting the various references to the Shards presents itself.

What might the reports of the Great Race and the wizard Om Oris have to do with each other? Probably Lovecraft just liked the Eltdown Shards as an atmospheric prop and attributed this or that item of ancient lore to its pages. But there is a clue in the "Fragment" that we should not overlook. Om Oris was able to vanquish Avaloth despite his era's ignorance of the necessary means for doing so. We might speculate that Avaloth was defeated with the superior knowledge of the Great Race, one of whom had temporarily exchanged minds with Om Oris. But this is nothing but speculation. At any rate, with the Great Race out of the running, we have no idea who did write the Shards.

In "The Challenge from Beyond," Lovecraft provides the most extensive data about the Shards and how they came to be current in the present day. We learn that "those debatable and disquieting clay fragments called the Eltdown Shards [were] dug up from pre-carboniferous strata in southern England thirty years before [= around the turn of the century]. Their shape and markings were so queer that a few scholars hinted at artificiality [= not products of nature, but of ancient workmanship], and made wild conjectures about them and their origin. They came, clearly, from a time when no human beings could exist on the globe. . . ." Already, we have a problem. The "Fragment from the Eltdown Shards" implies the Shards are a record which, though ancient, is much more recent than the "pre-carboniferous" date given in "The Challenge from Beyond." A human civilization is described, whereas in "Challenge," they were written "when no human beings could exist on the globe."

"About 1917 a deeply learned Sus-

sex clergyman of occultist leanings --the Reverend Arthur Brooke Winters-Hall--had professed to identify the markings on the Eltdown Shards with some of the so-called 'pre-human hieroglyphs' persistently cherished and esoterically handed down in certain mystical circles, and had published at his own expense what purported to be a 'translation' of the primal and baffling 'inscriptions.' "The resulting text consisted of a "narrative, supposedly of pre-human authorship. . . ." ("The Challenge from Beyond").

It is apparently the translation of Winters-Hall that August Derleth occasionally refers to in his stories as "The Sussex Manuscript." And the "prehuman hieroglyphs" are probably to be identified with the Pnakotic Manuscripts, to which Lovecraft would soon explicitly connect the Shards.

If the information supplied in "The Challenge from Beyond" conflicts with the "Fragment from the Eltdown Shards," no less does it fail to harmonize with that given in "The Diary of Alonzo Typer" (written in October 1935), wherein the Eltdown Shards are name-droppingly cited along with the Pnakotic Manuscripts: "I had never seen the text of the Pnakotic Manuscript[s] or of the Eltdown Shards before, and would not have come here if I had known what they contained." Typer read the text in book form in the deserted van der Heyl mansion, where it must have lain since at least 1872 when the van der Heyls disappeared. Clearly, the Eltdown Shards are now pictured along the lines of the Pnakotic Manuscripts as prehuman scriptures (like the Theosophists' Book of Dzyan, also mentioned in "Alonzo Typer"). Here the Shards have been translated (or at least transcribed) in book form long before the time they were even discovered

according to "The Challenge from Beyond." (This discrepancy was first pointed out by T. G. L. Cockcroft in his "Addendum" to Lin Carter's glossaries in The Shattered Room.)

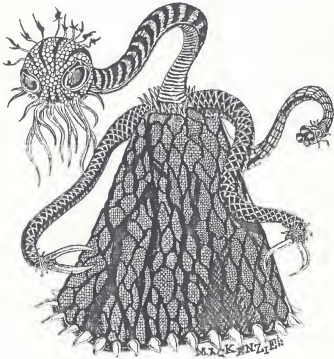
The linkage with the Pnakotic Manuscripts is made complete in a letter to Searight dated February 13, 1936, only a few months after the completion of "Alonzo Typer." Lovecraft says that, "Curious parallels betwixt them [the Pnakotic Manuscripts] and the Eltdown Shards have been pointed out--as if both were remote derivations of some immeasurably anterior source, on this or some other planet." Here we find a distinction implicitly drawn between ancient traditions underlying the Shards and the redaction of those traditions in a written text. This schema harmonizes well with the earlier data concerning the Great Race and the conflict of Om Oris with Avaloth. The latter material would have been included later by the (human) redactors and tradents, while the former would have been received by them from some prehuman and extraterrestrial source.

The final reference, in a letter to Henry Kuttner, written only three days later than that to Searight, merely reiterates the prehuman origin of the book, only this time the whole book, and not just its sources, seems to be in view. It "antedates the human race like . . . the Pnakotic Manuscripts."

How consistent was Lovecraft's conception of the Eltdown Shards? Basically, most of his references can be harmonized, making the whole into a chronicle composed of various strata, the earlier traditions stemming from prehuman and unearthly sources. The only really irreconcilable conflict concerns the question

of whether we are dealing with a book passed down through the centuries, or a collection of fragmentary baked clay tablets discovered at the turn of the present century. The latter version, implied in the parallel with "Piltown Man," actually appears only in "The Challenge from Beyond," while the former was already implied in the "Fragment from the Eltdown Shards," and was made more or less explicit in "The Diary of

Alonzo Tyler" and the letters to Seairight and Kuttner. The reference in "The Shadow out of Time" may bear either interpretation. Of the two possible conceptions of the Eltdown Shards, Lovecraft seemed finally to prefer that which made them little more than a variant version of the Pnakotic Manuscripts. This is really too bad since the version in "The Challenge from Beyond" was more unique and picturesque.



The Pnakotic Manuscripts: A Study

By Robert M. Price

H. P. Lovecraft's fictitious Necronomicon is only too familiar to most readers, and it has spawned a host of imitations. Some of these have been appropriately eerie in their own right, e.g., Von Junzt's Unaussprechlichen Kulten, Prinn's De Vermis Mysteriis. Another evocative title that might easily be taken as merely another sequel to the Necronomicon is Lovecraft's own Pnakotic Manuscripts. But this would be a mistake, for said manuscripts actually predate Alhazred's tome in the development of HPL's imaginary library. While they lack the sinister, nightmarish quality of the Necronomicon, the Pnakotic Manuscripts are if anything even more mysterious, since Lovecraft left many questions about them unanswered. At least he never sat down and systematized the data concerning them as he did with the Necronomicon (see his pamphlet "History of the Necronomicon"). We will seek in small measure to remedy that situation by piecing together the fragmentary hints left here and there by Lovecraft.

Interestingly, though Lovecraft's references to the Pnakotic Manuscripts range over eighteen years (1918-1936), he seems to have had either a fairly developed, comprehensive picture in mind from the start, or a fluid concept which he embellished in a harmonious way. Unlike the Necronomicon which often changed conception in the course of Lovecraft's fiction, the idea of the Pnakotic Manuscripts remain pretty

consistent throughout.

