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CRYPT OF CTHULHU

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Debatable and Disturbing: **EDITORIAL SHARDS**

Winfield Townley Scott once dubbed H. P. Lovecraft "his own most fantastic creation," and certainly many have found him to be so. The typical Lovecraftian begins by being captivated by HPL's fiction, then moves on to absorption in the man himself, in all his fascinating eccentricity, as if one might thus become a latter-day member of the Kalem Club. This Lovecraft personality cult has had some interesting results, one of which is the production of a small genre of fiction in which Lovecraft has become a character. Such a development is a natural one for two reasons. First, HPL was so unusual and interesting a figure that one might easily take him for a fictional character. Second, the personal devotion many Lovecraftians feel for their departed Master has caused them to trade apocryphal stories, just as legends and anecdotes grew up about the charismatic figures of Jesus, the Buddha, Saint Francis, and the Hasidic zaddiks. Only most of the tales of HPL are admitted fictions.

We have seen a number of such fictions lately, most notably Peter Cannon's Pulptime, in which HPL and Frank Belknap Long team up with Sherlock Holmes; Richard Lupoff's Lovecraft's Book, wherein

HPL gets mixed up with Nazi spies; Fred Chappell's "Weird Tales," in which HPL and Samuel Loveman encounter weird entities; and a recent tale in the "Heroes in Hell" series in which the shades of HPL and Robert E. Howard meet Gilgamesh and others in the netherworld.

This present issue of Crypt of Cthulhu, "The Adventures of H. P. Lovecraft" continues this trend by bringing you five more apocryphal adventures of Lovecraft, some parodic, some straightfaced. Robert Eber's "Howard Lovecraft and the Terror from Beyond" was culled from an old Esoteric Order of Dagon mailing at the advice of Randall Larson. Philip Weber's "The Man Who Collected Lovecraft," obviously and unashamedly inspired by Robert Bloch's "The Man Who Collected Poe," is not to be confused with Gregory Nicoll's tale of the same title (available in Etchings & Odysseys #5), which is an affectionate spoof-tribute to Lovecraft scholar Dirk W. Mosig.

After five such tales, you may or may not be in the mood for an article, "Lovecraft as a Character in Lovecraftian Fiction," which surveys the development of the whole trend.

Robert M. Price, Editor

THE VOLUME OUT OF PRINT

By Jim Cort

"What I am trying to achieve, in my own small way, is the placing on paper of the Ultimate Horror. I want to render in prose the terror that all of us have felt, lurking just beneath the surface. Not merely the fear of death, but the more encompassing, eldritch and nerve-shattering fear that things are not as they should be; that the assumptions from which we have hung our petty lives are in fact false; that there is nothing to stand between us and the outer darkness."

The editor shifted in his chair. "That's very interesting, Mr. Lovecraft, and very well put, may I add. But I'm afraid we're looking for something a little different here at Vanity Fair."

I hadn't really expected it to work. After a few polite questions and strained pleasantries, we got up to leave. The editor held me back when Howard left the room. "Where did you find that guy?" he asked.

"He followed me home," I said. "Thanks anyway."

Howard Lovecraft was newly arrived in New York City, fresh from Providence with a new wife and no job. He was making a little money from writing an occasional weird story, and a little more from revising the work of others not nearly so talented as he. But it wasn't enough.

I was working for an ad agency then and had quite a few contacts at the magazines around town. I didn't realize at first that Howard would be a harder product to market than Maxwell's Broccoli Flavored Gum. I could get him an interview with an editor. I could even accompany him into the office. But after that, it was up to Howard. And somehow Howard always managed to say the wrong thing.

Not that he was offensive. How-

ard would never give offense. No, he just sat there—well, being Howard. He would go on about the Ultimate Horror, or launch into a learned discourse on Eighteenth Century architecture, or turn so diffident that even while asking for the job, he would somehow imply he wasn't good enough for it. Needless to say, none of these approaches proved very successful.

We reached the street and Howard said, "I don't think it went well." He said it as if there might be some doubt in the matter.

"No," I said, "it didn't go well. Howard, you've got to start taking an interest in your own future. You've got to approach this job hunting business seriously."

Howard looked pained. "But I am, Jimmy. I don't think that's fair. I'm trying very hard to justify your confidence in me. I'm sure I could perform splendidly in any of these positions. It's just acquiring the position that seems to defeat me. I'm too old for this."

I said, "Howard, you're only 34. And you can get any job you want if you put your mind to it. You've got to keep to the point. You can't go off on tangents all the time. People get the wrong idea. Like that screwy stuff you told the guy from Collier's."

"I merely assured him that I would not permit my pure Anglo-Saxon heritage to cause me to look down upon members of the staff whose ancestry was less fortunate than my own. People care about things like that."

"No, they don't."

"The best people do," he insisted.

Howard had one basic and apparently insoluble problem: He didn't belong in the Twentieth Century. I'm sure being the lord of some estate in the 1700s in Merrie Olde England would have suited

him to a "T." I can picture him sitting around arguing politics with Addison and swapping verses with Pope. I can't picture him dealing with rush hour on the subway five days a week or punching a time clock. It was as if someone had kidnapped him from 1754 in Mr. H. G. Wells' time machine and dumped him in New York City in 1924.

"Howard, you have to understand everyone's not like you," I told him. "You've got to play by their rules if you want to get ahead. You've got to sell yourself."

He looked like I had suggested he sell his mother, not himself. "Heaven forbid! Jimmy, I'm surprised at you. There are some things to which a gentleman does not stoop."

* * *

When we got to Howard's apartment his wife Sonia was there to greet us. The desk was covered with hats and fabric samples from her new hat shop. Howard wrapped his little finger around hers and squeezed. "How are you, my dear?"

"Just fine, Howard," she replied. "How did it go?"

"Not badly, but not well," he answered.

She glanced at me over his shoulder and I shook my head. She sighed resignedly.

"Have you seen Mr. Houdini today, my dear?" asked Howard.

"No," said Sonia, "he hasn't come out yet, Howard."

As he moved toward the closet, I whispered to Sonia, "Harry Houdini?"

She nodded. "He was here to discuss a story he and Howard had done together when he suddenly got a brainstorm about a new escape stunt. He tied himself up with his own belt and insisted we lock him in the closet. That was two days ago. He hasn't come out since."

Howard was tapping softly at the closet door. "Mr. Houdini," he said, "are you all right?"

There was a clatter of coat hangers from the other side of the door, and a sound like a body landing heavily on a pile of shoes. "Yes," said a muffled voice, "I'm all right."

"Is there anything we can get you? Something to eat, perhaps?"

"No thanks." Then a sound like a closet shelf collapsing.

Sonia winced. Howard winced, too. He said, "There were a couple of items in the closet that we'll be needing—ah—soon—"

"Won't be much longer," said the voice. "Nearly got it now. This is going to be a swell trick—oof!" This last accompanied by a crash that shook one of the pictures off the adjoining wall.

"Howard," said Sonia, "how long are we going to put up with this?"

Howard said, "Really, my dear, we can't be rude. Anyway, Mr. Houdini is a great artist. We must make allowances. Shall we have some dinner?"

* * *

The next evening I found a note in Howard's crabbled, old-fashioned hand tucked under my door when I got back from work:

Jimmy,

Felicitous news! Gainful employment at last! Promise of much cash & pleasant work! Finally something worthy of a gentleman.

SH is off on a commercial trip, so Grandpa is being domestick by himself tonight. Could you bring over your Latin lexicon? Mine's in with Brother Houdini.

HPL

P. S. Bring ice cream.

"SH" was how he referred to Sonia. The reference to ice cream was intriguing, for it indicated that Howard truly considered this Reason to Celebrate. I ate a quick dinner and stopped by the store as I walked to Howard's place. I

arrived with the ice cream in one hand and my old Latin dictionary in the other. Howard answered my knock and hustled me inside. "You got my note," he said.

"Yes. What's this all about?"

"A job, Jimmy, a job," he replied as he took my parcels. "And it came to me. It just shows the advantages of a classical education. What flavor of ice cream is this?"

"Tutti-frutti."

"It sounds foreign," he said.

We wound up in the parlor eating tutti-frutti ice cream (of which, foreign or not, Howard had two helpings), and I got the story. A man had come by the apartment in the afternoon, fortunately after Howard was awake. Sonia had left that morning on a buying trip for her shop, so Howard had answered the door himself.

"It was remarkable," he said. "There he stood, like something out of Oliver Twist."

"Who?"

"He said his name was Alonzo Vermin, but I suspect that's an alias."

"Howard, be sensible. Who would change his name to 'Vermin'?"

"He had a book. Quite an old book, as it turns out, all in Latin, which he needed translated. He'd seen my advertisement in the local press and thought I was just the fellow. He was pleased at the number of elderly tomes I have here. Said it made him feel more secure leaving the book with me. It's quite rare, apparently."

"What sort of book is it?"

"That's the most intriguing part," said Howard eagerly. "It seems to be some sort of grimoire, a weird book of some kind, anyway. I've been able to translate a few passages already. Listen to this: 'It is of old rumor that the devil-bought hastes not from his charnel clay, but fats 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.' Isn't that wonderful?"

"Charming. I guess there are no pictures."

"This is just the sort of thing I can use for my stories," said Howard. "I've been taking notes for myself as I go along. The thing's an absolute treasure trove."

"May I see this book?"

Howard said "Certainly." He disappeared into the study and returned with a large black-bound volume and placed it in my hands. It was heavy and musty and half again as big as a telephone book. The pages were brittle parchment and covered with Latin paragraphs in the Black Letter style. On the front cover, embossed in the black leather was what looked like "RON CO."

"Who's Ron?" I asked.

"Some of the letters have been obliterated," said Howard. "As I told you, it's quite old."

"How much are you getting paid for this, Howard?"

"One hundred dollars," said Howard proudly, "five dollars as a deposit. Excuse me, I must just put this back in the study. I promised Mr. Vermin I'd take good care of it."

He had barely left the room with the book under his arm when the apartment door suddenly burst open and a large man stood in the doorway.

"Thought you could pull a fast one on me, eh?" he said. "Where's the book?" His face looked like it had been stepped on frequently and with great enthusiasm. He had a voice like Wallace Beery with a bad head cold.

Thinking quickly, I said, "I beg your pardon?"

"The book," he growled, "the black book. Where is it?"

"You must be Ron."

"Don't give me that stuff. I'm Vermin."

"I don't doubt it," I said.

"Oh, a wise guy, eh?" he said, and drew from his pocket a very nasty looking pistol.

I smiled just as soothingly as I knew how and said, "I believe you want my friend, Mr. Lovecraft."

As if on cue, Howard appeared in the doorway.

"Put your hands up in the air," ordered Vermin.

Howard looked indignant. "A gentleman would never assume such a ridiculous position."

"Mustn't annoy Mr. Vermin, Howard," I said, still smiling, "He has a gun."

"This isn't Mr. Vermin," said Howard indignantly. "This man is an imposter."

"Howard," I said, a little more insistently, "don't be rude. Mr. Vermin wants his book back."

"This is not Mr. Vermin. This is not the man who gave me the book. I'm certainly not going to turn it over to him." Howard had always been a man of high moral principles. I wanted to strangle him.

The man called Vermin eyed us suspiciously, or maybe that was just the natural cast of his face. "Wait a minute," he growled, "whaddya mean gave you the book? Lonnie, get in here!"

This last remark was made facing us, and it took me a moment to realize that it was not directed at us. For after a second a short, scrawny fellow with a limp and a bad complexion skulked around the door jamb. If Alfalfa Switzer had gone on the skids, he would have wound up looking like this.

"That's Mr. Vermin," said Howard.

"Introduce me, Lonnie," said the man with the gun.

"Mr. Lovecraft," mumbled Lonnie, staring at the floor, "this is m'brother Greg."

"Pleased to meet you," said Howard.

"Yeah," said Greg.

"Mr. Vermin," said Howard petulantly, "what is all this about?"

"Yeah, Lonnie," said Greg in a far less pleasant tone, "what's all this about? You told me this bird stole the book."

"Mr. Vermin!" Howard was appalled.

Greg clapped his hand on top of Alonzo's head and grabbed a hand-

ful of greasy hair. He then lifted his brother two feet off the floor until his face was level with his own. "You been playin' me for a sap," said Greg. "You give this guy the book, didn't you?"

"I was just gonna have him translate it," squeaked Alonzo, "while you was away. That's all. Pummee down, Greg." He hung from his brother's hand like a mail sack from a hook, running through an unpleasantly large repertoire of horrid faces.

"Translate, huh? While I was away, huh? So maybe you'd have a nice surprise for me when I come back, huh?" With every "huh" Greg gave Lonnie a vicious shake. "Jeez, Lonnie, ain't I got enough to worry about?" he went on in a softer tone. "What's the matter with you? Is it my fault I can make the book work and you can't? Is it my fault you flunked Latin? Why didn't you study like Mom told you? You never listened to anything Mom said."

"A boy's best friend is his mother," said Howard.

"Listen, Greg," I said as mildly as I could, "it must be awfully uncomfortable holding your brother and that heavy gun, too. Why don't you put the gun down?"

"Don't you like me, Lonnie?" said Greg, putting nothing down. "Ain't I always treated you right? What do you want to sneak around like this for?"

"I'd be glad to hold the gun for you," I added.

Lonnie's eyes filled with tears, whether from remorse or pain it was difficult to say. "Awww, Greg. I just wanted to be important, like you. I just wanted to help. I didn't mean nothing by it."

Greg said, "I was gonna let you help. I was gonna let you help tonight. You coulda asked me. What do you want to tell me stories for? I'm all embarrassed here."

"Awww, Greg," said Lonnie again, "I never meant for that to happen. I thought you was just gonna shoot 'em." He tried to look endearing and nearly succeeded, in

a Cabinet of Dr. Caligari sort of way. "Listen," he said, "couldn't we just forget the whole thing?"

Greg Vermin's face did something which might have been smiling. "Yeah, OK. We got more important stuff to do." He set his brother carefully on the floor and turned to Howard. "Mr. Lovecraft, I wanna 'pologize for thinkin' you stole the Necronomicon."

"Necronomicon," said Howard, "is that what it's called? Greek isn't it?"

"I dunno," said Greg. He raised the gun to point at Howard's nose. "Anyway, hand it over, or I'll blow your brains out. We got no time to lose. At 11:59 tonight we can open the gate."

"What gate?" asked Howard.

"Never mind, Howard," I said in a strangled voice. "Just give him the book and he'll go away."

"The gate," said Greg, "the gate to the other side where the Old Guys wait."

"The Old Guys?"

"Yeah, the Old Guys," said Greg impatiently. "Like it says in the book: Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathep, Cthulhu, Hastur,—"

"Gesundheit," said Howard.

"We can use the spells in the book to bring 'em through," said Lonnie.

"They'll take over everything," said Greg.

"Wipe out everybody," continued Lonnie.

Howard's eyes were glittering. "This is fascinating."

"No, it's not, Howard," I pleaded "Give them the book."

"Yeah," sneered Lonnie, "we don't want to keep them boys waitin' any longer. They been waitin' since before time began already."

"I must get this down," said Howard. He rummaged at the desk for pencil and paper and began scribbling furiously.

"Howard," I said, trying not to sound as hysterical as I was, "the man has a gun."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Howard without looking up, "We'll leave

that part out. Firearms are vulgar."

"It's almost time" said Greg, brandishing the pistol. "We need that book now. We gotta do it at 11:59 exactly. Like it says: la! Cthulhu fhtagn!"

"How do you spell that?" said Howard, still scribbling.

Greg turned to his brother in confusion. "He don't think we're serious."

"Prove it to him," said Lonnie. "Shoot his friend."

They both looked at me.

My stomach immediately plummeted to my knees. I tried to call Howard again, but my voice was too frightened to come out. The muzzle of the pistol that Greg pointed at me was the meanest, blackest hole I had ever seen.

Suddenly the closet door burst open and Harry Houdini stumbled out, his belt around his neck and his pants around his ankles. "I've done it!" he shouted.

Both of the Vermins yelled and swung around. Greg fired and a vase on the bookcase behind Houdini exploded into pnakotic fragments. Houdini plunged forward, tripping on his pants, and cracked his head against the leg of the sofa.

I grabbed the first thing I could lay my hand on, which happened to be the ice cream container, and threw it at the Vermins. Then, astonishing no one more than myself, I jumped out of my chair and landed on them both. We all collapsed to the floor in a heap and I tried to wrestle the gun from Greg's grip. I don't think I could have done it with a crowbar. He stood up with me clinging to his arm like a gibbon to a tree limb. His shirt was covered with tutti-frutti ice cream, and he did not look pleased.

Howard stood up from the desk, a look of outrage on his face. "That's quite enough," he said. "That vase belonged to my grandfather."

Lonnie lay crumpled on the floor, since his brother had landed

on top of him, and Greg still had the gun. He had a look on his face which I saw some years later in the movies on the face of King Kong. I don't like to think what would have happened then if the clock on the mantel hadn't chimed.