We first hear of them in the short tale "Polaris" (1918), where the scholarly narrator recalls that, "I gave each day to the study of the Pnakotic manuscripts." Of their contents, we are told only of "some lore of the skies which I had learnt from the Pnakotic manuscripts." This scribe lived in ancient Lomar, in the Polar north.

This detail squares with "The Other Gods" (1921), wherein the document is referred to as "the Pnakotic Manuscripts of distant and frozen Lomar." Also in this story, we become aware of an important distinction between earlier and later strata within the text. It contains relatively recent material including legends of the past, stories about characters and events already deemed ancient at the time of writing. For instance there is the legend of "Sansu, who is written of with fright in the moldy Pnakotic Manuscripts." "Now it is told in the moldy Pnakotic Manuscripts that Sansu found naught but wordless ice and rock when he did climb Hatheg-Kla [like Mt. Olympus, the reputed home of the gods] in the youth of the world." So even though the text is ancient ("moldy"), the events related therein are presented as being so much older that the text is relatively recent.

Yet the story also mentions "frightful parts of the Pnakotic Manuscripts which were too ancient to be read." Furthermore, it is implied that these paleogeologic passages were prehuman in origin, the product

of the "Other Gods" (the Dreamland equivalent of the Great Old Ones) themselves. For written there amid indecipherable prose is a symbol like that engraven on a cliff-face by the Other Gods in the story. This note is the first of several to the effect that the oldest kernel of material in the text is of extraterrestrial origin, which, by the way, would fit in nicely with the presence of astronomical lore in the manuscripts as mentioned in "Polaris." Who would know the stars better than aliens who have traveled between them?

Six years later (1927), Lovecraft repeated much of this information in The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath. He adds the notice that "the last copy of those inconceivably old Pnakotic Manuscripts" is preserved in the Dream World, having been carried there "by waking men in forgotten boreal kingdoms," i.e., Lomar under the imminent threat of the Gnothkeh invasion. "These manuscripts . . . told much of the gods. . . ."

The elderly zoog, who in Dream-Quest is the source of this information, must have had a spotty memory, for at least one copy seems to have survived in the waking world. The scholarly recluse Henry Akeley assumes that Albert Wilmarth has read it. In "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), Akeley shares in breathless excitement the revelations of the Mi-Go concerning "great worlds of unknown life down there; blue-litten K'n-yan, red-litten Yoth, and black, lightless N'kai. It's from N'kai that frightful Tsathoggua came --you know, the amorphous, toad-like god-creature mentioned in the Pnakotic Manuscripts. . . ." The phrasing here implies that the information about N'kai and Tsathoggua's coming from there is new knowledge, not already available in the Pnakotic

sources.

In At the Mountains of Madness, written the very next year, the narrator seems to imply both a prehuman and extraterrestrial origin for the Manuscripts. "A few daring mystics have hinted at a pre-Pleistocene origin for the fragmentary Pnakotic Manuscripts, and have suggested that the devotees of Tsathoggua were as alien to mankind as Tsathoggua itself." The connection of this passage to that in "The Whisperer in Darkness" is evident not only from the reference to Tsathoggua, but also by the mention in the very same paragraph of "that unpleasantly erudite folklorist Wilmarth." Taken together, the hints suggest that Tsathoggua's minions (who according to "The Mound," were indeed prehuman, even presaurian) were responsible for some of the earliest portions of the Pnakotic text; Tsathoggua itself is mentioned in the text; the oldest texts are prehuman; so were Tsathoggua's worshippers. So once again the core of the Pnakotic canon is ascribed to an unearthly race, albeit a different one than the "Other Gods" mentioned in the story of that name.

But we have not exhausted the references to the Pnakotic Manuscripts in At the Mountains of Madness. We find that the Manuscripts mention not only Tsathoggua and its amphibian cohorts, but also a different group of aliens, the star-headed crinoids. The Antarctic "Elder Ones" or "Elder things" (or "Old Ones," and thus, like the "Other Gods," an analog to the Great Old Ones) discovered by the Miskatonic University Expedition were "above all doubt the originals of the fiendish elder myths which things like the Pnakotic Manuscripts and the Necronomicon affrightedly hint about." Similarly, "there may be a real and

monstrous meaning in the old Pnakotic whispers about Kadath in the Cold Waste." (Kadath, of course, turns out to be the city of the Elder Ones.) From these references, we would guess that the Elder Ones were mentioned in the later, purely human portions of the Manuscripts, since the aliens are already, it is implied, the object of both fear and legendary embellishment. But remember that this story earlier makes the Pnakotic Manuscripts prehuman. We may suppose that, once again, there are prehuman portions as well as passages penned by human scribes, as is implied in "The Other Gods."

Lovecraft draws together all these strands in a letter to William Lumley not quite two months after the completion of At the Mountains of Madness. We discover that the "Pnakotic Manuscripts" . . . are supposed to be the work of the 'Elder Ones' preceding the human race on this planet, and handed down through an early human civilization which once existed around the north pole." Presumably it was this civilization (Lomar, or perhaps Hyperborea--see below) which added the "frightened" stories of Sansu and Kadath, supplementing the original core stemming from the Elder Ones. The Elder Ones have, by implication, been melded together with the Other Gods, and presumably with the Tsothoggua-spawn as well. The gaping question left us is how the Manuscripts made it from one end of the globe to the other, since the Elder Ones lived at the south pole, while Lomar was at the north! (Perhaps the texts passed through "the inner city at the two magnetic poles" mentioned in Wilbur Whateley's diary!)

Among the remaining references to the Pnakotic Manuscripts, we may distinguish two categories. One set of passages add new and seemingly

unrelated data. In "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" (1932-33), Randolph Carter enters an "extension of Earth which is outside time, and from which in turn the Ultimate Gate leads fearsomely and perilously to the Last Void which is outside all earths, all universes, and all matter." "There were hints of it in the cryptical Pnakotic fragments. . . ." While Lovecraft was working on the story, he wrote to E. Hoffmann Price, his collaborator on the tale, and in the letter again mentioned the text: "The Pnakotic Manuscripts mention the subterranean gulf of Zim" or "Vaults of Zin." Both these references seem to be dead ends. Nothing more is said about either matter discussed, and neither reference has anything to do with what has gone before.

In "The Horror in the Museum" (1933), there is but passing reference made to "the prehistoric Pnakotic fragments." Another tale written the same year, "Out of the Eons," mentions a similarity between Muvian hieroglyphics and "certain primal symbols described or cited in . . . The Pnakotic fragments." It is worth noting only that Lovecraft toyed with substituting the terminology "Pnakotic Fragments" for "Pnakotic Manuscripts" in the period 1932-33.