Greg stared at it, transfixed, as it chimed twelve times. He turned to Howard. "Is that clock right?"

"Of course," said Howard, "it's from Providence."

"Midnight," said Greg softly. "Too late." He let the arm to which I still clung fall limply to his side, and I slipped off at his feet. The gun tumbled from his hand and landed in my lap, scaring me all over again. "I can't do anything right," he went on. "I couldn't even make the book work right, not really. Mom was right. I shoulda been a bus driver."

He stepped over his brother and me and sat down heavily on the sofa. He looked at the two of us forlornly.

"How did you come by this book?" asked Howard. He was still taking notes.

"Me an' Lonnie found it someplace down in Greenwich Village," said Greg absently. "We was looking for a book the right size to put under a table leg. It cost fifty cents, I think."

"But all this destruction you were going to cause," said Howard, "all these beings from another place whom you were going to unleash. What made you think of that?"

Greg shrugged. "It was somethin' to do. My heart wasn't really in it, though. What I really wanna do is get out and meet people. I been thinking more and more about bein' a bus driver like Mom said. You get to meet people when you're a bus driver. I like people, really. It's just sometimes I get upset. You might not believe this, but lots of people are scared of me."

I said, "No kidding," as I emptied the shells from his gun.

"No, really," said Greg. Next to him on the floor Houdini groaned. Greg leaned over absently, picked him up with one hand and sat him on the sofa. "I don't know why. If I was a bus driver, I'd get to meet people all the time. Get to talk with them; get to know them. Maybe some of them would like me. I could drive one of those big double-decker ones, the kind they have on Fifth Avenue. I think they're swell."

Howard said, "I ride busses frequently. People often have pleasant conversations with the drivers. I'm sure it's a fine profession."

Greg Vermin stood up like a man remade. "Yeah," he said, "that's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna give up all this spook stuff and be a bus driver." He stepped to the middle of the room and picked up his brother's inert form. "Sorry about the vase. Suppose you keep the book, would that square it?"

Howard began, "Oh the book is far too valu—"

"Yes, thank you," I said quickly, "that would do nicely. So long. Don't let us keep you."

Greg walked slowly out the door, carrying his brother like a suitcase at his side. "Maybe Lonnie could be a conductor," he mumbled as he disappeared through the door.

"Not a bad egg, really," said Howard, "but his grammar is atrocious."

"I'm riding the subway from now on," I said.

Houdini groaned again on the sofa.

"Do you think you could look after Mr. Houdini?" said Howard. "I've got some reading I'd like to do."

"Sure," I said. "I could use the rest."

"Thanks, Jimmy." He picked up my Latin dictionary and went into the study. I don't think I'd ever seen him quite so contented.

MIDNIGHT IN PROVIDENCE

By Charles Garofalo

Time stopped in Providence at midnight. Not every midnight, but it did this particular one. It froze as the earth on the old grave cracked . . . moved . . . then exploded upwards. The skeleton of Howard Phillips Lovecraft rose and stepped out of it. With stumbling, unsure steps, the mortal remains of the old writer looked around at the wide expanse of the beautiful, moonlit memorial park. The Lovecraft plot almost overlooked the Narraganset Bay. Lovecraft saw he would have to cross the entire, quite large, cemetery to reach the road. Slowly, he set out for the cemetery fence.

No Lovecraft fans were holding covert midnight vigils at his grave this particular night. The cemetery caretaker, in the best tradition of Lovecraft's own stories, was too drunk to notice anything amiss. No one saw as the skeleton, from which hung the rags of an antiquated dress suit, left Swan Point Cemetery. Just as well. Even dead, a tall, unathletic writer awkwardly climbing over a fence is a rather ludicrous sight.

Lovecraft turned his steps toward the heart of Providence. His goal was a suburb on the other side of the town, a residential district which hadn't begun to be built until long after his death. But he knew about it, and he knew he had to go there. Death, for him, had been a paradox. Lovecraft had lain in his grave all these years, yet somehow he had also been aware of every single matter that might have remotely involved him, whether it had been a story of his being reprinted, a critic or biographer setting down his opinion of him, or even two readers talking him over. For a writer, such a fate might prove either heaven or hell, depending on the verdict of

his critics. As Lovecraft had expected to find only the unconsciousness all atheists predict comes after death (with occasional apprehensions of the fires of the Puritan hell during his blacker moods), he had been more than content to accept his lot.

What was going on in a strange dark house in the suburbs intimately involved him. And there was no possible way he could accept it.

Lovecraft knew he was lucky that time had stopped, as often happened when supernatural incidents occurred. There was no way he could have made it across town in time, otherwise. A shambling skeleton just doesn't get anywhere fast. He had no illusions about the possibility of waving down a car. True, there were far more cars out, even at night, than there ever were in his day, but it would have been unfair to expect the average driver to stop to pick up the walking dead.

Lovecraft slowly but purposefully marched through the sidestreet storefront district of Providence at the base of College Hill. He vaguely wished he could take the time to visit old haunts, but he had no idea how long time would stand still. As it was, he could not help noticing the changes, how so many of those old buildings he'd loved had been allowed to fall into decrepitude, and how many more had been torn down and replaced by modern structures. It grieved the antiquarian in him to see how his town had changed. Those old buildings had been ugly and ornate, even he had to admit, but they had had personality, something that the bland, characterless structures that for the most part replaced them sorely lacked. The occasional old building that was well preserved or possibly even restored

to something like its prime—usually a church or mansion—served to make the sad decline of the rest of the city even more obvious. As he trudged up Angell Street, he was almost relieved to see the Fleur-de-Lis building unchanged. Once he had called it hideous, and it was, but the new List Art Building up ahead, with its ultramodern, and ultra-ugly, design made the old Victorian pile look positively beautiful by contrast. Oh yes, he already knew of the List Art Building. They had moved his old residence, where he had written "The Haunter of the Dark," over a block or two to make room for it. A thing like that wasn't likely to escape his notice even if he was dead. No wonder crime was up and morals were declining these days, the skeleton thought. It would be easier for the average human being to adjust to one of the alien cities I put in my stories than to live his life in this barren modern town.

For all his dislike of the new Providence, Lovecraft had to fight to keep his mind on the matter at hand. There were temptations . . . to go visit College Street out of nostalgia, the temptation the various book stores held for him even after all these years (and to think his poor efforts were now for sale in many of them!).

Those few he encountered made no attempt to stop him. Of course, caught as they were between passing moments, they stood frozen and staring, unable to see him. As he predicted in many of his works, a goodly percentage of the people he passed were dark, foreign types, and he saw that a number of stores had signs in languages other than English.

He stopped to observe (he could not say "admire") himself in a large mirror in a store front. Too bad this business hadn't occurred before time and the worm had reduced him to bare bones. A skeleton was unpleasant enough, but a decaying corpse with its skin flaking off revealing the ghastly charnal flesh beneath would have been even more

horrifying and effective. The resuscitated cadaver from his tale "The Outsider," now that would have really filled the bill.

Well, he'd have to make do with what he had, and hope it was enough . . .

* * *

The neighborhood was affluent; everybody in it was either at the absolute top of the middle class, or outright rich. It was new, fresh; the buildings were all in beautiful shape, despite the wide variation in building styles; the parked cars he saw were all big and shiny.

So much for his stories, where squalid, mongrel foreigners worked the evil rituals in old tenement houses in the heart of dreary slums. As he homed in on his goal . . . an attractive if inaccurate imitation of an old German hunting lodge, he heard the faint chanting, and knew he had to hurry if he was to do any good, for time had started again.

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh . . ." someone chanted sonorously.

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh . . ." a dozen or more voices echoed.

Had any of Lovecraft's face been left, he would have allowed himself a smile. As it was, he had to settle for a skeletal grin. That "ancient chant" he'd created for his story was effectively eerie when recited under the right circumstances, not a batch of unpronounceable nonsense words the way his detractors said it would be.

But he had to get in there, and fast.

The back door was the quickest route. It was a good heavy wooden door, securely locked. Those inside the house definitely did not want uninvited guests coming in and seeing what they were up to.

Lovecraft slammed his shoulder against the door. Instead of his unprotected bones shattering, the way he'd half-expected them to, the door smashed off its hinges and fell in two pieces. The strength and durability pulp writers attributed to the resuscitated

dead was there.

" . . . Cthulhu R'lyeh . . ." the unseen speaker continued slowly.

" . . . Cthulhu R'lyeh . . ." his audience repeated.

They were in the basement.

" . . . wgah'nagl fhtagn."

" . . . wgah'nagl fhtagn."

In a group they repeated the strange words over and over again, each time a little more quickly, each time a little more intensely as their emotions built up. Lovecraft knew what they were doing from his researches into occult and religious practices. The ceremonies could not commence until the worshippers had worked themselves into a near ecstasy of excitement, into a sort of berserk fervor during which nobody really cared what he or she did.

Smashing through the door to the basement, the late author came rattling down the steps, so quickly he nearly lost his footing and almost came rolling down them.

His entrance was enough to stop the ritual dead. He stood at the bottom of the steps, confronting the celebrants. Fifteen people stood staring at him, all naked except for sheer robes. Thirteen wore scarlet gowns sewn over with cabalistic and astrological symbols. Two, a boy of about eight and a girl of maybe fifteen, wore the plain white robes of the sacrifices. They were gagged, each was tightly gripped by two cultists, and they were seemingly on the verge of being tied to the altar (a rough, crude imitation of a Roman Catholic church altar painted black) when Lovecraft had intruded.

Lovecraft's eyeless gaze swept the room, as the would-be devil-worshippers backed away from him. It was all there, a composite black ceremony gleaned from Waite and Crowley and a dozen other sources. There were the blasphemous altar, the big crucifix lying broken in three pieces on the floor, the pentacles, the black candles, the cups for catching the sacrifices' blood, the whips, the sacrificial knives, the grotesque sexual paraphernalia.

The worshippers were not the foregn scum he had always associated with black magic. Oh, there was a single person there of definite Chinese or Japanese ancestry, and two of the celebrants were dark Latin types, but there was little difference between them and the WASPs (Lovecraft had heard the expression even where he was) that made up the bulk of the celebrants. All were young adults, clearly prosperous, working at good jobs, already respectable pillars of their community. He, Howard and the rest had been wrong . . . Hawthorne in his "Young Goodman Brown" had had the right idea as to who might worship the devil on dark nights.

Except it was not the devil they were worshipping. Instead, behind the altar, seated on a black throne, squatted the object of their adoration. Cthulhu had come to life. There before Lovecraft sat the image of the very god he had created. More than man-high sitting down, repulsively fat, scaled, hands and feet ending in huge claws, wings flaring from his shoulders, obscenely ugly, leering face only half-hidden by the octopus tentacles . . . if Cthulhu had ever really existed, he existed now.

Lovecraft advanced on the worshippers, hands outstretched to clutch and rend.

"What the hell is . . .?" began one man in a cthulhoid mask, obviously the cult's leader. His words changed to a bleat of fear as the skeleton lunged at him. The clumsy, clutching fingers caught only his robe, tearing it off him.

The cultists all fell back, terrified. The skeleton's appearance affected these hardened decadents far more strongly than Lovecraft might have guessed. None of them had really believed in the supernatural: the black magic ceremonies were only an excuse to indulge their tastes for vice and cruelty. But all of them knew enough about the supernatural to know what a walking dead man meant, what he

represented.

Lovecraft then made for the cultists holding the intended victims. The frightened decadents gave back, releasing the boy and girl. The two children fled. Lovecraft knew that the memory of their kidnapping by the cultists, and his appearance, would plague them for years afterwards. Still, compared to what these lunatics had planned for them, they had gotten off light.

He had to create a diversion quick, though, before somebody thought to run after the escaping pair. The skeleton lunged around the room, grabbing at everybody, champing his lantern jaw and rattling for all he was worth. He wasn't accurate, but he didn't need to be. The worshippers screamed, dodged, hurled themselves in a dozen directions at once. Somehow, whenever anyone made for the door Lovecraft managed to be between him and it. Their cries of terror were magnified by the very same soundproofing that had kept their deeds hidden from everyone—everyone save a dead man with supernatural awareness.

It was very like a grotesque game of tag. Lovecraft soon tired of it, though nowhere nearly as soon as the cultists lost their enthusiasm for it.

"I invented Cthulhu," Lovecraft shouted, "to entertain people. That was all. I was telling a story to amuse myself and others."

He was amazed he could speak, considering his vocal cords were long gone. What he heard (with no ears) was a deep, inhuman voice, echoing as if he were speaking from a tomb. Still, it had the desired effect on the cultists.

"Just stories to amuse!" he repeated. "If later writers turned out a batch of poor imitations of my tales, that wasn't so bad, because they hadn't been meant for any great purpose to begin with. If they went and made some of my stories into bad movies, well, most movies are foolish anyway!"

Lovecraft reached the altar and

brought a bony fist down on it. The flimsy plywood caved in easily.

"But to use my creations as an excuse for your debauchery—" he roared, grabbing up one of their whips and breaking it over his knee.

"—your blasphemous orgies—" Lovecraft continued, stomping on the pile of objects on the floor.

"—your cruelty—" Lovecraft continued, attacking the statue of Cthulhu itself, "—is enough to make anybody turn in his grave!"

The image of Cthulhu was fashioned from papier-mache. The determined skeleton made short work of it.

Several of the diabolists had finally managed to flee. The others no longer could think clearly enough to do so. One woman was backed into a corner, screaming hysterically. Another was down on her hands and knees, begging him for mercy. There was a man down on his knees, too, trying desperately to convince God and the Virgin Mary he had reformed and repented all in the past few minutes.

No sense in lecturing these people on their sick actions—none of them was in any condition to listen.

In the distance Lovecraft heard sirens. The fleeing children had created enough of a disturbance to attract the police. The Cthulhu cult, the cult he had unintentionally brought into being, was finished.

The skeleton suddenly collapsed, strength gone. Lovecraft stood over the crumbling framework of bones that had held his spirit for so long. If he had been the cause of all this, even without intending to, maybe he had been held on earth, unquiet, to right it all. It was only just, he supposed.

But then he noticed something he hadn't before. The cellar steps continued further downward, much further. There might even be, say, seven thousand of them. Lovecraft began the long descent. Somehow he felt he would soon return to the Providence he remembered so fondly.

HOWARD LOVECRAFT AND THE TERROR FROM BEYOND

By Robert M. Eber

Glancing yet once more around the shaded room that was his dimly lit study, Howard Lovecraft reached into a dark recess behind a shelf of books, and withdrew a dusty package wrapped in oily brown paper. It had been a long time since he had last allowed himself to look upon the bizarre object wrapped therein. Nothing had happened the last time, but his nerve had given out at the thought of what he had tried. It had only been recently that he felt well enough to make another attempt. He expected no more success than in the past; such stuff as he was trying was, after all, utter nonsense. Yet he had, for a long time now, postulated the existence of forces beyond the realm of man's normal existence and was eager to test his theories. At any rate, it would make good copy for one of his stories. The ritual he contemplated would be looked upon as outrageous by his friends, much less by society at large, but he was willing to try anything to achieve his ends. And, oftentimes, hidden among the wild ravings of madmen, is a kernel of truth, if one knew what to look for. One could never be sure which parts of a ritual were just nonsense, and which had real significance.

But tonight would be different. The stars seemed to be in just the right position. And the moon—the moon had come up with a ruddy hue across the blotched face that had made him shudder at its monstrous significance. There was a nip in the night air that had made him tug at the lapels of his thin coat, and foreshorten his nightly stroll through the older sections of the town. The very sounds of the night seemed themselves to be in waiting, expectant of the extraordinary things that might occur on a night like this. Howard found himself strangely affected by the an-

ticipated events. It would be soon.

Slowly, almost reverently, Howard unwrapped the package, removing string and paper almost as if the very act of unwrapping it were dangerous. As the greasy paper was unfolded from around the black object enclosed within, a fetid odor arose, instantly filling the room with charnel vapors that assaulted the nose and tortured the senses. Momentarily, Howard reeled under the attack of the stench, fighting the instinctive urge to vacate the room until the worst of the eldritch smell had dissipated. Within moments, the odors disappeared, leaving but a trace of their former abundance. Howard had frequently tried to get rid of the smells when he had first acquired the object, but without success.

Slowly, Howard picked up the object, a look of awe and anticipation on his face. The dim light revealed the object to be a book, a book of massive covers with several locks across the pages. It was said, in certain unmentionable corners, that the book had been bound in human skin, and that other "parts" had gone into its making. Perhaps so; it might very well account for the unbearable odors that accumulated whenever the book was left wrapped up for prolonged periods of time. From its outside appearance, the volume was old, very old. The odd designs on the cover looked almost impossible to make, especially by human hands. The strange whorls and wild curves did not sit well with normal sensibilities, and the scenes depicted on front and back could only have been the result of a deranged mind. Howard had been unable to discover anything of the origins of the dark volume. Relatively recent history of the book, going back several centuries, was readily known, but the book's history rapidly plunged

into obscurity after that. There was not even a title page, or other signs of printing history that could help establish the book's lineage. From what he could learn on examination, he could not even be positive that the book had been printed; some unknown method may have been used to impress the characters onto the pages. The pages themselves were not paper or parchment, and Howard was not sure he ever wanted to know exactly what they were made of.

Leaving the dark volume resting on the study desk in its wrappings, Howard moved to the far end of the room, where a ceiling-high set of bookcases stood. Reaching to the center cases, he pressed a small stud in the molding; a muffled click was heard, and the two central cases swung outward on oiled hinges, revealing a small alcove. Within its depths stood a rounded piece of stone, with curious stains evident even in the gloom, which went undisputed by the study's light. Two brass candlestick holders stood, one to either side of the stone, with massive candles set in each. Like the book covers, the candlesticks showed bizarre designs. The effort Howard had expended in obtaining the holders had been monumental; even now several obscure cults would probably have killed him in singularly unpleasant ways had they known the whereabouts of the holders. Like the pages of the book, the candles were made of some extraordinary substance; Howard suspected human fat. A small cushioned board for kneeling, and a stand for holding the book, completed the furnishings of the alcove. In a small holder in the back of one of the bookcases were several singular instruments; some of the rituals described in the book demanded unusual actions and accessories. The most prominent was a silver knife, partially sheathed in black velvet. Symbols curiously suggestive of writing of some sort were engraved on the blade and impressed on the carved handle. Whatever message, whether

spell or warning, was meant to be conveyed by the symbols was undeterminable; the language, if indeed it was one, was irrevocably lost, at least in any place where man might be found. As it was, one didn't need a translation to perceive the hideous suggestiveness of the design. Perhaps it was the strange emphasis given to certain of the more subtle details. . . .

Quickly, Howard performed several ritualized gestures in front of the altar stone, and bowed thrice. He then retrieved the book, and placed it reverently on the stand in front of the stone, opening it to a particular place he seemed to have in mind. Deftly, he removed several of the instruments from their places, including the knife. No "sacrifices" would be necessary for what he had in mind, but both the knife and the utensils were necessary as props in the formula he intended to perform. The instruments he arranged on the floor next to where he would kneel; the knife he placed on the book, across the pages he intended to read. If all went well tonight, he would have to be well-prepared; the forces he intended to invoke did not allow for mistakes. He put out of his mind the picture of what had been described to him as the fate of those who had miscalculated, and continued with the exercises.

Swiftly, as he recited the Words of Power, his finger traced a pentacle on the surface of the stone altar, which immediately glowed with a steady, greenish light that seemed to pulsate with uncanny rhythm. Howard's voice was steady, his motions sure. The ritual described by the book was one enabling the user to gain knowledge so as to surpass that of the wisest of men. Howard was not exactly sure how such enlightenment was to come to him, but the glowing pentacle itself seemed to indicate that whatever was to happen could very well be lethal if he was not careful. Howard was very careful.

Thrice the formula on the eldritch pages resounded, his hand

cutting the air in disturbing figures with the knife as Howard performed the ceremony. The language was at best guttural, its syllables most certainly never meant for human speech. Each of the instruments Howard had prepared had its use and he applied them with a familiarity borne of long study and practice.

After what seemed an indeterminate period of chants and prayers, Howard paused. If anything was to happen, now was the moment. The air was heavy with anticipation as Howard strained his senses to detect a response to his spell.

Yet there was nothing. No wind, no crickets, no passing cars. Nothing. Only a silence that was almost deafening in its intensity. The book had not been too specific as to just what was to happen once the spell was cast. It had only noted, in syllables unpronounceable to human tongues, that extreme caution was to be exercised in the performance of the bizarre ritual. The translation was somewhat clouded beyond that as to the results of the spell; only that great knowledge and power would be made available to any who were prepared to do what was "necessary."

But the results were nil. Howard could detect no change in his surroundings; even the faint light of the glowing pentacle remained. Failure. Reluctantly, Howard stood up, closing the book as he did so. While he had experienced failure in the past, he was nevertheless keenly disappointed. Somewhere, somehow, he was missing some vital ingredient, some part of the incantation central to the success of the invoker. But, thinking back over what he knew, Howard could not imagine what had gone wrong. Further study of the strange tome would be called for. Unfortunately, while Howard had had no trouble translating the text literally, the full meaning of what he had read was often unfathomable. Considering the book's probable origin, this was not too surprising. Yes, a

closer examination of the text was clearly called for.

The glow of the pentacle died out fitfully as Howard replaced the ritual implements in their places, and extinguished the massive candles. Leaving the alcove, book under one arm, Howard closed the bookcase door, a muffled click the only sound in the stillness. There was no point in continuing tonight; not, at least, without greater knowledge of just what it was he was trying to do. Too many such as he had displayed overconfidence in such endeavors in the past and subsequently paid for their misplaced enthusiasm in singularly unpleasant ways. And, after all, there was still an enormous amount of correspondence to attend to. Howard sighed resignedly as he rewrapped the book, and replaced it in its hidden receptacle. He would just have to put off the experiment to a later date.

* * *

The street lights seemed strangely muffled, barely managing to illuminate the roadway, and only fleetingly able to penetrate the gloom surrounding the residential buildings of the neighborhood. Which was just as well, Dickie Ramsey thought, as he and his brother Bill crouched in the bushes alongside a likely prospect. The two of them had been casing the area for a nice quiet neighborhood to heist for weeks before happening on this one. They had already hit two of the dozen or so homes in the immediate vicinity and intended on finishing off the rest before the month was out. They were good, real good; the cops had no idea who was behind the robberies, and Dickie would see to it that they never did. Bill was good at safe-cracking and strong-arm stuff, but Dickie was the brains. Didn't he plug those two gumshoes who were onto them in Phillie?

But they had more important business right now. The joint right next to them. Only some queer

duck and an old lady. Easy Street, for sure. Must be loaded. These oddballs usually faked poverty; probably had a mattress stuffed with cabbage stowed somewhere. Well, if the guy didn't cough it up. . . . Dickie punched one calloused fist into the other hand, evidently with the satisfaction of long and successful experience. Of course, Bill would do all the "persuadin'" needed. And, from what they had seen of the guy, not much would be necessary.

But now to work. Cautiously, Dickie raised himself to the level of the window just next to him. No one. Just a bunch of books on shelves, and an old battered desk covered with papers. No sign of the owner; must be somewhere in the house. Just as well; it'll be easier to take'm when they're both inside. With almost imperceptible motion, Dickie pushed upwards on the window frame, gently at first, and then with greater force as the window slid silently open. This was almost too easy. A small curl of smoke caught his eye in one corner of the room, behind an overstuffed chair. Probably an ash tray, nothing to worry about.

The air of the room had a strange smell; an old smell, of antique paper. "This guy must be some sort of professor or something'," Dickie thought, scanning the rows of books crowded into the shelves and piled around the desk. He had never seen so many books in one place before; outside of a library, that is. Outside of libraries, that's where Dickie liked to be. Learning made him nervous. Now heistin', he knew.

"Give me a boost, Bill," he growled. Bill winced for an instant, then applied the needed assistance. In a moment, he was in and Bill right behind him.

Slowly they made their way across the study, towards the doorway at the far side. The night's "entertainment," as they liked to think of it, couldn't begin until their "guests" were present and/or accounted for. And neatly

tied up. A rustling of silverware and plates could be heard nearby; evidently someone was in the kitchen. Might as well have the "celebration" there as any place. Motioning with his head towards the doorway, Dickie proceeded forward, skirting the numerous books and papers scattered about. Bill followed close behind.

A slight movement caught Bill's eye; turning, he saw the curl of smoke that Dickie had noted earlier. He could have sworn that there had been less of the stuff when he had looked earlier. Dickie nudged him in the ribs; shrugging, he turned to go. Dickie had all the brains; if he wasn't concerned, there was no reason for himself to get worked up. Anyway, what could smoke do?

Looking around the corner of the study door, Dickie noted a short hall with several doors on either side. At the far end, Dickie could hear the movements of the kitchen occupant, preparing some sort of meal. Must be a real nut, eatin' at this hour; most folks'd be in bed right now, easy pickings. No matter; Bill would handle him OK. Motioning Bill forward, Dickie crept down the short hall, with Bill along the opposite wall. They paused at the kitchen doorway, Dickie sneaking a quick look around the corner. He was there, all right, emptying a can of spaghetti into a saucepan, apparently oblivious to the rest of the world. A really queer duck: slender, lantern-jawed, wrapped in some sort of bathrobe. Hardly the type to be any real trouble.

Bill glanced quickly behind himself; something was wrong. He could see nothing of the study to their rear. Only the faintest rustling reached his ears. And he couldn't even be sure of that; a whisper would have been louder. No matter now. Dickie was signaling a rush.

With a speed surprising due to his great size, Bill rushed the robed figure still occupied at the stove. In an instant, both Bill and Dickie were upon him; the man

struggled briefly, but to no avail. He desisted upon observing the wicked-looking blade Dickie displayed in the vicinity of his throat.

"One move and yer a corpse," Dickie growled.

"OK, OK, you win," the man stuttered. "Take what you want, just don't hurt me."

The stranger had immediately ceased struggling, but both Dickie and Bill could feel the tenseness in the man's body as they tightened their grip.

"Now that's more like it," Dickie answered, as they moved the man to a kitchen chair. Producing a length of rope from under his coat, Bill expertly tied the man down, leaving him virtually immobile.

"Now, we want all yer money. Ya know, cash, jewels, watches. And fast, too, if ya know what's good for ya."

"There's no money, but you can have what you want."

"Now you don't think that Billy-boy and I really believe that, do ya?" Dickie snarled, lowering his face until it was just an inch away from the prisoner's. "Ya better talk fast, or my brother there might get nervous. He does funny things with a knife when he gets nervous. Real funny things, if you get my drift. Don't ya, Bill?"

Bill smiled a most discomforting smile. "Sure do, Dickie. And I'm a little nervous right now." And he was. He didn't mention the smoke he saw coming into the kitchen door. Just a little right now, but increasing steadily. Something was wrong.

Bill relaxed a little, though, as Dickie motioned him to search the kitchen. Now that he knew something about. Rapidly he searched, pulling out drawers and emptying their contents on the floor, emptying the cupboards, and generally making a mess of things, and having the time of his life. He didn't find anything, though. Dickie let him continue to scrounge. Something might turn up, and, if nothing else, their "guest" might change his mind.

Howard watched the search, sickened at heart. There was nothing he could do to prevent what was happening, and the two didn't seem like the type who would believe him, no matter what he said. He had to think of something fast.

It was then that Howard noticed the peculiar smoke drifting through the door. Strange, the odors that came to him didn't smell like smoke; they seemed to have a curious, sulfuric scent. Curious: didn't smell like a fire. A shudder ran through him. It had struck him as to exactly what the smoke was. "Ah, gentlemen . . ."

"Yeah, what is it? Ya decided to talk, eh?" Dickie clamped one hand on Howard's shoulder. "OK, out with it; where's the dough?"

"In my study, in a concealed panel," Howard replied. His straining ears could make out a curious shuffling sound coming from the study. It seemed to get louder, as if it were approaching the kitchen. The smoke fairly billowed now, an acrid stench filling the room.

Dickie looked around in alarm. "What's that?" he cried, seeing the fumes billowing from the hallway door. The sounds were more audible now, a steady shuffling sound, matched by the groan of floorboards as whatever it was approached. There was also the sound of heavy breathing, a rasping noise that filled the room.

Dickie had turned completely white. "Let's get the hell outta here!" he screamed. He didn't budge, however; he seemed to be rooted to the floor. Bill made as if to escape out the kitchen door, mewing sounds issuing from his throat. The stench filled the kitchen, and the whole house trembled as the shuffling became a heavy thumping. A fetid stench filled the kitchen, and the smoky clouds blinded all. Something brushed against Howard; he fell over backwards, striking his head against the floor. As he slipped into unconsciousness, it occurred to Howard that whatever had brushed against him had had a

scaly, almost reptilian texture to it. . . .

* * *

Slowly, Howard checked his eyelids; they seemed to be still in working order. With great deliberateness, he opened his eyes, while reaching to his forehead. Dampness. He lowered his hand; there were smears of red. And streaks of white as well. He stirred, groaning as he attempted to raise himself. Apparently he was no longer tied up; he got to his feet, gingerly leaning against the table. He noted the clock against the wall: 6 a.m. He had been unconscious for quite a while. The entire kitchen was a mess; and among the ruins there were blood-stained pieces of something he didn't even want to think of. In spite of his throbbing head, he had to smile to himself. The spell seemed to have worked; the only problem had been in the timing. And, for once, things had worked in his favor. Of course, before he had the repairmen come in and fix things up, he would have to clean up the place a bit. No sense in inviting questions he couldn't answer. The two thieves might be missed by someone, but he doubted it seriously.

Of course, some of his friends might inquire as to what he had been up to; he would have to make up something. Fortunately, he was rather good at that sort of thing. He could imagine the letter he would write. He would tell them how the ceiling fell in and banged poor "Grandpa" on the head; he would not mention the strange, clawlike marks in the ceiling, markings tinted with streaks of red.

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The Man Who Collected Lovecraft

By Philip Weber

I had come to the small secluded Providence cemetery that day to visit a long departed but not forgotten friend. Gazing on the simple granite monument which marked the entombment of his flesh, I turned and made my way through the maze of similar headstones whose shadows had begun to lengthen in the midafternoon sun.

Living about seventy miles outside of the city, I had spent the last four years teaching at a small community college. My initial choice for taking the position, after completing graduate school, was its proximity to Providence and the final resting place of one whose stories and memoirs have made such a lasting impression on my life.

The cemetery gate groaned rustily as I exited and turned one last time. Lying upon the grass covered earth which I had been standing on not two minutes previously was an orange and black tabby cat. I smiled sardonically knowing his love for cats and that he wouldn't mind at all to have it bask a while above him.

Rituals in life as well as in death can be things of comfort. My infrequent pilgrimages always left me ravenous, so not to break the tradition, I stopped at the same little restaurant located three blocks from the cemetery. I ordered a large steak and two glasses of house wine.

My hunger assuaged, I drained the last few drops of wine from my glass, left a modest tip, paid my bill and was about to get in my car when a cat darted out from between my legs, almost knocking me over. A passing car squealed its brakes to avoid hitting the cat as it raced away. It had evidently been underneath my car and my opening the door had frightened it, I surmised.

As the feline beast scurried past

me I'd felt a slight twinge of pain on my left ankle. Still standing in the road, I pulled my sock down and noticed a small trickle of blood oozing from two punctate wounds. Cursing to myself, I searched for the cat and saw it sitting on the curb across the street. It then casually walked into a small shop. I quickly followed, vowing to take revenge either with its owner or more preferably with it; for you see I hate cats!

Entering the shop I immediately spied the beast nestled in the arms of a dark haired man who looked to be about thirty. He wore a neatly trimmed black beard, had a long straight nose and peered out at me from deeply set dark eyes. Before I had a chance to say anything he spoke.

"I saw everything that happened and I would like to apologize for Ezzie's behavior. He has a bad habit of sneaking up on people . . ."

"Has Ezzie had his rabies shot?" I interrupted sarcastically.

"Why, yes, about two months ago. He . . . he didn't bite you did he?"

Still angry I pulled down my sock to show him the partially clotted wound.

"Ezzie, how could you!" He admonished and popped the cat smartly on the rump. It sprang from his grasp and backed itself into a corner, hissing, its yellow eyes filled with hate.

"Nice pet you've got there, Mr. . . ."

"The name's Schwartz, Nathan Schwartz." He walked over to where I stood and we shook hands informally. I introduced myself as Mark Richards.

"Mr. Richards, I am extremely sorry. Please, look around the shop and if you see anything you like, anything at all, it's yours." I

hadn't paid much attention to the contents of the place. It was a somewhat cluttered antique and second-hand store. It contained some old heavy furniture; tables, dressers, desks and the like. I rather hurriedly walked through the shop, heading for the back, trying to find some way to excuse myself when I came to a bookcase. Taking a casual glance at several titles I was somewhat surprised to find nothing but works of writers dealing in the macabre and fantastic. More intently I began to study the accumulation of old books. The works of Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Lord Dunsany, J. S. LeFanu, Algernon Blackwood, and C. A. Smith were all well represented. But search as I would I could find nothing by that one troubled genius that Providence claims as its own. I was about to comment to Schwartz on this egregious omission when I saw a collection of old pulp magazines neatly arranged in a glass display case.

I walked over to it and found it filled with the works of one author: H. P. Lovecraft, my spiritual mentor and the man whom I had come to Providence today to pay my respects to.

On bended knee I peered with envy through the clear glass. A small placard read "Complete First Publications of H. P. Lovecraft." Within the case were approximately forty pulp magazines whose garrish front covers proudly displayed his name.

I was so engrossed in the perusal of these treasures that I hadn't noticed Schwartz standing behind me until I heard a loud purring noise. Somewhat startled I spun around to find him holding that damn cat in his arms, gently rubbing its head.

"See anything you like?" he asked.