The second group of passages that remain to be considered essentially reinforce what we have already established. In a letter to Duane Rimel dated 1934, Lovecraft speaks of "the non-human sounds [of prehuman aliens, which] were known to certain human scholars in elder days, and recorded in secret manuscripts like the Necronomicon, the Pnakotic Manuscripts, etc." The phrase "elder days" recalls the "elder myths" and "Elder Ones" of At the Mountains of Madness. In this letter the link

between those Elder Ones and the human (Lomarian) guardians of the Pnakotic traditions is made clearer. The latter translated, or transliterated, the scriptures or lore of the former. Yet so great was the obscurity arising from the alien character of the material thus handed on, that these ancient portions of the Manuscripts soon became indecipherable. They were "too ancient to be read" with understanding.

About a year later, in "The Shadow out of Time," Lovecraft again underlined just how "ancient" these texts were. The story concerns the "Great Race of Yith," an intelligent species which had flourished 50 million years before the birth of the human race. And "Of all things surviving physically and directly from that aeon-distant world, there remained only certain ruins of great stones in far places and under the sea, and parts of the text of the frightful Pnakotic Manuscripts." This comment would seem to be the sole basis for Lin Carter's ascription of the core portions of the Pnakotic Manuscripts to the Great Race of Yith ("H. P. Lovecraft: The Books"). But note that all the text says is that the Manuscripts date from the Great Race's era, which however was coterminous with that of the star-headed Elder Ones (with whom the Great Race warred). The Pnakotic texts are no more directly associated with the Great Race than are the undersea ruins (R'lyeh?) mentioned in the same context. And Lovecraft had explicitly attributed the Manuscripts to the Elder Ones. Thus the attribution of authorship to the Great Race would seem to be gratuitous.

Finally, in a letter to Richard F. Searight in 1936, we meet with Lovecraft's last mention of our text. "Exact data regarding the Pnakotic

Mss. are lacking. They were brought down from Hyperborea by a secret cult (allied to that which preserved the Book of Eibon), & are in the secret Hyperborean language, but there is a rumour that they are a translation of something hellishly older--brought from the land of Lomar & of fabulous antiquity even there. That they antedate the human race is freely whispered. Curious parallelisms betwixt them & the Eltdown Shards [Searight's own creation, and used by HPL in "The Challenge from Beyond," "The Shadow out of Time," and "The Diary of Alonzo Typer"] have been pointed out--as if both were remote derivations of some immeasurably anterior source, on this or some other planet." Again, the Manuscripts, at least portions of them, are prehuman and extraterrestrial in origin. And the transmission of the manuscripts is clarified further; not only did a human "civilization" receive them from the Elder Ones, but specifically a "secret cult" handed them on through the years.

One last note: might the passage of the Pnakotic Manuscripts through Hyperborea have been the occasion for the interpolation of references to Tsathoggua, such as that mentioned by Akeley? Probably not, since Lovecraft specifically refers to a "human civilization" and "human scholars" receiving the texts from the Elder Ones, whereas he describes the "Hyperborean worshippers of Tsathoggua" as "furry" and "prehuman" ("The Shadow out of Time").

In our study of the enigmatic Pnakotic Manuscripts, we have inferred that this title must refer to a collection of materials of heterogeneous nature and origin, some of them prehuman, extraterrestrial, and no longer decipherable. These older portions stem from some group or

groups of aliens, certainly including the crinoid Elder Ones, but perhaps also others such as the "Other Gods" and the Tsathoggua-spawn. The more recent fragments seem to look back to this primordial era with loathing and fear, which no doubt increased as familiarity with that age and its inhabitants decreased.

The transference of the Pnakotic lore from nonhuman to human hands also marked its transference, oddly, from the south to the north pole. All in all, Lovecraft's conception of the Pnakotic Manuscripts was both comprehensive in its scope, and consistent in its usage throughout his fiction.



Prehuman Language in Lovecraft

By Will Murray

In addition to being treasure-troves of elder lore, the dark books cited in H. P. Lovecraft's many stories are rich in linguistic arcana. Specifically, they contain multitudinous examples of what Lovecraft liked to call "prehuman language," the speech of the Great Old Ones who inhabited the earth before the advent of man. Lovecraft dished out examples of this tongue sparingly, but he seems to have done so with great care, as if these transcribed approximations carried real meaning and were not merely a function of atmospheric verisimilitude.

Perhaps for Lovecraft, they did possess meaning, for certain words and phrases -- or their phonetic equivalents -- recur again and again in HPL's stories and letters. Some are obviously names; others convey less clear resonances. All defy ready understanding while seeming to be almost accessible in a mad-deniably tantalizing way.

Early instances of prehuman language in Lovecraft's fiction occur in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward and amply illustrate a basic reality of this language -- that written-down versions of what may originally have been spoken words are always approximate and subject to aural interpretation. These are the twin formulae for raising the dead from their "essential salts" and returning them to granular form later:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Y'A1'NG'NGAH | OGTHROD AI'F |
| <u>YOG-SOTHOTH</u> | GEB'L--EE'H |
| H'EE--L'GEB | <u>YOG-SOTHOTH</u> |
| F'A1 THRODOG | 'NGAH'NG AI'Y |
| <u>UAAAH</u> | <u>ZHRO</u> |

According to the story, the second formula is "no more than the first written syllabically backward with the exception of the final monosyllables and of the odd name Yog-Sothoth." This is an oversimplification in that it ignores the fact that the line-ranking is inverted as well, but this doesn't affect the words involved.

It's interesting to note that the many apostrophes invariably mark syllable breaks in these incantations. But more than that, some seem to act as word separators as well. Although they were new when originally presented in this novel, certain words imbedded in these formulae appear by themselves in many later stories.

Yog-Sothoth is one, of course. But so is the curious coinage 'Ngah, in one form or another. More on it later. A phonetic equivalent to Uaaah--Ya-- also reappears in subsequent stories. Geb does not, but it should be pointed out that it is the name of a minor Egyptian deity. Ai, on the other hand, is the Greek cry meaning "woe!" Reversed, it becomes that oft-heard prehuman cry Ia! Make of this what you will.¹

These two formulae contain both primary characteristics of Lovecraftian prehuman language: the hyphenated proper names and the high incidence of apostrophes, which also serve to mark missing or doubtful letters. Various keys are given in this novel to suggest phonetic interpretations of the first formula. On page 161, it is overheard as "Yi-nash -Yog-Sothoth - he-lglb-fi-thro-dag" with the terminal shout given

as "Yah!" An older text than the one giving the formulae as rendered above spells the first line of the initial formula as "Aye, cngengah, Yogge-Sothotha," providing an unexpected "c" and "e" in place of the apostrophes in the second word, which was elsewhere pronounced as "nash."

Obviously the rules of spelling and pronunciation in prehuman speech are not easily deciphered. This is also true of syntax, as is clear from the first and most famous example of the tongue given in "The Call of Cthulhu." This is the line which reads:

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu
R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn."

and translates as:

"In his house at R'lyeh dead
Cthulhu waits dreaming."

Lovecraft informs us that R'lyeh is the undersea palace of the entity Cthulhu. It would seem that "fhtagn" probably means "waits" because the line is compressed to "Cthulhu fhtagn" later in the story.² It might possibly mean "Cthulhu dreams" instead, but "fhtagn" is unlikely to mean both "dreams" and "dreaming." We would expect some change in verb-form. In any event, there are nine English words to the phrase, and if we count the apostrophes as word breaks (disregarding the one in R'lyeh, of course) there are nine prehuman words in the original, too. But the arrangement of those words makes generating a grammatical structure--and thus translating the rest of the words--virtually impossible. No syntactical arrangement, in which R'lyeh wgah'nagl separates the subject-verb combination "Cthulhu waits," works.

Linguists know that grammar is a function of the mind and that while several combinations of words can convey the same meaning ("Dead Cthulhu waits dreaming in his house at R'lyeh" is just as sound as Lovecraft's translation), the arrangement must conform to instinctive language patterns. Thus, "In his house at Cthulhu R'lyeh dead dreaming waits," among others, is an unworkable grammatical transformation, and one which the mind quickly perceives as false.

The human mind, that is. Perhaps to the minds of the Great Old Ones, that or some other arrangement is perfectly intelligible. But the fact remains that for us, prehuman syntax appears inaccessible. This is probably a deliberate act on Lovecraft's part, although the principles of Transformational Grammar alluded to here were unknown in Lovecraft's time.

While this may be so, there are indications that individual words carry definite meaning. Not content to lace his stories with prehuman language extracts, HPL rattled them off in his letters as well. One is a variant on the "Call of Cthulhu" extract, and is from a letter to Clark Ashton Smith dated December 3, 1929. It reads: "Yug! n'gha k'yun bth'gth R'lyeh glur ph'ngui Cthulhu Yzkaa. . . ."

Several of these words are familiar. There is a Y'kaa in "The Horror in the Museum." "Ph'ngui" is only one letter different from "ph'nglui," and "n'gha" is very close to "'Nghah" from the Charles Dexter Ward formulae. Various forms of 'Ngha appear throughout Lovecraft's stories and letters. Two separate letters to Smith, one dated October 17, 1930, and the other dated November 7, 1930, make references to "the year of N'Gah" and "the Seal

of N'Gah" respectively. Other forms include "n'ggah" (Lovecraft to Long, November 22, 1930) and "n'gha'ghaa" ("The Dunwich Horror").

More interesting is the frequency of incidence where a variation of this word appears with a variation of "k'yun," as in the phrase "n'gha k'yun" cited above in the December 3, 1928, letter. Other variations include "N'ggah-kthn-y'hhu!" (Lovecraft to Smith, October 7, 1930) and, just possibly, the mention of "The Worm Bgngghaa-Ythu-Yaddith" in a January 1931 letter to Smith. All of these fall under the heading of whimsical scribbblings, perhaps, but it's interesting that in "The Whisperer in Darkness," which was being penned during the same months these letters were composed, reference is made to an ". . . unpronounceable word or name, possibly N'gah-Kthun." This name (even in the letters it is most often hyphenated, a sure indication that it is a name) appears in a different form in the 1933 revision, "The Horror in the Museum" thusly: "Spawn of Noth-Yidik and effluvium of K'thun." See also "the Black Sun Gnarr-Kthun" (HPL to CAS September 11, 1931).

We don't know what N'gah means. Kthun vaguely echoes Cthulhu, but this needn't be meaningful. It might just be that these were sounds that Lovecraft found especially alien. Certainly N'gah is a special favorite of his.

N'gah is done to death in an untranslated line from the Necronomicon (from "The Dunwich Horror") which reads: "N'gai, n'gha'ghaa, bugg-shoggog, y'hah; Yog-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth." As with the formulae from Charles Dexter Ward, spoken versions are given later in the story. Here, they are spoken by Wilbur Whateley's inhuman brother, who has difficulty with the words and throws

in some improvisations of his own. The first begins thusly: "Ygnaiih . . . ygnaiih . . . thflthkh'ngha . . . Yog-Sothoth . . ." To this is added: "Y'bthnk . . . h'ehye--n'grkdl'lh . . ." A second attempt starts off in prehuman, but ends up in English crying: "Bh-ya-ya-ya-yahaah--e'-yayayayaaaa . . . ngh'aaaa . . . ngh'aaa . . . h'yuh . . . HELP! HELP! . . . ff--ff--ff--FATHER! FATHER! YOG-SOTHOTH!"

It's odd that the word N'gai (which also appears at the end of "The Haunter of the Dark" in the disjointed muttering "Ia . . . ngai . . . ygg . . .") comes out as "Ygnaiih" verbally. It's also odd that the compound word bugg-shoggog is left out of the spoken version of the quote. Except for the lack of capitalization, this word seems to be a name, yet Wilbur's brother leaves it out of the incantation. Perhaps bugg-shoggog is not a proper name, but a general term, like horse or cat. This is pure speculation, of course, but it could be that bugg-shoggog is a term meaning one of the offspring of Yog-Sothoth. While the word is not repeated within the story, it crops up quite mysteriously two years later in a letter to Frank Belknap Long dated March 14, 1930. HPL mentions in passing that Clark Ashton Smith is sending him pieces of dinosaur bone, whereupon he lapses into prehuman, saying "YSSShh . . . bugg-shoggog . . . n'ghan . . . ?" Later, he adds a solitary "W'ygh."

The monosyllabic "ya," probably a variant of Ia, also survives into other writings, for some reason as "Ya-R'lyeh" ("The Electric Executioner," cf. "Ia R'lyeh!" in "The Man of Stone"), a cry that seems to appear only in HPL's letters and revisions. A variant, "Y'aaah!" is found in "The Curse of Yig," and "The Shadow out of Time" mentions

a Cimmerian chieftain of 15,000 BC named Crom-Ya. Again, there is an inner logic in which a word is attached to a known name.³ Another possible variant may be Y'ha-nthlei, the sunken city of "The Shadow over Innsmouth."

While Lovecraft's letters and stories are rife with other examples of prehuman language, it would serve no clear purpose to cite them all. Instead, certain general observations can be made about this tongue.

First, the language is absolutely riddled with apostrophe marks, which seem to stand for missing letters and also serve as word divisions. Where we know the exact missing letters, there seems to be no discernible pattern: the marks can stand for consonants as well as vowels. Probably these marks are a carryover from the Arabic text of the Necronomicon, inasmuch as that language is also heavily festooned with apostrophes.