Answering rather sheepishly, "I have never seen such a fine collection of Lovecraft's works. I have a few of his things myself, but nothing like this. As a matter of fact while I was in town today I paid a

visit to his grave, which I'm sure you know is just up the street."

"Thank you for the compliment," he said as he placed the cat on the floor. "From time to time someone interested in Lovecraft finds his way to me. I have devoted my life to the collection of his works and the preservation of his memory. All modesty aside, I consider myself one of the foremost experts on H. P. Lovecraft's writings and life. I've even gone so far as to write a few poor pastiches based on his stories."

A melancholy quality had entered his voice and his eyes had a dreamy glaze as he spoke. He quickly recovered his composure and repeated, "See anything you like?"

"Well, yes, but I couldn't ask you to part with any of these," indicating the contents of the display case.

"Nonsense, that nasty bite on the leg has to be worth something. I tell you what. Since we seem to be kindred spirits in our admiration for Lovecraft, if you're willing to take a forty-five minute drive, I will allow you to look through my personal collection which far surpasses anything you see here," making a sweeping gesture to include everything in the shop.

Letting my curiosity take control I readily agreed. I spent the next hour or so perusing the shelves and taking mental note of the things I might be interested in returning for at a later date.

We conversed on and off whenever I could think of some hard-gleaned fact or anecdote about Lovecraft. My statements seemed to amuse him. Stroking his beard and smiling he would either agree and add a few insights of his own or totally disagree, quoting articles or portions of stories to contradict me. I had always been able to hold my own in any conversation on Lovecraft but Schwartz's depth of knowledge on the subject left me dumbfounded. I'm sure at times he thought me a cretin.

Jogging my memory I recalled

reading a story by Schwartz published in a semiprofessional magazine. It was entitled "Lurker From Beyond The Crypt" or something to that effect and I remembered thinking it quite good. A rather gruesome tale having the proper atmosphere and build-up of suspense, making it stand above the other stories it accompanied. Not wanting to run out of things to talk about I decided to ask him about it later at his home.

The cat Ezzie had free run of the shop. More than once I had caught it peeking out at me from behind one of the pieces of antique furniture which were scattered about. Having tried several times to coax it to me in an overture of friendship, without success, I decided to give up. Besides, my ankle still hurt and I hadn't completely given up the idea of having my way with it. I also had a sneaking suspicion that the cat in the graveyard and Ezzie were one and the same.

Looking through the large picture window at the front of the shop I noticed that the sky had begun to grow ominous. Dark clouds began piling up and muffled claps of thunder echoed in the distance. The wind gusted bits of paper and debris about the road.

"I like a good storm, don't you, Mr. Richards?" thundered Schwartz, "It puts me in the mood."

A bit startled by the intensity of his voice I turned to find him standing directly behind me. He seemed more animated than I had seen him before. His eyes were fixed upon me like a wild animal about to pounce, sending a shudder up my spine.

Realizing that the storm was about to break Schwartz hurriedly prepared to close the shop. Having taken all the money from the cash register and checking all the doors and windows, he picked up the cat and we left by the front door. Before we could reach our cars it had begun to rain; gently at first and then in torrents.

The storm-blackened sky was lit

repeatedly by sinuous shafts of lightning which momentarily blinded me as I tried to follow Schwartz through the rain choked streets. The downpour was so intense at times that I feared for my safety and would have pulled to the curb had I not been afraid of losing him.

He drove like a mad man, darting down side streets whose antique looming houses seemed to mock us as we hastened by in the rain. Up one street, accelerate so as not to lose him. Hit the brakes, skid to a stop. Turn again, accelerate, double clutch, brake, turn; his tail lights always visible in the distance. Windshield wipers full speed, clapping time; not fast enough to completely clear the glass before the next sheet of rain descended. The houses and buildings wavered and undulated through the windshield as oncoming headlights pierced my retinas, leaving yellow spots before my eyes as they passed.

Just when I thought I couldn't go any farther we reached the outskirts of the city and a stretch of straight road. I pressed the accelerator to the floor and prayed that my worn tires would hold me to the pavement. I stayed on Schwartz's tail 'til we reached his house.

Pulling into the driveway, lined by large unkempt evergreens, I got my first look at his home as our headlights momentarily lit the front of the large Victorian structure. It sat back about a hundred yards from the road and as we approached I could see that the house, once a thing of pride and beauty, had fallen into disrepair. A wide antique veranda, missing portions of its woodwork, wrapped itself serpentine around the house. Large areas of paint had peeled away from the exterior, leaving it blotched and sick looking. The unlit vacant windows, overgrown shrubbery and crumbling masonry gave the place an air of utter despair.

Pulling into a small carport we made a mad, rain-soaked dash for

the house. Once inside Schwartz turned on the lights and we quickly shed our sodden jackets. Taking our drenched outer garments, Schwartz excused himself saying he would take them to the back of the house, where they would dry quickly, and bring us some refreshments.

The cat had gotten its share of the rain, too. Its matted wet fur clung tightly to its body making it look ridiculously thin and weasel like. It shook itself several times in an effort to dry off and splattered my already wet pants leg.

Finding myself alone for the moment I decided to look around. The lone overhead light cast dense shadows down the long hallway. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the interior contrasted markedly with its exterior appearance. The central hallway was flanked by four rather spacious rooms, all containing furniture many generations old. Two brightly colored Oriental rugs covered the hardwood floor of the hall and a banistered stairway on the right led up to the second floor.

My exploration was cut short by Schwartz's return. He was carrying two wine glasses filled with a deep red liquid.

Handing me a glass he said, "I'm very partial to wine. I hope you like it, it's my favorite." Then as an afterthought he continued, "I make no apologies for the decrepitude the house has fallen into. I really prefer it this way. The structure is sound, really, and its neglected decayed appearance keeps most people away, giving me the privacy to do as I please.

"Now I'll show you what I brought you here for. Please follow me to the library."

I followed him, sipping on the wine as we went; its pleasant fruity taste was a delight to the palate.

"This is where I work and study. Have a look around," he said and seated himself behind a large mahogany desk beside an unlit fireplace.

The library wall was lined by bookcases filled by volumes which

imparted a musty odor to the room. He had not been exaggerating when he boasted about his collection. The sheer volume of works contained in the room was mind-boggling, but the fact that they were all of one particular category, that being the bizarre and malign, literally took my breath away. I was drawn to several old and crumbling volumes placed by themselves. Picking up the largest of the books, I was taken aback but really shouldn't have been surprised to find that in my hand I held the dread Necronomicon, authored by that mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred. For its size it was inordinately light. I felt a compulsion to open it but its reputation was so sinister and evil that I hastily reshelved it. The frightful Book of Eibon and the horrific De Vermis Mysteriis were sandwiched between the Necronomicon and another volume of unspeakable lore, the Celaeno Fragments.

Deciding to limit my search to less formidable material, I moved to a section containing the works of Lord Dunsany. Inspection of several of the books revealed that the inside dust jacket had been signed by Dunsany himself. One of these read "To my good friend Ezekiel Schwartz."

Turning with open book to Schwartz I asked, "Who is Ezekiel Schwartz?"

Answering with an amused smile, "He was my uncle. All these books belonged to him, as did the house and grounds. He was devoted to the writings of Dunsany and met him once when he toured America. They corresponded off and on for years, as he did with many of the writers who shared his interests. Lovecraft included. If you look here you will find many of these old pulp magazines autographed. Here, take a look."

Motioning for me to approach, he handed me a copy of Weird Tales magazine which was inscribed on the front cover, "To a True Believer," and signed "HPL."

"This is simply fantastic," I

said. "Any collector of Weird Tales would pay a lot to have a copy autographed by Lovecraft." Having made this profound statement I drained my glass, feeling the warm glow of the wine as it heated my insides. I was beginning to feel quite high and euphoric being among so many kindred spirits.

"Yes, you are probably right. Here, Mr. Richards, your glass is empty. We can't have that. Ezekiel, you keep Mr. Richards company while I fetch more wine."

Before I could protest, Schwartz had removed the empty glass from my hand. He exited the room, leaving me alone with the cat.

As if it knew to take charge, the cat Ezekiel, rather tastelessly named for Nathan's late uncle, commenced to walk around the periphery of the room next to the bookcases which lined the walls. With its tail haughtily lashing back and forth it pranced around the entire room, seemingly full of self pride.

Suddenly it jumped upon the desk and made a whining utterance, opening and closing its mouth to modulate the sound, which seemed startlingly close to human speech.

Feeling a sudden compulsion, I approached the desk to find the cat standing atop several sheets of smudged paper which were covered by sprawling handwriting. A typewriter, loaded with paper, sat on the desk and it appeared as though the text of the handwritten manuscript was being transcribed on the typewriter.

Ezekiel gave another eery utterance and I found myself walking around to the front of the desk to read what had been transcribed. It read:

"Know that there are far worse things than Death and that those who are cursed to spend even one second as the undead suffer a torment worse than a lifetime in Hell."

Before I could continue reading Schwartz entered the library with another glass of wine. Placing it in my hand he said, "Drink this, Mr. Richards, and I will tell you a

story that without doubt would equal any that are contained within the volumes in this library."

Again the cat "spoke" and I emptied my glass in one gulp. The fruity fragrance was pleasantly tantalizing but the scent of the poppy flower was very strong. In a minute my inebriation was complete and I felt drained of my inner resolve.

Schwartz silently motioned me to an overstuffed armchair. Feeling that I had been drugged, I tried to resist his unuttered command. I gripped the edge of the table with all my strength; my fingernails blanched under the strain. I stood this way for perhaps a minute, afraid to take the proffered seat to hear a story in which I felt I was to take a part.

Turning to the cat Schwartz said, "This one is strong, Ezekiel. You have made a good choice. Please help Mr. Richards to his seat."

As if it had understood, the cat casually strolled across the desk top and stopped at where my aching hands held me in place. It gently licked my little finger and then grasped it in its sharp white teeth, gradually applying pressure until the pain was too much to bear. My right hand dropped from the desk and then the left when similar force was applied.

I was still standing in place when the cat nimbly dropped to the floor at my feet and gave me a sharp bite on the calf.

I let out a muffled groan and knowing that in the end I would have to sit, I decided to spare myself any further pain. As I dropped into my seat, Schwartz began his story.

"You have probably already grasped that my uncle was a man of peculiar habits and tastes. He was a man unafraid to look behind the pleasantries of life, undaunted by the prospect of Death. Because he knew that Death could be defeated! Not in the hollow spiritual sense as you might think, through the teachings of the World Religions. No, not that way. You

see, Uncle Ezekiel Schwartz was a Wizard, a Sorcerer, a Necromancer, if you like, and had usurped even the power to overcome Death.

"In this age of the computer chip and quantum mechanics he was an anachronism, totally out of step with inventions like the artificial heart and surgical procedures of organ transplantation. Through many lives, through many transigrations he has practiced his craft until this present age of disbelief whose skepticism is so pervasive that even he felt threatened.

"He had foreseen all that was to come as he felt the almost imperceptible flagging of his powers coincide with the rise of Science and 'Modern Medicine.' He began to isolate himself more and more from the society amid which he felt more and more the outsider. He cloistered himself away within this house, conserving his energy, determined to wait for the day when belief in the supernatural and occult would return.

"Uncle Ezekiel turned to those who shared his beliefs, many of whose writings abound in this room. One after another he sought them out and invariably suffered profound disappointment and rejection when they refused to believe in him. All save one: Lovecraft, that courageous soul who, too, spat in the face of Death. They conversed long and regularly over many a volume of ancient and forgotten lore. You should know that 'Herbert West—Reanimator' and The Case of Charles Dexter Ward were largely inspired by conversations Lovecraft had with my uncle.

"But in the end, Lovecraft was unable to accept my uncle for what he really was. The cancerous growth which finally robbed him of his life could have been dealt with if only he had confided in Uncle Ezekiel. But Lovecraft was a proud man and didn't tell him of his illness until it was too late. With tears in my eyes, I have listened many times of how he grieved the night of his dear friend's passing and how he vowed to bring him

back!"

In my drug-induced stupor I sat immobile yet heard every word perfectly. The cat was before me on the floor; its terrible yellow eyes held me in a powerful hypnotic stare. Schwartz paused briefly and then continued his fantastic tale.

"Late on the night following Lovecraft's burial my uncle stole into the cemetery, dug up the loosened earth which covered his coffin, removed Lovecraft's body, filled in the grave and brought his corpse to this house where it has resided for almost fifty years. Old Ezekiel hoped he might save Lovecraft even yet!

"I came to live with my uncle some eight years ago at his request. I call him uncle but he is not my father's brother. No! The generations that have passed since his birth can hardly be counted. But we are related, of this he had assured me. And because we were of the same blood he took an interest in me. I can still remember the night he came to my college dormitory and introduced himself as my father's prodigal brother come to make amends. We talked long into the night. He told me incredible stories about my ancestral heritage; some of which I knew but most I had never heard before. He told the stories with such vividness and in such detail, it seemed he must have lived for centuries to have accumulated all his facts. In that one night he totally captured my soul. Without telling my parents I went to visit him between semesters and have been with him ever since.

"I became his pupil, His apprentice if you like. When he told me of his true nature I was able to accept it. He taught me much of his ancient craft, and much I have learned on my own.

"About two years ago he began suffering from angina. His symptoms of heart disease became progressively worse and I believe he actually suffered two small heart attacks. It was at this time that he told me that his body was dying and that a new host had to be

found quickly. I offered myself as the vessel to hold his spirit but he said that was not his plan. He had already selected a suitable host, a young man both handsome and robust. I was to act as his intermediary; to facilitate his transmigration and to help him through the adjustment period until he could take full possession of his new body.

"But as they say, 'The best laid plans oftentimes go astray.' The time was fast approaching when the change was to take place. I had left the house on an errand and upon my return found my uncle lying on the floor of this very room—dead! His faithful cat lay prostrate at his side.

"I panicked. How could this have happened? I was beside myself with grief, having let my uncle die by not being there when he needed me! I cursed myself, knowing full well that my powers of Necromancy were insufficient to stir him to life.

"As I wept over the lifeless body of my uncle, his faithful cat stirred itself and sat drunkenly up. I picked it up and cradled it in my arms. It meowed and when I looked at it I was held by its powerful hypnotic stare, a gaze which before had been peculiar to my uncle! Could it be true? How could I know for sure?

"There was a chance. I searched his body and found a small syringe hidden in his hand, the same syringe which he always carried. Examining it, I noticed traces of dried blood and knew that in his last desperate seconds before his heart stopped, Uncle Ezekiel had injected his essence into the cat! The transference had been completed!

"As days turned into weeks and my uncle's control over his new host became complete, he began trying to communicate with the pitifully inadequate feline vocal cords. Strange to say but within a short time he was able to make himself understood to me. Can you not testify that he has spoken to you tonight?"

A loud crack of thunder sounded directly overhead and the lights flickered, suddenly breaking my captor's attention. I wanted no part of this sick charade. Making a feeble effort to rise, I felt my arms and legs spasmodically respond. Like a flash, the cat leapt from the floor at my feet and clamped its mouth on my neck. I felt the pulsation of my jugular vein in its grasp and knew that if I did not reseal myself it would sever the vessel with its powerful fangs.

"Now, Mr. Richards, please do not attempt to flee. My uncle does not want to damage you. I am surprised at your continued resistance, an admirable trait but foolish. The hypnotic drug I placed in your wine was sufficient to have incapacitated two men your size. Another indication that Uncle has made a fitting choice.

"There, the truth is out! You are to host the spirit of Ezekiel Schwartz for his next transmigration! Think of it! How I envy you, Mr. Richards. My uncle will be such a splendid Master. His powers are vast and you will share in the knowledge gained through the ages, and in knowledge beyond the scope of Mankind.

"Uncle is anxious to start a new life and you will furnish him with the body to do just that. Your cooperation, although not necessary, is preferable. He can be very generous, Mr. Richards. He will know the things that you want and get them for you. But, just as a coin has two sides, disobedience and resistance will have its price.

"Ezekiel has had his eye on you for many months, observing you whenever you came to the graveyard. His powers of suggestion and manipulation are formidable. It was a simple matter for him to will you to stop at the restaurant once he had implanted a ravenous hunger within you. His luring you into my shop was child's play. The tricky part was getting you to come here. I think I did quite well, don't you?"

Was I mad? Could this really be happening? I kept expecting to awaken from this terrible nightmare. Of course, I knew I had been drugged and that Schwartz was using my drugged state to scare me into believing his preposterous tale. But for what purpose? Extortion? Revenge? I could think of nothing I had ever done to him, having only met him a few hours ago. The cat was real enough and I had no doubt that it and Schwartz could do me real harm, so I decided to go along with their preposterous hoax until I saw some way to escape.

"The time is at hand, Mr. Richards. Uncle Ezekiel grows impatient with expectation. He desires to do those things that only the human form can accomplish. Look deeply into my eyes. Yes, that is right. Now look at my hand. Good! I believe you will find that you can now move, though with some difficulty. Get out of the chair and walk to the bookcase."