Secondly, pronunciation of these words is itself problematical, as Lovecraft reports many variant pronunciations of a single name. For example: Relex for R'lyeh; Gooloo and Tulu for Cthulhu; Xinian for K'nnyan; Iog-Sotot for Yog-Sothoth, and others. In some cases, letters do not even remotely correspond to actual sounds those letters are supposed to represent. When this happens we may be dealing with written variants produced by adaptation to the speakers' native languages, as in the case of John=Johann=Juan=Jon=Yahya=Yokhannon, etc.

Thirdly, there is evidence to suggest some prehuman words have survived into human languages. For example, the name of the living dead men in "The Mound" is y'm-bhi, which approximates the West Indian term, jumbee, also spelled zombie. The reverse is also true, it would

seem. When, near the end of The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath, Randolph Carter mounts a Shantak bird, Nyarlathotep exclaims, "Hei! Aa-shanta 'nygh! You are off!" Aa-shanta would seem to be the prehuman original of what HPL anglicized as "Shantak."

Fourth, there's a tendency to collapse prehuman words when rendering them in English. One letter extract (HPL to CAS, October 7, 1930) includes the name Cthua, possibly an elided version of Cthulhu. This kind of word compression could explain the odd "la . . . ngai . . . ygg" fragment scribbled by Robert Blake as doom descends upon him at the climax of "The Haunter of the Dark." Earlier in his terminal writings, he began free-associating names from the Cthulhu Mythos, but they are the standard English spellings. Among them are Shaggai and Yuggoth, which might be represented as Ngai and ygg, respectively, in prehuman.

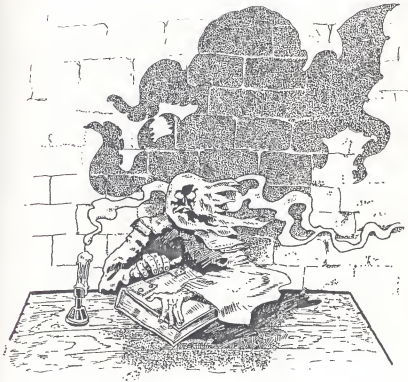
Lastly, while there are recognizable patterns to Lovecraft's construction and use of prehuman words and phrases, there may not be a systematic logic to the language as a whole. But neither is Lovecraft guilty of free-associating sounds in the manner of Robert Blake. As always, he seems to have given as much thought to his linguistic extracts--the total sum of which probably wouldn't fill a single printed page--as he did to his carefully worked-out plots. If there's a key to translating the tongue of the Old Ones, it has so far not been rediscovered. But the haunting possibility remains that the writer who translated his own initials into the prehuman Eic'h-Pi-El may have left a Rosetta Stone of sorts buried in one of his stories or letters . . . if only we knew enough to recognize it.

NOTES

¹Iä seems to equate to the variants hei, ei, and ii. There is also a River Ai mentioned in several dreamworld stories, though this may have simply been borrowed from the city Ai in Joshua 7:2ff.

²Fhtagn is elsewhere rendered as fthagn ("Out of the Eons"), fhtaghn ("The Electric Executioner") and fhgthagn (HPL to Frank Belknap Long, November 22, 1930).

³Speculation; Lovecraft often spoke of "Great Cthulhu." Let's suppose ya means great. Thus, we have Great R'lyeh, Crom the Great, Great Nthlei, and even "Great Shub-Nigurath!" if we include the variant "Iä." Or substitute some other like adjective; they all work. Another word that works this way is ho. See Yian-Ho ("The Diary of Alonzo Typer" and "Through the Gates of the Silver Key"), Shaurash-ho (HPL to CAS, August 1932), all proper names.



FUN GUYS FROM YUGGOTH: Steve Behrends

FROM

The Good News Necronomicon

(TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION)

Yea, and curse the Heavens at the price of dates, grin to the Merchant whose rugs you have stolen, weep at the camel-drops upon your new sandals, yea, even unto that day when

On all we know the Great shall tread
In ages looming e'er ahead.

Think you only of the grit in your goat's milk, your woman's baneful nagging, your enwormed meat-pies, and think you not of

The cessation of your heart and breath
By Those Who eternal live in death.

Think you not of the Thingies Awaiting at Nights's Tent-Flap, Who push the Lands through the Heavens, and Who sow the eves with shadows. Such were They when the World was

a vapour in blackness, for the years are Their moments.

Think you not of Shoozt'thwagah, Who sudseth undisturbed in caverns deep at the Moon's pole; of Hastur, the Unwisely Beckoned, Who wacketh the Aether to confetti with His encrusted Wings; of Vilyeh-Dodjhok, the Ick From the Stars, Who hangeth like a plum from his dung-builed house in residential Bang Dwah; of Drowsy Cthulhu, Who playeth unending rounds of canasta with the fishes in nasty R'lyeh; of Dwllay-Tch'ch, Who is Source and Father of all pus-balls and boils, and Who aideth not in the digestion of celery and hard cheeses . . .

Of all These think you not, nor yet of the children of strange times to come: of Abu Ben Hastur, who was great fun at parties; of Rugose Ruth, who never found love; of popular Jim-Bob Niggurath of the many manhoods . . .

R'lyeh Review

Richard L. Tierney, "The Fire of Mazda" in Orion's Child #1 (available from Orion Press, P. O. Box 75, Hartford, OH 44424-0075, for \$2.50, plus \$1.00 for postage).

(Reviewed by Robert M. Price)

Orion's Child is an ambitious new magazine whose professed aim is to "bring to you the very best of the type of stories so loved during the Golden Age of the genre." By including "The Fire of Mazda" in its first issue, they have certainly gotten off on the right foot. This is the latest of Tierney's chronicles of Simon of Gitta, a fantasy hero who is both swordsman and sorcerer. He is the latter because Simon represents Simon Magus, or Simon the Sorcerer, mentioned in Acts 8:9-11ff. Simon was credited by early Christian heresiologists with being the founder of Gnosticism. Whether this is correct or not, there is definitely known to have been a Simon who founded one of the many Gnostic sects. The Simon stories all presuppose a cosmology based largely on Gnosticism with some Zoroastrian and Cthulhu Mythos elements thrown in. This is less explicit in the earlier tales such as "The Scroll of Thoth," "The Ring of Set," and "The Sword of Spartacus," but it is prominent in "The Fire of Mazda." Here we learn of the creation of the material world by the evil Demiurge Achamoth, or Azathoth. Actually, in the Gnostic systems Achamoth (a corruption of Hokhmah, the personified Wisdom of the Old Testament) was the mother of the misbegotten Demiurge, but the temptation is great to identify Achamoth with the Demiurge since the name is so close to Azathoth, the

"blind idiot god" of Lovecraft's pantheon who "chanced to mould [the earth] in play," a close parallel to the Gnostic Demiurge.

Simon himself represents the incarnation of part of the "sundered soul" of the Lord of Light. Though not an element of Simonian Gnosticism, this does match the myth of Manichean Gnosticism, wherein the Primal Man, or Man of Light, was identified with Ormuzd, or Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Light, in earlier Zoroastrianism. The Primal Man's soul was trapped and scattered throughout the material world, giving it order where there had been chaos.

"The Fire of Mazda" also introduces Simon's love interest, Helen, a mysterious figure who also incarnates the primal spirit of light. Here we have a vestige of Simonian Gnosticism. The historical Simon traveled with a reformed prostitute named Helen, whom he said represented Ennoia, the primordial Thought whom he had rescued from bondage in the brothel of the material world.

"The Fire of Mazda," then, makes careful and imaginative use of various items of Gnostic lore, as does the Simon series generally. But there is good writing here as well, especially the scene in Chapter I, when Simon first beholds a vision of Helen in the stormy skies above Rome. There is also a good treatment of the ambivalent character of Simon's mentor Dositheus (another historic Gnostic sect-leader) who is willing to stoop to using black magic in order to destroy the greater evil of Rome. (By the way, "Seed of the Star God," which appears here next issue, is a sequel to this story.)

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

That illo for "The Haunter of the Dark" [cover, Crypt #22] is striking work and please congratulate the artist--I have never seen a better likeness of me!

Your issue is great, too. The piece on HPL and Isadora Duncan is most intriguing.

--Robert Bloch
Los Angeles, CA

Thank you for Crypt #22. I was much impressed by Doctor McNamara's piece on Lovecraft's dreams. If it had been available when I wrote Lovecraft, it would have affected my book.

About S. T. Joshi's piece on Robert W. Chambers, I can add a point. Chambers wrote four novels laid in Upstate New York at the time of the American Revolution: America; The Little Red Foot; and one other whose name escapes me and which I can't find in my notes. At least one of these, The Little Red Foot, directly influenced Lovecraft's fellow fantasist Robert E. Howard. Howard took the scenery for his Conan stories directly from that novel in "Beyond the Black River," "The Treasure of Tranicos," and "Wolves Beyond the Border," the latter two published posthumously in 1967 with substantial changes and additions by me, in the collection Conan the Usurper. The scenery was that of the Mohawk and Black River Valleys and the Adirondacks. Real places mentioned by Chambers, such as Canajoharie, Caughnawaga, Oriskany, Sacandaga, Schoharie, and Thendara, became Howard's Conajohara, Conawaga, Oriskonie, Scandaga, and Thandara. The Picts were the Iroquois Indians of that time, as described by Cham-

bers and other frontier-story writers, especially those appearing in Adventure Magazine. We can be sure Howard drew from this particular novel because the name of the narrator-hero of "Wolves Beyond the Border," Gault Hagar's son, comes from the names of two families in Chambers' novel: the Hagers and the Gaults.

Howard may have also read one or more of Chambers' other American Revolutionary novels, as well as Fenimore Cooper's novels in the same setting; but The Little Red Foot is the one we can be sure of. It is always risky to say that any voracious reader like Howard had not read the works of some predecessor.

"Thendara" is a special case. The name is used by Chambers' Iroquois a couple of times; but I don't know whence Chambers got it. There was no place of that name in Upstate New York until the early 1920s. Then my father, who owned the tract that included the sawmill village and railroad stop of Old Forge, launched a real-estate development in the region. One of his people had an Iroquois dictionary, and the region blossomed with Iroquois names. Old Forge became Thendara; the Spectacle Ponds, Lakes Tekeni and Easka, &c. I was startled when I came upon Howard's "Thandara," knowing that REH had never been within a thousand miles of Herkimer County, NY. But Chambers' book revealed the source.

--L. Sprague deCamp
Villanova, PA

Crypt 22 is a very good issue. Cover by Koszowski: excellent! He has a real talent and seems to im-

prove each time I see him. Dave Carson was round my place the other night and saw this; he called it great but he did point out that it was supposed to be a three-lobed burning eye, not a three-eyed burning lobe!

Carter, Myers, Howard, Moskowitz, Tierney and Fulwiler were all splendid, which is what you'd expect.

To answer, very quickly (I hope) S. T. Joshi's letter. Yes, I would like to read unadulterated HPL. If you, S. T., are going to do something about it (which is to say, convince a publisher he should give us a complete Lovecraft without errors) then I'm on your side. I'm on your side anyway: I never read anything by you that I didn't find interesting and informative. But each to his own; I personally don't think it matters whether theos/deos, vita/vitta, schon/schön. I haven't time to think it matters! Maybe that's the difference between a scholar and a writer, eh?

But excuse me if I don't agree with you when you say, "There is just as much creativity in a brilliant analysis as in any work of fiction." No way. A chicken can lay an egg, but the egg has to become a chicken first before it can lay an egg. Let's take it logically and from square one:

Just assume that from this moment forward no one writes another word of fiction. What are all you critics and analysts going to do for the rest of your lives? I mean, there's an end to your "creativity"! But the sustained creativity of a writer, which he puts into his stories, is enormous. He's writing it out of his own original thoughts, not merely describing (or distorting) what someone else has written. He has to take the germ of an idea, play with it, plant it in his brain, let it take root there, nurture the bloody thing and finally, when it starts to put up a shoot, water it and train it and prune

it until it's just the right shape. It's all creativity. The guy who comes along and bites bits out of it (or even, on the other hand, says, "Wow!--that's great! A terrific piece of" . . . etc.) is only describing what the author did--usually inadequately and always (where analysis is concerned) inaccurately. Whether the story is good or bad, the critic can't know what the author put into it, or didn't. As to why it was written--especially when the author is dead and can't confirm or deny--how can the analyst hope to get it right? I mean, I write a story because I want to write a story--not because when I was a kid my father screwed my cat. Or I was kept on a bookshelf til I was sixteen. Or my wooden leg has dry rot. (He didn't; I wasn't; it has not, incidentally.)

To say a story is bad is OK if you believe you could do better. To say one is superb is to admit that you couldn't do better--and that's a harder thing to do. As for your list of author/analyst/critics: yes, thank you, you've proved my point. For my money they've all earned the right to be critical! (Except maybe Lovecraft, who, not understanding sex, could hardly hope to give a fair treatment to romance.) Yes, I know he was a male and proved he was a male. There's a tree in my garden that does that every spring. I've no doubt he could do it, I'm just saying he didn't understand it. I don't think my tree does either.

But it's my opinion anyway that there are a lot of critic/analysts about who shouldn't criticize and couldn't analyse to save their souls. Phil Pannagio, in his letter in 22, throws light on just such a case.

God help me, when I die, please don't let anyone start writing essays on why I wrote this or that! I write stories because it's better than

humping coal or cleaning streets or being a toilet attendant. I imagine the people I take issue with have their reasons, too, but they can't be the same as mine because toilet attendant is definitely preferable.