With a touch of his hand the bookcase swung open, revealing steps leading downward. As I approached I felt the rush of cold, dank air on my face. Another odor, that of rot and decay, could be faintly discerned. I hesitated at the brink and felt the gnawing bite of the cat on my leg.

I tried to run but couldn't. Schwartz helped me down the flight of steps, supporting me on his arm. Once at the bottom I beheld a dimly lit passageway through drug-fogged eyes. The floor seemed to ripple and undulate at my feet as we began our slow journey. The passageway had many branches and turns. Like Theseus, I searched for some way to mark my passage through this labyrinth. Noticing a thin layer of undisturbed dust or soil which covered the floor of the other passages, I marked it and hoped it would prove useful if I found the means of escape.

The stench-filled air grew more fetid the farther we progressed within the shadow-shrouded maze; no doubt the odor was provided to

add a realistic touch to this diabolic farce. The pungent aroma of formaldehyde was also present. I knew the odor well from school, yet its smell was disturbing.

At length we arrived at a large wooden door, bolted from the outside. Schwartz undid the bolt and unlocked the door. He hurriedly ushered me and the everpresent feline inside without relocking it. I noticed my visual disturbances had abated somewhat as he turned on the dim overhead light. I could faintly make out that we were in a rather large room which seemed to be set up as some type of laboratory.

Schwartz led me to a small bed and bade me lie down. Again I tried to resist. Summoning all my strength I hesitated at the edge of the bed, only to feel the cat tug at the flesh of my leg. Again my powers of resistance were insufficient to overcome the commands of these two repugnant creatures.

As I lay down on the crumpled bedspread I suddenly felt the enormity of my predicament. I began to tremble with fear as the room grew dim about me. I screamed with terror, trying to remain conscious.

When I came to, I found both my wrists bound by sturdy hemp ropes. The overpowering smell of rotting flesh and formaldehyde helped to clear my head. From my supine position I had an unobstructed view of Schwartz. He was standing at a work bench covered by numerous articles of laboratory glassware. Two lit Bunsen burners cast an eerie blue glow, while oddly shaped glass retorts and distillation chambers simmered and boiled.

Both Schwartz and the cat would scurry back and forth amid the sputtering maelstrom of brightly bubbling liquids. Schwartz was reading from one of the ancient, malevolent volumes I had seen in his library. It appeared to be the *Celaeno Fragments* and I listened as he read aloud.

"Ia! Ia! Hastur! Ph'nglui
mglw'fnafh Hastur Hali wqah'nagl
fhtagn. Mutafn uft'elon Hail. Cf-

ayak, vulgtmm, vugtlagin, vulgtmm.
 la! la! Hastur!"

After repeating this several times he began to chant, in a deep bass voice, still reading from the book.

"Magnum Patrium Hastur!

"Regnum De Mundus,

"Regnum De Vaccus.

"Sui Fratres Cthulhu Vincos.

"Placeo Meus Causam Audis!

"De Vermis Resutectum Homini.

"Sum Te Humilis Famulus.

"Placeo Meus Causam Audis!

"Commuto Aqua Vita.

"De Vermis Resurrectum Homini!

The cat, too, seemed to be mouthing the words in its own limited way.

Schwartz presently saw that I had regained consciousness. He continued chanting for several minutes. The diabolic experiment seemed to have reached a climax as Schwartz carefully collected various decanted liquids into a small crystalline flask.

Having apparently completed the formulation of the sinister concoction, he carefully walked to an elongated hinged wooden crate, flask in hand. Schwartz gingerly lifted the lid, and he and Ezekiel peered inside, seeming not to notice the fetid odor of corruption that was released. Again they began to chant. Schwartz poured the fluid into the coffin-shaped box and then described a peculiar sign in the air with his forefinger.

Unable to determine the significance of the bizarre proceedings and being curious as to the contents of the box, I pulled myself into a sitting position, despite my restraints.

A minute passed by. And then two. Suddenly I heard a hollow rustling which was punctuated by bumps and soft percussions, sounding as if something had stirred to life within.

The hair on my head and neck stood erect as a weird, agonized groan was emitted from the box! I began to shiver and quake with fright.

Schwartz reached down and

pulled upwards; a jacketed arm with thrashing hand came into view. As Schwartz continued to pull, a figure shrouded in shadows sat erect in its coffinlike container, his back towards me! My captor continued to guide and support the gaunt form out of its confinement and into a hastily positioned chair. The cat pranced around the seated figure, winding through its slightly separated legs and meowing those hideous half-human vocalizations.

Although I could not at first see the face of the thing from the coffin, my worst suspicions were confirmed when Schwartz positioned a lamp from the workbench to illuminate its head and upper shoulders.

With heart pounding and fear-crazed convulsions, I sought to flee the sight of this unholy resurrection. My eyes were drawn to it. . . . The recognition was instantaneous and hideous beyond belief! The gaunt emaciated form with elongated oval face, small mouth and closely deep set eyes . . . was Lovecraft! There could be no mistake! Oh, but it was horrible! The skin of the hands and face was a ghastly shade of blue-black, broken by patches of moldy white. The eyes had a vacant dead stare and the sclerae were dull and red, imparting a fiery demonic gaze.

It opened its crusted mouth, revealing decay-blackened teeth, and made a desiccated, blood-curdling utterance!

"Why have you brought me back? Damn you! Damn you both to Hell!"

Schwartz again described that mysterious necromantic sign in the air. The shade of Lovecraft spoke no more and sat sullenly immobile.

"This is not Mr. Lovecraft's first awakening, you see. I have quite often put him to work for me! He still retains his profound literary skills, which I have occasionally employed in the creation of stories passed on as my own. Rather ironical, I must say! As a matter of fact the manuscript on my desk is his most recent effort."

Schwartz laughed heartily at his

own personal triumph over Lovecraft.

"We have brought Lovecraft back to witness Uncle's transformation tonight. He has become resistant as of late, throwing frequent violent fits. He may soon have to be discarded, having outlived his usefulness, if you will excuse the expression.

"Now all that remains is to draw off a small amount of blood from Uncle's feline host and inject it into you! This requires that your mind be placed into a more conducive state. When you awake the transformation will have begun. I envy you, Mr. Richards."

Schwartz waved his hand above me in that mysterious fashion I had witnessed before and I lost consciousness.

I awoke with a crash, finding that the bed and myself had been overturned. Feeling that my arms were now free I pushed the bed from on top of me, only to have it shoved roughly back. I could hear sounds of a scuffle close by and, pushing the bed away a second time, I was witness to Schwartz and the Lovecraft-thing locked in mortal combat.

They tore and gouged, neither giving the other any quarter. I could hear the reedy rasp of Lovecraft's voice through clenched teeth. "I told you not to bring me back, damn you! I only want oblivion! Do I have to kill you to make you understand?"

The monster gave a terrific push and sent Schwartz hurtling towards the laboratory workbench. Broken glassware and boiling liquids were propelled across the workbench and spilled onto the floor. One of the Bunsen burners was extinguished and the sickening smell of propane gas began to fill the room.

Schwartz, badly cut and bleeding profusely from his face and arms, tried to raise his arm to employ his sorcerous powers. Lovecraft, aware of the other's intention, lunged forward, grasped the threatening arm and forced it down into the hot blue flame of the other

lit burner. Schwartz screamed in agony, trying to free himself from the fiery torment.

Suddenly, the cat leaped upon Lovecraft's shoulders and bit viciously into the moldering blackened skin of his neck. At once Lovecraft released the scorched arm and grabbed for the cat. He hurled it against the wall with a sickening thud; it fell to the floor in a lifeless twisted mass.

The gas fumes were becoming overpowering, and I gasped for breath as I watched the surrealistic spectacle. Lovecraft turned to look at me with berserk menace in his eyes. "Come to me," he said. "You don't know! We must all die!"

Knowing that each second I delayed brought me closer to my doom, I leaped for the door. It was unlocked and I burst through, bolting it behind me.

The gas fumes were not strong outside. With difficulty I retraced my footsteps through the dusty imprints we had left a short time before. After what seemed like hours of twisting and doubling back through the underground maze, I at last came to the steps leading to freedom.

Suddenly, a muffled explosion echoed from deep within the labyrinth of tunnels. Dirt descended in streams through the wooden rafters of the ceiling as a second detonation was heard. The gas-filled laboratory had been ignited by the open flame of the Bunsen burner, and the heat produced by the first explosion in turn ignited the canister of propane.

Black smoke had begun to billow from the open bookcase as I crossed the threshold. Grabbing the sheaf of mold-smudged papers on the library table I raced across the room, down the hallway and out the front door.

A light drizzle was falling outside. I started my car and sped down the driveway. As I passed the library window I could see that the flames had spread upstairs. Soon, the whole house, its occupants, and all its dark secrets

would be consumed.

Everything you have just read transpired a mere six days ago, but those six days have been a living nightmare for me.

I thought I had escaped the malignant influence of the Schwartzes when the explosion and blaze gutted the house where I was held captive. I breathed a sigh of relief as I climbed into bed in the early morning hours following my terrible ordeal. Once in bed I gathered the pages of Lovecraft's manuscript on my lap and wearily read them. Unquestionably authentic.

I hadn't been asleep for more than an hour when I awoke violently ill, with flu-like symptoms. My body ached horribly and I was racked by nausea and vomiting. A general malaise had overcome me and I thought a shower might bring some relief.

As I was lathering myself I noticed a small bruise on the soft inner portion of my arm. I screamed and collapsed onto the shower stall floor! I knew! I knew what Lovecraft had meant with his final cryptic cry.

Schwartz had consummated his malignant plans that night as I lay helpless and unconscious. He had managed to inject me with the virally infected blood from his ageless uncle! And now I, too, was infected!

From that day to this I have fought a losing battle for possession of my body. An alien consciousness is being nurtured within me and has begun to impose its will over mine . . .

The inner voice began yesterday. I have fought it; tried to drown it out but it always returns. It promises much, very much. When I resist, it threatens . . . I haven't slept in thirty-six hours. I fear that if I do it will take complete control. I know what I must do. There is a gun in my bedroom. I must act now before it grows too strong. I leave this record in the improbable hope that some reader may believe my story.

But if not, no matter. The whole terrible business will at least have ended.

*Preliminary Investigative Report
State Bureau of Investigation
Providence, Rhode Island*

The extraordinary suicide note found with the body of Mr. Mork Richards is to be held as state's evidence in the orson and double homicide at the residence of Mr. Nothon Schwartz, resident of Pawtucket. Two bodies were removed from the structure, both of which were burned beyond recognition. One is believed to be that of Mr. Nothon Schwartz. The identity of the second victim is as yet undetermined. Presumably the remains are those of the Ezekiel Schwartz mentioned in Richards' account. Final identification is pending dental analysis. A small animal body was also recovered.

The suicide note's story of unholy resurrections and possessions may be some sort of elaborate blind to conceal a more mundane motive behind the orson and homicides.

The final autopsy report on Mr. Richards has been delayed due to the sudden illness of Dr. Grohom, the medical examiner. Dr. Grohom became quite ill shortly after performing the autopsy. He was hospitalized for two days suffering from high fever and unusual psychological disturbances. His office reports his condition is improving and that the autopsy report will be completed as soon as he returns to work, possibly this week.

*Detective William Burke
State Bureau of Investigation*

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CHRISTMAS WITH UNCLE LOVECRAFT

By Bruce J. Balfour

The night air was cold and clear on Christmas Eve. The stars shone like brilliant sapphires in the sky and the full moon lit up the snowy spruce boughs like crushed diamonds. Ancient farms with moss-covered cottages squatted on the gently rolling hills, brooding over old New England secrets as the two Elder Gods strode past. They were in high spirits, laughing as the sheep ran away from them and huddled together in fear against the far side of their pens.

Disoriented after the long trip from Betelgeuse, Ythoquah and Rozhoth-Tar had gotten lost in the woods of the New England countryside. But now they had found a beaten track that made walking easier. They felt secure in the knowledge that the track would lead them to familiar surroundings. They could sense in the air that they were almost Home.

"Looks like we're coming to a village," Rozhoth-Tar said with a voice like a bubbling hiss. He slackened his pace as they stepped onto a concrete road.

"Don't worry about it," Ythoquah boomed. "At this time of year, the humans are all safe indoors, sitting around a fire with their dogs and cats. We'll pass through without anyone seeing us."

Rozhoth-Tar's tentacles twitched with nervousness as a Model T automobile appeared on the road behind them, its headlights illuminating the two Elder Gods. It swerved into a ravine moments later.

"Well," Ythoquah said, "almost nobody will see us."

They approached the village on soft feet over a thick fall of powdery snow. Dusky orange-red squares were visible on both sides of the street where the warm light of the homes overflowed into the night. The windows that lacked curtains revealed pleasant family

scenes to the watching Elder Gods outside. Many humans were seated around dinner tables or in front of fireplaces as they joked, laughed, and told stories. Moving from one window to another, the two Gods watched with wistfulness in their eyes as cats were stroked and sleeping children were carried off to bed. A dog's bark broke the silence and they continued on their way.

When they were through the village they could smell the friendly fields again. They braced themselves for the final stretch, the Home stretch, that would end with the opening of a door and a warm fire to greet the weary travellers from a distant star. They plodded along in silence, each thinking his own thoughts.

Rozhoth-Tar thought about his four sore feet. If only the Creator had given him the ability to fly in Earth's thin atmosphere, he wouldn't have such a problem. Yog-Sothoth never had trouble with sore feet, being coexistent with all time and conterminous with all space. The Creator could at least have made him like Azathoth, the blind idiot god, an "amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity." He sighed and trudged onward. At least he didn't have to do this every year.

Ythoquah felt good about the long walk and the change of scenery, but he was getting hungry. Many years had passed since his last Christmas feast. He was hungry enough now to eat a horse, but they hadn't seen any on their trip. His multiple eyes were fixed on the white landscape ahead, not noticing when Rozhoth-Tar jerked to a stop.

Rozhoth-Tar had caught a smell on the air. A moment later he had captured it again and was sure of its source. Home. They were very

close now. By following the scent they could take a shortcut through the woods.

"Ythoquah! Come back!"

Ythoquah turned and eyed his companion. "We can't stop now. If we don't arrive soon, everyone will be asleep."

A pleading look in Rozhoth-Tar's massive eyes made Ythoquah sigh and trudge back to his friend's side. "This better be good. My tail is nearly frozen."

"I've found a shortcut," Rozhoth-Tar said. "I can smell Home!"

"I'm amazed that you can smell anything in this cold," Ythoquah sniffed. "Lead on."

As they scrambled up a hillside to a dense forest, Ythoquah began chattering about what they would do when they arrived, how wonderful it would be to sit in front of the fireplace, and how much food he meant to eat. Even the evil Ancient Ones would be in good spirits this evening.

Ythoquah stayed close behind his friend as they crossed a deep ravine, scrambled through dense undergrowth, and crossed an open field in the moonlight. Then, without warning, Rozhoth-Tar dropped into an ancient tunnel that smelled of decay. Ythoquah was surprised for a moment, then followed without hesitation. Rozhoth-Tar struck a match, his night vision not being as good as it once was, and continued through the tunnel at a rapid pace.

Even though his sinuses were bothering him, Ythoquah could now detect the scent of Home as they neared the far end of the tunnel. A thrill rippled through his blood. The Creator was near!

They popped out of the tunnel in a vacant lot on College Street in Providence, Rhode Island. Their appearance startled a group of cats who quickly departed the area. They smiled as they glimpsed the familiar lines of the Creator's Colonial style home with its fan carving over the front door. Its eighteenth century design and smoking chimney were pleasing to their eyes.

The windows of the five upper rooms glowed with welcoming light. They had finally arrived.

The two Elder Gods jumped over the hedges and climbed the front wall to peer in through one of the second-story windows. Leaning on the white Colonial mantel by the roaring fireplace was a thin man of average height with stooped shoulders. He had dark eyes and mousy gray hair which was cut short. His face was long with a lantern jaw and a small, severe mouth. He wore a conservative blue suit with a blue tie. The Elder Gods watched with affection in their eyes. This was their Creator. This was Uncle Lovecraft.

Ythoquah scratched his claws across the window as Lovecraft had taught him and hid from the Creator's view. Lovecraft looked up from the flames and smiled at the window, remembering the greeting ritual. He approached the window and spoke in a high-pitched voice with a flat, nasal quality.

"Do I hear a cat at my window?"

The two Elder Gods clung to the outer wall out of Lovecraft's view until he turned and started away from the window. Ythoquah quickly dragged his claws across the glass again. Lovecraft spun around and spoke gravely to the window.

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

Rozhoth-Tar worked a claw under the window and opened it. Then he and Ythoquah jumped into the room in front of Lovecraft and towered over him in a menacing fashion. Lovecraft smiled.

"It is wonderful to see you again, Uncle!" Ythoquah boomed, his voice rattling the windows.

"It's nice to be Home," Rozhoth-Tar said.

"I was pensively ruminating on the possibility that you might not arrive," Lovecraft said. "Shall I procure some liquid refreshment for you?"

They both nodded. Lovecraft left the room and quickly returned with two large glasses of ginger ale.