But the truth will out. Eventually one of these Jungian/Freudian exploiters of the dead will smuggle a piece of fiction into print, and when that happens there'll be a hell of a lot of us punched-holes-in, berated, bruised and battered, proven scribblers out here just waiting to join the ranks of that long list of yours and turn critics in our own rights! (You will of course understand that the main body of these anti-characters [antibodies?] is chiefly active in the Lovecraft circle / Mythos related fields.)

To close: A writer of fiction is a man who tells lies for money. That's his job, by which he eats. The better he lies the more his readers like him. Critics on the other hand are supposed to tell the truth about what they read or the way they interpret it; but occasionally it's an excuse to glorify themselves and say "Hey, look how clever I am!" Which is to say that every now and then they are bigger liars than the writers!

A coroner carrying out an autopsy can be brilliantly "incisive"--but when he's finished carving up the body, will he ever be brilliant enough to build a new one?

Something else to think about: even your author/critics occasionally make a crap of it. One such, (in my opinion vastly overrated and dry and tasteless as cardboard on a hot day) has it that the second paragraph in HPL's "The Hound" is "an atrocious piece of writing . . . not, as one might suspect, a piece of juvenilia." Now, I'm just about ready to agree with him--about that paragraph! There are others in the story

just as bad. But when you link them all together, including all the good lines, and read them and begin to feel the mood, then something quite different emerges. I like the story, for all that I know it's not superbly written. Even if the writing is bad, there's something behind it which is brilliant! But if I had heard only the critic's voice, why!--I might not have wanted to read "The Hound" in the first place! Heaven forbid! (The same author / critic / analyst has it that "The Music of Erich Zann" is "crude." Parts of it may be, but overall it's a gem! And the same guy has written a couple of "Mythos" things to show how good he can do it. Well, I don't know if he fooled you but he didn't fool me. Cardboard! Lovecraft, even at his worst, gave me a certain frisson. He may not have been the world's best writer, but he did have one of the finest imaginations.

Genuine scholarship--like yours --I admire. Genuine criticism has to have its good points. Genuine analysis may be of value to minds that way inclined. But when critics/analysts/and scholars crit, an, and schol just to see their names in print, that's a different bag of shoggoths entirely . . .

--Brian Lumley
London, England

Dear Mr. Lumley,

Though I hate your style and decidedly think it stinks indeed--this is of course what I meant when croaking all my hatred and sickening at your smell--I gladly found with great amusement that you have a good sense of humor, if nothing else, and I wanted you to know I certainly appreciated it, reading "Comments on Robert M. Price's 'Brian Lumley--Reanimator.'" You know, frogs have their own

peculiar behavior, and St. Toad is often the target of numerous misunderstandings. Of course you hardly know me for I don't hang around your sock drawer at all. It possesses some strange misty effects on my proboscis . . . The thing in your drawer a couple of weeks ago couldn't be me, for I was on a business trip with Yibb-Tstill aboard a time-and-space-traveling clock. But maybe next time?

Anyway, I've taken an indisputable interest in the multiple ways to avoid your literary invasion; thanks for your gracious help. Yet, frogs rarely need a scuba while diving . . .

So, I wanted you to be assured I was sensible to your deliciously squamous sense of humor, really! And if indeed being a coprocephaloid makes my smile not too evident, having it where my mouth should be, I wish my thoughts regarding your style you wouldn't take as a personal attack. It wasn't. You might be one Ithaqua of a bad writer, you sure are a fine humorist, never refusing to grin . . .

--Patrice deG. Joubert
Ripon, Quebec, Canada

I read Hoffman's "Supernatural Horror in Lovecraft" and thought it good. This sort of horror is hard to put a finger on. Personally I find "real-world" horror much more horrifying, but it is lacking in fascination. Nothing fascinating about being mauled by animals, knifed by punks, lynched by rednecks or paralyzed in a car wreck. In such real-world disasters the horror is in the scuzzi-ness of it all--the realization of being undone by forces inferior, stupid, even mindless. I find tales of such things unpleasant, and would never read a story for horror alone. No, fascination's the thing. Lovecraft's "wrongness" never really horrifys

me, and I doubt it did him. Violation of natural laws is at least as fascinating as it is fear-inspiring. Personally, I would love to violate the restrictions of time, space and natural law, but would be horrified to see them violated by anyone else. I'd never trust anyone but myself with such powers!

--Richard L. Tierney
Mason City, IA

In "A Weird Tales Filmography," p. 37, col. 2, l. 8, "It was not released in the U. S." should read "It was not released in the U. S. until 1970." [Crypt #22]

I must disagree with Steve Mari-conda's conclusion that "The House of the Worm" couldn't possibly have been the provisional title of "The Shunned House." As indicated by these passages from Selected Letters I, it was not the New Jersey house alone, but also the memories it evoked of another house, that sparked the writing of the story:

It reminded me of the Babbitt house in Benefit Street, which as you recall made me write those lines entitled The House in 1920. Later its image came up again with renewed vividness, finally causing me to write a new horror story with its scene in Providence and with the Babbitt house as its basis (p. 357).

Riding home on the subway, I was struck with the memory of weird things I had seen at twilight in Elizabethtown, and other weird things of longer ago--and at once realised that I was about to write a story (p. 359).

The plot germ of this story may have been gestating in Lovecraft's mind for years--possibly since 1920,

when he wrote "The House." Circa 1922, he wrote the following in his Commonplace Book:

Horrible Colonial farmhouse &
overgrown garden on city hillside
--overtaken by growth. Verse
"The House" as basis of story.

Lovecraft later crossed out this entry and wrote beside it "Shunned House"--indicating the idea was used in writing the tale.

In letters written in February 1924, HPL said his idea for "The House of the Worm" was "partly shaped" (SL I, p. 295) and had "for some time been simmering unwholesomely in my consciousness" (p. 304). I believe Lovecraft had the Babbitt house idea in mind at this time, but didn't fully develop the plot of the story until eight months later, when the sight of the New Jersey house stimulated his imagination. Therefore, there is no contradiction in Lovecraft's reference to "The Shunned House" as a "new" story.

As Professor Dirk W. Mosig has observed, "The Shunned House" is thematically related to "The Festival" (1923). The fate of the dead wizard in the former tale is explained in the translated passage from the Necronomicon which serves as the terminal paragraph of "The Festival":

"The nethermost caverns," wrote the mad Arab, "are not for the fathoming of eyes that see; for their marvels are strange and terrific. Cursed the ground where dead thoughts live new and oddly bodied, and evil the mind that is held by no head. Wisely did Ibn Schacabao say, that happy is the tomb where no wizard hath lain, and happy the town at night whose wizards are all ashes. For it is

of old rumour that the soul of the devil-bought hastes not from his charnel clay, but fests and instructs the very worm that gnaws; till out of corruption horrid life springs, and the dull scavengers of earth wax crafty to vex it and swell monstrous to plague it. Great holes secretly are digged where earth's pores ought to suffice, and things have learnt to walk that ought to crawl!" (Dagon, p. 195).