"Have the others arrived yet?" Ythoquah asked, looking around at the empty room.

A crash sounded in the hallway. "I believe they're approaching at this moment," Lovecraft said. "They are conveying victuals for our repast."

It was like a parade. The bat-like Shantaks entered the room with trays of food. They were followed by Azathoth and Hastur the Un-speakable who carried a massive fir Christmas tree between them. Yog-Sothoth was next with a tray of food on every tentacle. Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, Dagon, Hypnos, and Yig brought up the rear carrying enough bottles of ginger ale to flood the Plateau of Leng. Dhazhzhin-Hajgu, another of the Elder Gods, carried a giant roll of cheddar cheese into the room and set it on the floor.

A wonderful celebration ensued and everyone had a good time. They feasted on chili con carne, vegetables, cheese, candy, several flavors of ice cream, and coffee. As usual, Azathoth was the life of the party. The blind idiot god danced around with a lampshade on his amorphous head until he passed out with his face in a bowl of pistachio ice cream. The tree was decorated by the time the fire and the party died down at two in the morning. By common and silent agreement, everyone moved away from the fire precisely at two o'clock. Most of them tried to hide their bulky bodies behind the few small pieces of furniture. Uncle Lovecraft set out a small tray of food and drink near the fire, then ducked behind the couch as he motioned for everyone to remain silent.

Thunder boomed and lightning flashed. Rozhoth-Tar, intoxicated by the ginger ale, started to giggle. Ythoquah clapped a claw over his friend's mouth to silence him. A series of damp squelching sounds became audible on the roof, followed by an enormous crash. Clouds of soot dropped down the chimney to snuff out the remnants

of the fire.

Uncle Lovecraft and his creations waited in tense silence as an eldritch tentacle appeared in the chimney, probing the ashes in the fireplace. A couple of bricks fell into the fireplace, then the gargantuan body of Great Cthulhu slid down the chimney and bounded into the room. Lovecraft and the others were delighted to see the bundle of gifts that Cthulhu gripped in one massive tentacle. Although it appeared to be uncomfortable, Cthulhu was wearing a bright red outfit with white trim. A fake white beard was attached beneath the gaping mouth.

Cthulhu boomed with a sound resembling laughter as he dropped the gifts underneath the tree. With a wink of his eye, Cthulhu nodded to Uncle Lovecraft and squirmed back up the chimney with his tray of food and drink.

"Cthulhu wgah'nagl Merry Christmas fhtagn!" everyone shouted as Cthulhu disappeared from view.

Little time passed before all the presents were opened. Uncle Lovecraft received an autographed first edition of the *Necronomicon* and seemed very happy with it. The Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones received a wide variety of ancient figurines carved in their own images. Ythoquah also received a heavy wool mitten for his tail. Rozhoth-Tar acquired a set of comfortable fur boots custom-made by the Abominable Snow-Men of Mi-Go.

Showering wishes of the season on Uncle Lovecraft and the others, the assembled creatures moved off to their bunks and sleeping bags. Lovecraft poured himself a nightcap of ginger ale and toasted them all as they left the room.

Exhausted from the day's exertions and their long journey, Ythoquah and Rozhoth-Tar clambered into their bunks and covered themselves with the heavy blankets. They both felt great joy and contentment. They saw clearly how much this occasion meant to them and the special value of such an

anchorage in their existence. Even so, they would not turn their backs on the stars and what they offered. They knew they must return to the larger stage. But it felt good to know they had this Home to come back to, these things which were so glad to see them again and could always be counted upon for the same simple welcome. They fell asleep with contented smiles on their faces.

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LOVECRAFT AS A CHARACTER IN LOVECRAFTIAN FICTION

(continued from page 37)

¹See Steven J. Mariconda, "The Hound!—A Dead Dog?", Crypt of Cthulhu #38.

²See Robert M. Price, "The Humor at Red Hook," Crypt of Cthulhu #28, where I show how both Suydam and Malone are Lovecraft alter egos.

³Most of the following dates are initial publication dates. Up to this point they are composition dates.

⁴See also Shea's very Derlethian The Color out of Time (1984).

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

(continued from page 60)

the Marsh clan; he already had Deep One blood. When he sculpted the statue it was to be a bird woman, yet in his dreams he was influenced by something I guess like a succubus, to change the statue into a Deep One woman. Corey was so much a Deep One already that the drunk ran when he saw Corey's neck creases. The succubus-like dream-woman and the statue only helped to cause what was in him to happen anyway.

In "Haggopian" also, Haggopian has Deep One blood from his mother's side. The bite from the hagfish did not turn him into a Deep

One; he already would have become one. The bite turned him into a vampire of sorts.

"Fisherman at Falcon Point" remains the only mystery, unless that old fisherman saved the merwoman in the first place because he felt sympathy—which could imply that he was one of them, too. But that is only implication. That one story is a mystery.

--Tani Jantsang
Newquay, England

[Oops! The discussion of "Innsmouth Clay" was added to Lorson's article, to update it, by your bumbling editor. Mea culpa! --Editor]

I would like to address the criticisms of Crypt leveled by Ms. Jessica Amanda Salmonson at your magazine's lack of female authors. First, let me reaffirm the facts she pointed out to begin with—that really, there aren't very many females writing for the 'zine. This is true. However, I think it is not necessarily correct in calling the "excuse" used by many editors who say "no females submit" "archaic." Must we be labeled barbarians because we tell the truth? I think not. For one, Jessica, it is not entirely easy for editors to recover addresses of lady writers—this job is, in fact, quite nearly impossible without the proper connections. I as editor of Revelations from Yuggoth myself would love to reprint more work by female macabre artists. However, much of the stuff currently being produced is below the par I set for my magazine. Moreover, most of the older stuff put out by such highly-respectable ladies as Greye La Spina, Leah Bodine Drake, Mearle Prout, Dorothy Quick, Alice I'anson, and others is extremely difficult to research copyrights for, and as such even more risky to reprint.

Don't get me wrong. I am not defending chauvinism. Many of my favorite macabre artists are of the fairer sex—C. L. Moore, M. E. Counselman, and all of the ladies
(continued on page 43)

FANTASY MACABRE #10 - OUR CTHULHU MYTHOS ISSUE

Featuring; "The Guardian of the Gate" by James Grandillo, a never before published story which, August Derleth at the time of his death, had accepted for an anthology on which he was working.

Among the other ten stories in issue #10 are: "The Light in the Room" by Gary William Crawford; "The Kiss" by Archie N. Roy; "Pages from Pickman's Diary", Arkham House artist Tony Patrick's first serious work of fiction; and "The Pacific High" by Grant Fjermedal, bestselling author of THE TOMORROW MAKERS (Macmillan).

Subscriptions to FANTASY MACABRE are \$9 for three issues. Subscribe now and receive three (3) back issues free, including, while supplies last, one containing a new story by Tom Ligotti.

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LOVECRAFT AS A CHARACTER IN LOVECRAFTIAN FICTION

By Robert M. Price

Any author puts himself into his work, but some have done so in a literal fashion as when, for example, Lin Carter, author of the Callisto series of science fiction adventure novels, sets aside the role of Burroughsian narrator and dons the mantle of (anti-)hero in Lankar of Callisto. H. P. Lovecraft's characters often have an autobiographical ring as well. And, of course, HPL has entered the fiction of others as a character. We will take this occasion briefly to survey the major appearances of Lovecraft as a character in Lovecraftian fiction.

Following the common practice of cannibalizing one's autobiography for one's fiction, HPL used aspects of his own unique upbringing and his antiquarian interests to fill in the sketchy outlines of his narrators/characters in "The Tomb" (1917), "The Outsider" (1921), The Case of Charles Dexter Ward (1927), and "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1933). Lovecraft himself is the narrator of "The Statement of Randolph Carter" (1919) and the prose poem "Nyarlathotep" (1920) simply because these stories are transcripts of his own dreams. (Harley Warren in "Statement" is really Samuel Loveman.) Similarly, innocent personal experiences transmogrified into fictional horrors form the basis of "The Hound" (1922), so HPL is the narrator and Rheinart Kleiner is the doomed "St. John."¹

Two tales from 1925 are genuinely autobiographical to a greater extent. "He" and "The Horror at Red Hook" both comment ruefully on Lovecraft's "New York Exile," as may be seen readily from the opening lines of the former.²

Lovecraft's Randolph Carter

character is a more completely realized alter ego. HPL probably got the idea from having used his own dream in "The Statement of Randolph Carter." Why not have Carter return as his alter ego? In "The Unnamable" (1923), Lovecraft/Carter appears full-blown as a writer of horror stories for the pulp magazine Whispers. "The Silver Key" (1926) is more pensive and wistful, and provides an eloquent statement of Lovecraft's philosophical stance: an escape from nihilistic despair by taking refuge in the beauty of the past. Randolph Carter becomes a Burroughsian inter-world adventurer in The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath (1926-27). The speech of Nyarlathotep at the end of the novel provides a statement of Lovecraft's esthetic strategy of building realms of cosmic fantasy on earthly scenes and locales that seized his own imagination in breathless moments of wonder. Finally, in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," Lovecraft adds yet another alter ego in the same tale: "Phillips, the Providence mystic, was lean, grey, long-nosed, clean shaven, and stoop-shouldered." I suspect it is no accident that a second Lovecraft Doppelgänger appears in this story alongside Randolph Carter. "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," a sequel to "The Silver Key," was really the idea of E. Hoffmann Price ("De Marigny" in "Through the Gates"), who wrote the first draft. Lovecraft collaborated only reluctantly. Randolph Carter is used in this tale in a way Lovecraft had not planned. In this light, "Ward Phillips" and his speech take on new importance. Phillips briefly sums up what he had thought to be Carter's fate,

giving a summary of the events of "The Silver Key." Of course "Through the Gates" undoes the ending of the earlier story, the story of Carter as HPL had really wanted it ended. Now forced by politeness to lay it aside for the sake of his friend Price's proposed sequel, Lovecraft dissociates himself from Carter and identifies himself instead with the new character Ward Phillips, who now pointedly reminds the reader, "Here's what I thought happened: remember 'The Silver Key'?" It is thus a subtle protest against the Price sequel in which HPL was a reluctant collaborator.

Lovecraft began to invade the fantasy worlds of others in Frank Belknap Long's "The Space Eaters" (1928),³ where the narrator's friend "Howard" is "a tall, slim man with a slight stoop . . . long nose and slightly protuberant chin. . . . My friend wrote short-stories. He wrote to please himself, in defiance of contemporary taste, and his tales were unusual." Together Howard and the author manage to drive away invading aliens with advice from the Necronomicon (the Necronomicon epigraph does not appear in the story as printed in the Arkham/Ballantine Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos).

No doubt the best known fictional appearance of Lovecraft is as the unnamed Providence recluse whose aid is sought by the narrator of Robert Bloch's "The Shambler from the Stars" (1934). Young Bloch even went so far as to obtain HPL's written permission to finish him off in a grisly fashion. HPL's corpse is sucked dry by the vampiric avatar of Tsathoggua at the story's climax.

Lovecraft had "Robert Blake" done in by an avatar of Nyarlathotep in "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), but added some autobiographical details that really made Blake half-Lovecraft, half-Bloch. Blake lives in Lovecraft's house and writes tales with titles that satirize HPL's own. (The final tale in this trilogy, Bloch's "The Shadow from

the Steeple" (1951), brings in fellow-author Fritz Leiber as yet a third doomed character.)

To be complete, we ought to mention Bloch's creation of Luveh-Keraph, Egyptian high priest of Bast (the goddess of HPL's beloved cats). This HPL pre-incarnation, highly reminiscent of HPL's own "Klarkash-Ton," appeared in Bloch's "The Suicide in the Study" (1935).

In the stories of Long and Bloch, the reason for introducing Lovecraft as a character is simply the fun of seeing HPL appear in one of his own stories, so to speak. The idea is much like that of the Candid Camera viewers who often wrote in asking that Allen Funt himself be made the unsuspecting dupe in one of the show's elaborate filmed scams.

August W. Derleth began injecting his mentor HPL into Mythos tales for a discernibly different reason. Lovecraft does not actually appear in the stories; rather, he is mentioned by characters as a figure of their recent past. For instance, already in "The Return of Hastur" (1939), shortly after HPL's death, Paul Tuttle discovers that Lovecraft's tale "The Shadow over Innsmouth," which he has read in the February 1928 issue of Weird Tales, is actually true. In "The Keeper of the Key" (1951), we read

"But Cthulhu is a legend—a creation of the imagination of the American writer, Lovecraft!" I protested.

"You say so. So do others. But consider the parallels. . . ."

In "The Seal of R'lyeh" (1957) we even discover that HPL, Robert Barlow, and Robert E. Howard were probably all done in by the Old Ones! Of course the point here is to chill the reader with the implication that "Cthulhu is real—even in your world!" It does not come off very well. (Colin Wilson handled it more effectively in The Mind Parasites where the Old Ones turn out

to be real in Derleth's own world.)

Derleth does make Lovecraft an on-stage character in "The Dark Brotherhood," but here the narrator, "Arthur Phillips," as in "The Statement of Randolph Carter," is unobtrusively, almost incidentally, Lovecraft. "Ward Phillips" in "The Lamp of Alhazred" is obviously and transparently Lovecraft, as the story is Derleth's tribute to HPL and to his imagination. Thus this touching story does not quite fall into the same category we have been discussing.

The present decade has witnessed a whole new approach to using Lovecraft as a literary character. Here writers have realized what Winfield Townley Scott said years ago, that Lovecraft was "his own most fantastic creation." Lovecraft has now begun to appear as himself, a character fully as interesting and entertaining as any of his fictional protagonists. Why not make him a fictional protagonist, then?

Fred Chappell's "Weird Tales" (1984) does contain strong supernatural elements, and in a very Lovecraftian way: those who stumble on the truth of the reawakening elder race are destroyed. But the character involved is Hart Crane. Lovecraft appears in the story but takes no part in the fantastic action. When he appears he is simply part of the mosaic, but it is the genuine HPL we meet.

Peter H. Cannon's novella Pulp-time (1984) teams Lovecraft and Frank Belknap Long with Sherlock Holmes. The whole Kalem Club eventually becomes involved. The story is really about Lovecraft and his "New York gang." Lovecraft as Lovecraft is the center of the story.

Richard A. Lupoff's Lovecraft's Book (1985) is also all about Lovecraft, though Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard have important lesser roles. Those real-life characters were all picturesque enough to have had such adventures as Lupoff casts them in, though as it happened, it never

happened.

One feature Chappell's, Cannon's, and Lupoff's Lovecraft apocrypha have in common is the notion that real-life adventures inspired various Lovecraft tales. The too-true theories of madman Sterling Croyden inspired "The Shadow over Innsmouth," "The Dreams in the Witch House" and (by implication) At the Mountains of Madness. HPL's team-up with Holmes inspired "The Horror at Red Hook," and his submarine exploits with Houdini's brother led to "The Shadow over Innsmouth." In a sense, we are back to Derleth, only here the idea is that "truth is stranger than fiction," not that fiction is truth after all.

One last note on Robert Bloch's use of Lovecraft as a character. In his later novel Strange Eons (1979), a Cthulhu Mythos homage to Lovecraft, he pretty much recapitulates Derleth's "It's true after all" theme, having characters refer to Lovecraft as a writer who turned out to be speaking the truth after all. (Similarly, see Michael Shea's recent Fat Face, 1987).⁴ But as early as 1940 Bloch had anticipated the latest trend in his short story "Ghost Writer" which recounts supernatural revenge among the Lovecraft Circle. (At least we think so.) The characters are purposely very different in manner and appearance from their real-life analogues, but the story seems to be loosely based, in a self-deprecatingly satirical way, on the master-disciple relationship between HPL and young Bloch, though the Bloch character also seems to incorporate elements of August Derleth and perhaps even Forrest J. Ackerman (cf. the "Boiling Point" controversy in The Fantasy Fan). In this story, the master bequeaths his disciple his (spirit-possessed) typewriter, opening a channel for really posthumous collaborations, a theme recalling Bloch's later "The Man Who Collected Poe" (1951) as well as Karl Edward Wagner's "Sticks" (1974).

FROM THE VAULTS OF YOH-VOMBIS

By Lin Carter

Hors d'Oeuvres

Time's the mightiest conqueror of them all. Not Hannibal with all his elephants or Rome with all her legions can wreak the ruin of a trickle of sand through an hour-glass. Ask the ghosts of Babylon and Nineveh and Tyre if it be not so! --Donn Byrne,

Messer Marco Polo

It's impossible to starve. You can always try burglary, or holding people up. If you get away with it, you have money for food; and if you are caught they serve you meals in jail. --T. H. White,

England Have My Bones

The jewel is cut into facets, each brilliant but each different, and it is possible that many different religions are at least moderately true. --James Hilton,

Lost Horizon

Uncultivated minds are not full of wild flowers. Villainous weeds grow in them, and they are the haunt of Toads. --Logan Pearsall Smith,

Trivia

There have been earthquakes which, in a few seconds, have been responsible for killing almost as many people as a politician in his entire career. --T. H. White,

The Elephant and the Kangaroo

Neither the substance of America's favorite sport, politics, nor the substance of America's favorite food, the hot dog, can bear too close analysis. --Gregory McDonald,

Fletch and the Man Who

The lucky man is generally the man who knows exactly how much to leave to luck. --C. S. Forester,

Flying Colours

It is the tragedy of writing a really good letter that you cannot be there when it is opened.

--A. A. Milne, Once On a Time

Time is for dragonflies and dragons. The former live too briefly and the latter live too long.

--John D. MacDonald,

Pale Gray for Guilt

My imagination has its dancing-places, like the Dawn in Homer; there are terraces, with balustrades and marble fountains on them, where Ideal Beings smile as I draw near; there are ilex-groves and beech trees under which I hold forth for ever; gardens fairer than most earthly gardens where groups of ladies never grow weary of listening to my voice. --Logan Pearsall Smith, More Trivia

A Preponderance of Giants II:

A "preponderance" is the collective noun for giants suggested by John Boardman and enthusiastically adopted by myself. (Some of my own coinages in the collective noun department which might amuse you are: a quorum of senators, a bevy of bathing beauties, a synod of bishops, and a cackle of witches. You can play this game yourself, with a couple of friends . . .) But on with my list of giants:

HARPIN of the Mount. A savage giant overcome in battle by the knightly hero of the twelfth century romance, Yvain.

HUNDER. A giant so huge that every morning for breakfast he devoured three whole sheep, a pie made from one thousand apples, and a chocolate drop as wide as a spinning wheel. It would take six ordinary men to so much as lift the brass key to his front door! See James Thurber's fairy tale, The Great Quillow.

IRUS. The beggar-giant in the Odyssey who toiled for Penelope's castleful of free-loading suitors and tried to interfere with the return of Odysseus, who slew him.

KEWISH. The three-legged giant of the Isle of Man in the old Manx tale. He was quite a nice and friendly giant, as giants went in those days: he never harmed a soul. In fact, he once saved St. Patrick from being eaten up by a sea monster.

KLAAS. Youngest of the three boisterous giant brothers of Holland's Gelderland, in the old Dutch tale, "The Whispering Giant." They were a noisy and bothersome trio, until outwitted by the cunning of the dwarves.

LAGGAN. Five-headed giant who lived three hundred years and was finally slain by the Scot huntsman, Finlay the Changeling. Laggan was the head of the last family of giants left in Scotland. See "Finlay the Giant Killer" in Giants! Giants! Giants!, edited by Helen Hoke.

MAUSHOP. Another good giant, like Kewish above; he lived in Cape Cod (of all places!) in the days when only the mean, conniving, ugly, dwarfish pukwudgies lived there. See "The Good Giants and the Bad Pukwudgies" by Jean Fritz.

MORGANTE. Ferocious Pagan giant conquered by Orlando, converted on the spot to Christianity, and who thereafter performed noble and chivalric feats until at length expiring from the bite of a crab. See Morgante Maggiore by Pulci (1482)—if you can find it—a burlesque in verse of chivalric romances. Sounds like a fun book (I can't find it, myself).

MRS. YOOP. A genteel but dictatorial giantess in L. Frank Baum's The Tin Woodman of Oz. She commanded vast magical powers, but only when she wore her magic lace apron. When Woot the Wanderer stole it from her, she lost all her powers.

OG. King of Bashan in Deuteronomy 3:11. He lived for three thousand years, and avoided drowning in the Flood by swimming along with part of his weight resting on the Ark. His bed measured nine cubits by four cubits.

OLD DENBRAS. Elderly Cornish

giant some fifteen feet high and very fat from all the good eating he had done. His teeth, though, were nearly ground down to the gums—"that was from grinding up the bones of goats, for he always ate 'em raw, with the skin on." See Fairy Tales of the British Isles.

ORGOGLIO. In the Faerie Queene, the most fearsome giant that ever was seen, thrice human height, who bore as a cudgel a full-grown oak tree he had torn up by the roots. He battled with the Red-Crosse Knight (St. George, you know), who only failed to overcome him because he was at the time laid low by a magic draught from Sluggard's Fount. Prince Arthur finally killed him; Orgoglio, I mean, not St. George.

PANTAGRUEL. The thirsty giant in Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel. (Did you know, by the way, that Gargantua is supposed to take place in Utopia?)

PIET. Eldest of the three jolly giant brothers in the Dutch tale "The Whispering Giant." You can find the story in 13 Giants, edited by Dorothy Gladys Spicer (Coward-McCann, 1966).

PIRE. Two-headed giant from the south of Narnia, overcome by Olvin, the fair-haired King of Archenland, who turned him into a mountain. See The Horse and His Boy, by C. S. Lewis.

QUANT. Wife of the good giant Maushop, of Cape Cod, of all places.

RUMBLEBUFFIN. Another giant of Narnia, a good one this time, freed by Aslan from his enchantment as a statue in the courtyard of the palace of the White Witch, Jadis. See The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.

STONEFOOT. Yet one more Narnian giant, summoned to battle by Roonwit at the command of King Tirian. See The Last Battle.

STUMBLEDUFFER. One of my own giants, for a change! A nice, friendly, quite gentlemanly giant who lives in the Zetzelstein Mountains in Terra Magica, and who never eats Man, being much fonder

of elephant cutlets, whale stew, hippopotamus hash, and suchlike dishes. You can read about him in Dragonrouge and also in Callipygia.

TEUTOBOCHUS. Name coined for the giant's skeleton discovered near the Rhone in 1613. When reburied, the remains required a tomb thirty feet long. (Another giant skeleton was dug up in 1456, also near the Rhone. I suspect that both consisted of the fossilized bones of mammoths.)

THUNDERDELL. A two-headed giant who happened to be the eighth of his colossal race to be dispatched by the hand of the indefatigable Sir Jack.

THUNDERTHIGHS. Another of my own giants, who lives atop a medium-sized Alp in Terra Magica. Unlike his friend, Stumbleduffer, Thunderthighs does indeed eat Man, when he can catch 'um. He was some twenty times human height, or about 120 feet tall, and weighed four tons. When he perspired, a drop of his sweat would have filled a quart bucket. See my novel, Dragonrouge. Please: I need the royalties!

TIR-A-LIRRA. Friendly, but enormous, Turkish giant in Frank R. Stockton's charming children's fantasy, Ting-A-Ling Tales. His best friend was a tiny Turkish fairy (Ting-A-Ling), who was, to him, so miniscule that he could hardly see him at all.

VANCE, SIR GAMMER. Nice giant with the interesting hobby of bottle-making, in the traditional English nonsense-story of the same name, which I know only from James Reeves' redaction, in his Three Tall T (1960).

WIMBLEWEATHER. A "small" giant of Narnia, but brave as a lion. He was a member of Prince Caspian's War Council, and proved to be none too bright for all his courage. See Prince Caspian.

YOOP. A ferocious giant held captive in the Quadling Country of Oz, and exhibited to the public in a gigantic cage. He was twenty-one feet tall, and weighed 1640 pounds and was something over

four hundred years old at the time he was visited by the Scarecrow, the Patchwork Girl, Princess Dorothy, Oko and Toto. See one of the best and liveliest of L. Frank Baum's Oz books, The Patchwork Girl of Oz (1913).

And there you have it: not all the giants I know of, but at least a full preponderance.

Materials Towards a Natural History of Gryphons:

Mythical creature, hybrid or composite of eagle and lion, most authoritatively pictured as possessing the belly, hind-quarters, rear legs and tail of a lion, and the beaked head, chest, wings, and clawed forelegs of an eagle—except that it has ears, long, pricked ears, and no birds do. (Did you ever stop to think about that?)

Name is variously given as griffin, griffon, gryphon, griffun, gryphoun, griffown, griffoune, greffon, gryffon, grifon, gryfon, griffion, griffen, gryffen, griffyn, grefyne, grifyn, gryffin, griphon, girphinne, grephoun, griphin, gryphin and gryphen.

All of these derive directly from the French griffon, which came from the Old French grifoun, which came from the Italian grifone, which came from the Latin gryphus, which came from the Greek grups or gryps, which might possibly, but probably did not, come from the Hebrew kerubh ("cherub").

Homeland variously said to be Scythia or Hindoostan. Sir John de Mandeville suggests the otherwise unknown land of Bacharie in Asia, where the trees bear wool like sheep and man-eating ypotains (half-man and half-horse) inhabit the rivers, lakes, and streams.

Ancient, Classical, and Medieval authorities seem about evenly divided in their opinion as to whether the gryphon was imaginary or real. Aelian, Solinus, Pomponius Mela and Herodotus mention the gryphon in context as an actual beast, while Plautus, Virgil, and Ariosto agree.

On the other hand, Albertus Magnus, Pliny, Aldrovandus, and Matthias Michovius declare the beast purely imaginary. In his Vulgar Errors dear old Sir Thomas Browne ponders the question and concludes that the gryphon is symbolic. (Symbolic of what he doesn't say.)

Refuting Sir Thomas, Andrew Ross takes up the question of such an unlikely hybrid (eagle and lion) and points out, rather cogently, I'd say, that even more unlikely creatures actually do exist—such as "the Gyrappa, or Camelopard," a living composite made up of the spare parts of "the Libbard, Buffe, Hart, and Camel." Ross has a point, you must admit; and he could also have pointed to some of the more absurd creatures, such as the porcupine, kangaroo, armadillo, and, Ghod help us all, the platypus (which is, as you know, a composite of animal, bird, and reptile, and look it up if you don't believe the Guru).

You may conclude that the gryphon is imaginary, but if so, you may find yourself in trouble with the British Museum. You see, they have one of the foreclaws of a gryphon, which is for some reason sacred to St. Cuthbert. (Yes, St. Cuthbert . . . I don't make this junk up, you know!) Another foreclaw, but probably not from the same gryphon, is preserved in the Brunswick Cathedral. It came from Palestine which, come to think of it, is sure a long way from Scythia, or Hindoostan, or, for that matter, Bacharie. Oh, the British Museum also has in its collections a fossilized gryphon's egg. (Don't ask me—!)

Today, our fabulous monster's name adorns a rather extensive family of Welsh origin (to say nothing of the flag of Wales), and a small, ridiculous breed of dog even more silly-looking than the poodle.

Such is fame.

THE JABBERWOCK

The Jabberwock, that frightful
beast
(I say this without malice),
Is very little known (at least
So I deduce from Alice)

The facts about the beast are few:
'Tis corpulent and bulgy,
It's fond of rosemary and rue,
And lives in woodlands tulgey;

It keenly fears a pruning fork,
And feels contempt for gerbils;
It's fond of soap and salted pork,
And when it runs, it burbles;

It is not really very strong,
And often gets the sniffles;
And sometimes, as it romps along,
Huntsmen report it whiffles;

It is not very good at games,
Conundrums oft will stump it;
Its eyes have been compared to
flames,
It cannot play the trumpet;

It dines on stout and sourdough,
And loves a double feature—
And this is really all I know
Of this elusive creature!

(And just one more, for the road:)

THE YETI

These large and lumpish creatures
were
Covered entirely with fur.

Rumors concerning them persist.
They may not (or they may) exist.

All I can say about the Yeti
Is that they are not very preti.

--The Intelligent Child's Own
Book of Interesting and
Instructive Monsters

We are sad to report the death
of **Donald Wandrei** on October 17.
Wandrei was a gifted writer of
weird fiction and co-founder of
Arkham House.

Another poem from that unpublished book of mine:

THE KEEPER AT THE CRYPT

By Carl T. Ford

I have been lecturing Crypt readers on the evil delights of playing the Call of Cthulhu role-playing game for some time now. However, not so many Cthulhoids will be familiar with a game entitled Cthulhu Lives run by "The H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society." The player or investigator actively participates in a real "live" mystery, connected in some way or another to those Lovecraftian horrors we love to loathe.

Members enrol in the society for an annual membership fee and then when they decide to participate in an adventure they pay a further fee per session. In the game Cthulhu Lives characters are inevitably situated in 1920s surroundings and so the player dresses accordingly. (Regular newsletters sent out to Society members frequently contain articles advising players on costume preparation and design.)

Games are run approximately on a monthly basis and circulars are sent out to members announcing that a "scenario" is to take place. Players wishing to participate arrive at the destination on the day specified and will find themselves introduced to the other players, whom they may or may not know from previous adventures. Characters are subtly introduced into the scenario by a nonplaying character (i.e., a player who is present in the game, but whose prime concern is to steer "investigators" along the right tracks, towards the goal or adventure conclusion. He may play a small or large part in the actual game, depending on the Keeper's plans). Other nonplaying characters also participate—all these actors know the route the game is to take and act out their roles accordingly. They may or may not be whom they claim to be, and it is up to the investigators to decide whether to trust them. NPCs can

be fellow investigators, cultists or demons in disguise for all the players know. Only the Keeper (referee) and fellow NPCs know the truth and outcome of the adventure.

The action might take place in a deserted mansion or haunted castle, in a woodland house or an old graveyard, anything the Society have hired as premises for the entertainment of the members. In some cases property is leased by the Society or owned (such is the case with several "live" role-playing groups in England).

Monsters usually play a small part in the set-up. Characters might catch a rare glimpse of Deep Ones in an old cove or by the sea banks, but very rarely. If they do, the Keeper might decide that they are driven insane by the sights they see and so the character might suddenly be forced to retire from the game. When the monsters do show up, it is on rare occasions, usually at the end of a scenario. Besides, seeing someone running around in a rubber suit might dampen the atmosphere so carefully built during the course of play.

The main action revolves around the characters' investigations into the mystery at hand. Important clues may wait in mansion libraries; or concealed staircases (hidden behind players' bedroom wardrobes) might lead to unspeakable horrors far below the house cellars. For the investigating players it's action and excitement all the way.

Games can last up to several weeks. Recently the Cthulhu Lives group travelled to England for a scenario which spanned from the gaslight scenes of old London Town to Cambridge in an adventure entitled "The Wicker Man."

Membership to "The H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society" costs only

\$15 a year. Even if you don't think that running around in 20s garb, investigating old wine-cellars, creepy crypts, bat-ridden bell-towers, and mysterious mansions is for you, Crypt readers might still like to obtain the regular newsletters that the Society send out to members.

Membership gets you a certificate and card, regular updates on adventures and a monthly newsletter entitled Strange Eons, which contains reports on the Society activities, articles on Lovecraftian matters and other eldritch lore. The Society also hold their Annual Black Tentacle Awards ceremonies, wherein Society members get to vote for their favourite "live" adventures, actors, Keepers, and whatever else these cultists get up to.

Having been established for almost four years now, the HPLHS is going strong and is definitely worth a wandering tentacle. So if you've ever craved to walk those haunted Arkham hills, visit the legendary harbours of shadowed Innsmouth, study in dark libraries filled with tomes of ancient lore, then why not drop a line to:

Sean Branney, President
HPLHS
1434 15th Street
Boulder, CO 80302
USA

Your lives will never be quite the same again.

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU (continued from page 33)

forementioned (and somewhere on that list your name must surely fall). But I must insist that simply because editors lack stories by women (Schiff is a good example—he is perhaps the most un-biased man I ever met) does not mean they are "archaic," "chauvinistic," or most of all plotting against the opposite sex for domination of the field of supernatural literature. One might disagree; but why do I doubt it?

(continued on page 55)

THREE NEW ONES!

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Featuring three weird menace tales: "Plaything for the Chortling Fiend" by Charles Hoffman; "Coffin Crag" by Carl Jacobi; and "Meat for Satan's Ice Box" by Francis James, plus an article "Another Exciting Hugh B. Cave Story" by Audrey Parente. . . . \$4.50

REVELATIONS FROM YUGGOTH

This long-awaited premier issue features Cthulhu Mythos fiction by Wilum Pugmire, Dave Stall, Mark Rainey, Robert M. Price; poetry by Brian Lumley, a story fragment by Robert E. Howard, loads of loathsome art, and other surprises. . . . \$4.50

CROMLECH #2

This even longer-awaited second issue of the Journal of Robert E. Howard Criticism sports a cover by Stephen E. Fabian plus "Howard's Prototypes" by L. Sprague de Camp, "Shadow in the Well" (a story fragment by Robert E. Howard) and more! . . . \$4.50

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We have also published selected works by H. P. Lovecraft, plus Lovecraft criticism and bibliographies. At The Root, Cats And Dogs, The Materialist Today, FuBar, Les Bibliotheques, and Howard Phillips Lovecraft: The Books 4. etc., etc., etc.

Forthcoming items include: William Hope Hodgson: A Bibliography of Books and Periodical Appearances. Clark Ashton Smith: The Books. Les Bibliotheques, etc., etc., etc.

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R'lyeh Review

Steve Behrends (ed.), Clark Ashton Smith: Letters to H. P. Lovecraft. Necronomicon Press, 80 pp., 1987. \$6.95.