I think this passage makes clear the meaning of the title "The House of the Worm."

--William Fulwiler
Duncanville, TX

I read Sam Moskowitz's article on Buchan with interest, since I recently read Buchan for the first time while researching an anthology. But I wonder why Sam didn't go right to the obvious source and discuss the three stories that Lovecraft actually mentions, "The Green Wildebeast," "The Wind in the Portico," and "Skule Skerry." These are all to be found in Tales of the Runagates Club (1928), which we can be sure Lovecraft read. That he read The Watcher at the Threshold is only conjecture.

Of course Runagates Club was published too late to be a formative influence on Lovecraft, but I am sure it appealed to him as the work of a kindred spirit. "The Wind in the Portico" is especially Lovecraftian in its premise and structure. In it, one scholarly gent is visiting the house of another, who has excavated the altar of the ancient Celtic god Vaunus. Needless to say, no good comes of this. Vaunus is a thoroughly frightful fire entity, and the meddling scholar (the owner of the house, not the narrator) meets an unspeakable end. The story has the

characteristically Lovecraftian beginning, slowly-paced, with lots of local color, suspicions raised and only partially allayed, more explorations of the nature of the phenomenon, and finally, a half-seen horror in the night which confirms the protagonist's worst suspicions. The protagonist has a little more spunk than the typical Lovecraftian one. He tries to save his friend, but is driven back by the flames, and ends up in the usual state of confusion, delirium, and lingering dread.

The other two stories mentioned are not especially Lovecraftian, although "Skule Skerry" has all the fear-drenched atmosphere that HPL regarded as so important.

There is another Buchan fantasy collection, The Moon Endureth (1912) which also bears investigation in this light. I haven't read it yet, but I note that the story "Space" is synopsised in this manner by Bleiler in his Guide to Supernatural Fiction: "Hollond, a mathematician, discovers the nature of space and the laws governing it; he can move about freely in hyperspace while he sleeps. But psychologically, the discovery is almost unbearable, because of presences in space."

Well, doesn't that sound awfully familiar? I shall have to read it. It sounds like a lower-key version of "Dreams in the Witch House."

We don't need to look to Buchan, finally, for the source of the Lovecraftian concepts of an older race lurking in the remote parts of the British Isles, which menace mankind, pursue hapless victims through lonely glens, etc., etc. (I am referring to the synopsis of "No Man's Land" on page 15.) "No Man's Land" may be as typical a story as Lovecraft, or Buchan, ever wrote, but of course Arthur Machen wrote it first. This is almost a synopsis of "The

Novel of the Black Seal" in The Three Impostors (1895), with which Lovecraft was thoroughly familiar.

Is there any actual evidence that Lovecraft ever read The Watcher at the Threshold?

--Darrell Schweitzer
Strafford, PA

Your magazine continues to be a fascinating forum for Lovecraft lore, though I could do without the deadly dull R. E. Howard entry ["The Fear-Master," in Crypt #22].

Allen Koszowski's cover for #22 was marvelously lurid and dramatic.

Risque Stories #1 was quite a treat. I look forward to further issues, as well as the premiere issue of Shudder Stories.

It was quite admirable for you to print Brian Lumley's rather scathing reply to your article on his works. Such controversy galvanizes the atmosphere of your publication, as well as revealing a bit about the personality of the author.

Keep up the good work! The high quality of Crypt reflects well upon its founder and editor. My best wishes go to you for all your future endeavors.

--Peter H. Gilmore
New York, NY

Crypt #22 was a good one, starting with Allen Koszowski's outstanding cover. When I look at something like that it makes me feel that, as artists, we're all just twiddling our thumbs. Beautiful.

The rest was typically fascinating. But someone should look into Weird Tales on TV as a follow-up to the "Weird Tales Filmography."

--John Borkowski
West Haven, CT

[Fulwiler is already working on it!
--Ed.]

I wanted to drop you a note to tell you I enjoyed issues 20 & 21 of Crypt. However, I would like to point out to Mr. Schultz that there is no "lack of continuity" in Lovecraft's Fungi from Yuggoth; please advise him to read Stanza #36 of the poem. (Seems awfully simple, doesn't it?)

Likewise, you may wish to advise Mr. Joshi that the "young poet in Dunedin" from his edition of Saturnalia is Allan Brownell Grayson, a friend of Whitehead's. The poem was written c. 30 May 1931. (I owe this information to Mr. Kenneth W. Faig, Jr.)

--Elmer R. Mudgett
Wauwatosa, WI

Crypt #22 was a good issue, not spectacular, but a nice effort.

I am trying to restrain myself on the subject of "The Fear-Master" as I am too furious to do so reasonably.

Brian Lumley's comments were amusing (his defense of himself, not his weak humor). But he had better learn to read his HPL. His own quote: "The Old Ones had. . . Shog-

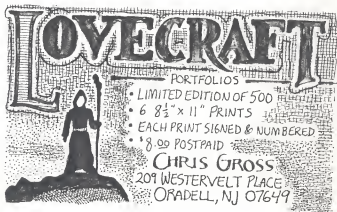
goth tissue from which to breed stone-lifters . . . , and other protoplasmic matter to mold into phosphorescent organisms for lighting purposes" (emphasis mine). Sorry, Lumley, but you've lost this round.

"Reuterdaahl, Relativity and the 'Aimless Waves'" was, to my mind, the gem of the issue. The confusion of fact and fiction was complete, it was well written, and truly entertaining

"The Unpleasant Dreams of H. P. Lovecraft" was an important essay. I knew most of what it had to say, but it was good to see it all in one place, and stated so cleanly and concisely.

"Supernatural Horror in Lovecraft's Literature" was also interesting. Yet I feel, much as we love him, we cannot credit HPL with "eschewing as 'tradesmanlike' any commercial considerations." Indeed, his revisions alone are almost purely commercial, but a number of good points are made. Especially regarding old movies.

--Jeffrey Weinberger
Cambridge, MA



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NEXT TIME ...

Richard L. Tierney is a long-time fan of both Robert E. Howard and H. P. Lovecraft, and it is no coincidence to find that many of their fans are fans of Tierney's as well. He has written some excellent fiction carrying on the Weird Tales tradition but with a style and flair uniquely his own. Crypt of Cthulhu #24 is devoted to Richard L. Tierney and will feature these items of Tierneyana:

"The Howler in the Dark" by Richard L. Tierney

"Seed of the Star-God" (a new "Simon of Gitta" adventure) by Richard L. Tierney

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(At the base of Peter H. Gilmore's "Stele of Cthulhu," the top row of hieroglyphs reads "Crypt of Cthulhu." The bottom reads "Great One, Serpent Demon, Terrible One.")