(Reviewed by Stefan Dziemianowicz)

Like so many of H. P. Lovecraft's correspondences, the one with Clark Ashton Smith was a true meeting of the minds. Although they often discussed the possibility of the one coming out to Providence or the other to Auburn (more likely since Lovecraft seems to have had more of the travelling bug), in the fourteen years the two writers exchanged letters they never saw each other face to face. Public record of this correspondence has been one-sided, limited to the twenty-six entries in Lovecraft's Selected Letters, but thanks to the efforts of Smith scholar Steve Behrends we now have a volume of Smith's forty-four extant contributions to the literary friendship.

The book begs comparison to the Arkham House edition of Lovecraft's letters, but really, none is possible. Lovecraft's letters are true revelations and the five volumes patch together an extraordinary cultural and intellectual history, of which Lovecraft's fiction is only a brief chapter. In Smith's letters to Lovecraft, writing for the popular magazines is of supreme importance. This is to be expected, since it was through appearances in Weird Tales that the two got to know each other. But also, as Behrends notes, this was the period in which Smith made the transition from poetry to prose, and one can chart the dramatic growth of Smith's interest in his fiction writing as the letters move from his early half-hearted descriptions of a story idea to theories on how and why he writes his particular type of weird story.

But readers should note that the greatest value in these letters is in their use as adjuncts to the specific

stories Smith discusses. Even though Behrends has edited out some of the day to day details, he observes that in comparison to Lovecraft's opuses, Smith's letters are often "quite perfunctory," full of early story synopses (often altered or forgotten), but equally full of praises for the most recent Lovecraft story or gripes about his battles with Farnsworth Wright and Hugo Gernsback over acceptances and payment (a matter of some importance, since Smith was supporting himself and his aging parents on his meager sales).

One doesn't get as much of the writer's character from Smith's letters as one gets from Lovecraft's. Still, there are occasional glimpses. In a relatively long letter dated circa October 24, 1930 (Smith's playful dating of letters from mythical places and times has made only an approximate chronology possible), Smith describes the difference between Lovecraft's approach to the weird through "corroborating detail and verisimilitude" and his own attempts "to delude the reader into accepting an impossibility, or series of impossibilities, by means of a sort of verbal black magic." Simple as this sounds, it explains a lot about other attitudes Smith expresses.

Smith was very aware that he differed from most of the pulp fantasists in that he was "far happier when I can create everything in a story, including the milieu." To editors who request that he write stories that are "'a play of human motives, with alien worlds for background,'" he retorts "if human motives are mainly what they want, why bother going to other planets?"

Smith felt as embattled against the "yaps and nitwits" as did Lovecraft. He hated feeling compelled to write "in a manner that obviates mental effort on the part of the lowest grade moron" in order to make a sale. The trick, one that

he felt he could not master, was "to develop adequate atmosphere in connection with fairly rapid action." For this reason Edmond Hamilton, someone who sacrificed the former for the latter, and who could do it well and to order, is often Smith's whipping boy.

With a half-century of hindsight, some of Smith's complaints seem petty. The idea of Clark Ashton Smith selling stories to Hugo Gernsback, even before the bedrock definition of science fiction evolved, is ludicrous. Whereas most of Gernsback's science fiction writers accepted the form as a limited space in which to work out their imaginations, Smith used "science fiction" as a stepping off point into worlds totally of his own creation. The poetic possibilities of a new landscape, not its scientific plausibility, were his concern. Small wonder that Smith compares himself to Lovecraft's own Randolph Carter, a seeker of "the unknown, the uncharted, the exotic" in the land of the banal, and eulogizes "science, philosophy, psychology, humanism . . . [as] only candle flares in the face of the eternal night with its infinite reserves of strangeness, terror, sublimity."

But if Smith chews a sour grape or two, he is also perceptive, chastizing Farnsworth Wright for "playing safe when he can't find a precedent for some particular tale—a method of selection that is none too favorable to originality" and making thoughtful recommendations to Lovecraft on his stories. (By suggesting that Lovecraft have Derby animate the corpse of Asenath through knowledge of black magic, he may have been the first to point out a major flaw at the end of "The Thing on the Doorstep.")

Maybe the most important letters here are not the ones to Lovecraft, but the nine (included as an appendix) written in response to August Derleth within two months of Lovecraft's death. Derleth seems to have had it firm in his mind by then how he wished to display Lovecraft to the world through the

Cthulhu Mythos; for example, in an April 21, 1937, letter, Smith refers to Derleth's citation of the Farnese letter, and thus the "black magic" quote. Smith shows great restraint, recording on more than one occasion his reservations about Derleth's interpretation of the Old One's as inherently "evil." More importantly, in the penultimate letter, he criticizes "The Return of Hastur" for what we now recognize as a trademark of the Derleth Mythos and its many contributors: "you have tried to work in too much of the Lovecraft mythology and have not assimilated it into the natural body of the story."

Smith's letters are valuable for the Derleth criticism alone. As insights into the character of their author, they render a sketch of a man very different from his correspondents, whose very human likes and dislikes are often mitigated by a sense of humility. From the evidence here, the lament sounded for Lovecraft—that he dissipated too much of his enormous talent by pouring it into his letter writing rather than his fiction—will not be leveled against Smith. If anything, the ordinariness of these letters makes Smith's dreamy fantasies seem all the more extraordinary.

Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg (eds.), *13 Short Horror Novels*. NY: Bonanza, 1987, 758 pp. HC, \$8.98.

(Reviewed by Stefan Dziemianowicz)

The short novel form gives writers a chance to develop ideas that need more than twenty thousand words to take off but that would fall just short of the fifty thousand word runaway. What it generally gives editors and publishers, though, is a pain in the neck. The things are unwieldy—they take up half a short story collection and they have to be serialized in magazines. The best indication of their bastard-child status is the fact that we've yet to give them a real name:

novelettes? novellas? short novels?

Luckily, Messrs. Waugh and Greenberg got the idea that a nice-sized anthology could be made out of short novels alone. Hence this collection, a bargain even if you've already got most of the selections.

There's quite a broad range here: from as far back as Arthur Conan Doyle's The Parasite to Fritz Leiber's Horrible Imaginings of 1982; from the Civil War South of Manly Wade Wellman's Fearful Rock to the South Pacific site of Ted Sturgeon's Killdozer; from the bathtub gin gangsters of Cornell Woolrich's Jane Brown's Body to the psi-entists who ride George R. R. Martin's transgalactic Nightflyers. Mythos fans alone get four different sides of the subgenre: early Mythos (Long's The Horror from the Hills), late Mythos (The Shadow out of Time), Derleth-style Mythos (Stephen King's Jerusalem's Lot) and nouvelle Mythos (Ted Klein's Children of the Kingdom).

Weighing in at about fifteen thousand words each, maybe Ray Bradbury's Frost and Fire and Ray Russell's Sardonicus don't warrant the short novel moniker. But considering the average story length is a line or two shy of sixty pages, why carp about length?

Lovecraft Studies #15; Studies in Weird Fiction #2; \$4.50 each. Necronomicon Press, West Warwick, RI 02883.

(Reviewed by Stefan Dziemianowicz)

Although readers of this magazine need no inducement to pick up a copy of Lovecraft Studies, many will find Peter Cannon's "Arkham and Kingsport" a good reason for acquiring #15. An excerpt from Cannon's forthcoming book on Lovecraft, the essay focuses on stories Lovecraft wrote between 1920 and 1923 when he first began to convert his beloved New England into the Miskatonic region. By coincidence, Cannon's essay is bracketed by Steve Mariconda's "On the Emergence of Cthulhu." This search for

the sources of "The Call of Cthulhu" begins with the vivid 1920 dream in which Lovecraft plays the role assumed later by the artist Wilcox, ends with his sitting down to write the story in 1926, and considers in between the influence the Brooklyn incarceration, the Kalem, an earthquake and readings of Machen and de Maupassant all may have had on the story's development.

Rounding out the issue are Will Murray's discovery of "A Probable Source for the Drinking Song from 'The Tomb'" in a song by Puritan whipping boy Thomas "Merry Mount" Morton, and "Mythos Names and How to Say Them," in which Bob Price sticks his neck out to provocatively theorize that Dagon is not an entity unto himself, but only another, "safer" name for Cthulhu. The idea of giving abominable gods sanitary names for the purpose of public worship has its precedents, and Price notes that in Lovecraft's fiction we see Cthulhu, but only hear of the worship of Dagon. This potentially controversial paragraph-long observation calls for fuller development.

Don Burleson is also on hand with his deconstruction of "The Terrible Old Man," but be prepared to strap on your "new criticism" hip-waders. Burleson offers some interesting insights on the conflict between perceptions, beliefs and actions of characters in the story, but the thick jargon permeating the essay makes it as much a study of his critical methodology as of Lovecraft's brief tale. Likewise Don Herron's "The Red Brain: A Study in Absolute Doom" in Studies in Weird Fiction #2. It is good to see Donald Wandrei getting critical attention, and Herron makes valid points, but he devotes half the essay to explaining "paralogical dimensionality" through an example completely unrelated to Wandrei's story. Furthermore, it's questionable whether this point of critical reference is essential to Herron's argument.

The biggest reason for picking

up Studies in Weird Fiction #2 is S. T. Joshi's "Arthur Machen: Philosophy and Fiction." Although it takes up more than half the issue, this cornerstone essay concisely summarizes Machen's work as an extension of his philosophy (some would say prejudice) regarding the spiritual nature of mankind. Joshi explores his thesis through several common themes in Machen's work, among them the concept of "piercing the veil" thrown over reality and the contrast between the romantic and material sides of life. In shorter efforts, Will Murray is back with a possibly lost sonnet of Clark Ashton Smith's published in The Thrill Book, and a reprint of E. F. Benson's appreciation of J. Sheridan LeFanu yields up a gem as quotable today as it was fifty-six years ago: "The moral is excellent, but who wants a moral in a ghost story? We can unbend our minds over morals afterwards."

Brian Lumley, The Compleat Crow. Buffalo, NY: Ganley, 1987. 191 pp., \$7.50.

Brian Lumley, Demogorgon. Grafton, 1987. 333 pp., \$5.95.

Weirdbook #22, Summer, 1987.

(Reviewed by Stefan Dziemianowicz)

With the exception of the ubiquitous Randolph Carter, H. P. Lovecraft appears to have had little interest in series characters. In particular, no series character appears in his Mythos fiction and for a good reason: human beings are of the least importance in these stories. They are there to piece together the few facts given them, draw their limited conclusions and, as the reader's surrogate, be horrified at the implications. Could the impact of such knowledge on a character be quite the same the second time around? August Derleth seemed to think so when he put together the stories for The Trail of Cthulhu, and most would agree that it was a big mistake. Because Laban Shrewsbury knows everything that's at stake before

the stories even begin, his adventures seem about as exciting as those of a priest who wakes up every morning knowing he must put Satan behind him.

A similar problem dogs Brian Lumley's early Titus Crow stories. Lumley's overachieving psychic sleuth/cryptographer/numerologist is so well equipped to handle what the Mythos throws at him that his exploits read less like horror stories than mystery tales: it isn't a question of whether Crow will survive but how he'll manage to do it. In "The Caller of the Black," he's saved by knowing a counterspell few mortals are aware of; he avoids getting trapped in "De Marigny's Clock" by being respectfully cautious of the unknown. In "An Item of Supporting Evidence," he is so safe and smug in his wisdom that he appoints himself to the task of exposing the Mythos to others.

If Titus Crow sounds more like a Sherlock Holmes of the paranormal than a Lovecraftian figure, it's because Lumley made the Mythos only one of his many outre interests. In later Crow stories if the Mythos appears at all, it is kept in the background, subordinated to voodoo ("Darghud's Doll"), warrior ghosts ("The Viking's Stone"), a Crowleyesque mage ("Lord of the Worms"), even the Antichrist ("Name and Number").

These later stories are better written, because their supernatural complications are more suitable to a know-it-all. But they are not without their problems. Although Lumley shifts their focus from the cosmic indifference of the Mythos to the more familiar battle between good and evil, copies of the Cthaat Aquadingen, G'Harne Fragments and other Mythos tomes still sit on the library shelves at Blowne House, making a mockery of the moral universe Titus Crow is fighting to preserve. More importantly, where the early Crow stories seemed as lacking in plot as some of Derleth's tales, the later ones are sometimes overplotted. Both "Lord of the Worms" and "Name and Number"

turn on tricks of numerology. Lumley is a whiz at fiddling with dates and digits to get them to do his bidding, but all the reader can do is sit back and watch him work out the pat ending. There's no real engagement at this level of the story. It's a little like playing black-jack when you know the dealer has an ace-in-the-hole and all you can do is sit waiting for him to flip it up.

The Compleat Crow is beautifully illustrated by Steve Fabian and contains all of the short Titus Crow stories, including the very obscure "Name and Number" and "Inception," the first story of the Crow saga chronologically, but newly written especially for this collection. Readers who own Lumley's Arkham House books already have half of this collection, but the price is right for acquiring the other half.

The slope leading from the Titus Crow series to Demogorgon is slippery indeed. Although the novel is not related to the series, its Antichrist figure and interest in that part of Palestine uncovered during the Megiddo archaeological digs in 1936 are pre-figured in several of the later Crow stories. Like Lumley's 1986 novel, Necroscope, Demogorgon grounds the ultimate battle between good and evil in modern international politics, only this time it's not the East-West Cold War but the turbulent Middle East that comes under scrutiny. What with the current state of world affairs, the signs are right for the emergence of the Antichrist and Lumley has him masquerading as a rich easterner named Khumeni (read into that name what you will). To claim his earthly realm, though, Khumeni must secure two stone tablets from behind the Israeli border and consummate the necessary rites with his three sons. Charlie Trace may be one of those sons, and the only way he can preserve his own life is to foil the hellish trinity of Satan the father, Khumeni the son, and Demogorgon as a perverse Holy Spirit.

Because the novel is less encumbered with subplots than Necroscope, it moves briskly. That's a good thing, too, since the story leaves a few questions unanswered, several of which arise from a surprise ending that seems to contradict an earlier episode. Once again, Lumley resorts to numerology to show how the Antichrist has timed his return to coincide with the nuclear age. His system, which involves a cycle of regeneration from which a certain number of years is subtracted each time, is not fully explained. This leaves the reader conscious of its having been plotted backwards from 1983, rather than amazed at how 1983 is the culmination of centuries of preparation. But the fact that Lumley plotted it at all is what distinguishes his tales of doom from the reactionary fantasies of those folks who proclaim the return of Satan from soapboxes and sandwich boards.

Another side of Lumley can be found in Weirdbook #22 in the pulp adventure "In the Temple of Terror." A sequel to "The Kiss of the Lamia" in Weirdbook #20, it's an action-packed sword and sorcery yarn with enough thud, blunder and cliff-hanging peril to grab your interest. (Weirdbook #22 also carries Darrell Schweitzer's "The Chivalry of Sir Aldinger," another trapeze through the warped landscape of Monty Python anachronisms that made his Tom O'Bedlam's Night Out enjoyable reading.)

Roger Johnson, Deep Things Out of Darkness (published by Garrie Hall, 93 Beaumont Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 2AJ, England. £3 (Add postage: £1 surface or £2 air mail). Pay in cash, either pounds sterling or dollar equivalent.

(Reviewed by Robert M. Price)

This new booklet from the publisher of Tales After Dark is a collection of new tales by Roger Johnson, whose work has appeared in Tales itself, though readers may

also be familiar with Johnson's work in Ghosts & Scholars (or in The Years Best Horror Stories, where his "The Scarecrow" and "The Wall Painting" have been reprinted).

These six stories belong to three different genres. "The Breakdown" and "The Taking" are more or less in the tradition of M. R. James, though they cannot be called pastiches. "Your Own Light-Hearted Friend" is a tale of Jack the Ripper and bears a certain resemblance to a certain well-known Robert Bloch tale, but it is completely original nonetheless. Finally, "The Dreaming City" and "Ishtaol" (the second a sequel to the first) and "Custos Sanctorum" are Cthulhu Mythos tales.

Of the three Mythos entries, the best, I think, is "Custos Sancto-

rum," a story of the Deep Ones, told by a Deep One, but entirely free of Derlethian convention. The other two, dealing with the proverbial lost prehuman city, are too reminiscent of other stories by HPL, Brian Lumley, and Lin Carter. Of the two Jamesian efforts, "The Breakdown" seems to be too abrupt (a fault shared by "The Dreaming City" and "Ishtaol," which read almost like final climax chapters of longer works). All in all, the stories in this attractively produced booklet seem to me not quite Mr. Johnson's best work. Nonetheless they are certainly enjoyable, and publisher Garrie Hall has made another solid contribution to the small press horror field. We may hope he is only getting started.

THE MAGAZINE MYTHOS, 1986-1987

(Reviewed by Stefan Dziemianowicz)

In the introduction to his 1980 collection New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos, Ramsey Campbell observed that the Cthulhu Mythos had become so overcrowded with stories "that it is now impossible to devise a coherent pattern linking all of its aspects, even if one were foolish enough to try." Nevertheless, by its very nature, Campbell's book suggests he was attempting to distinguish the stories he selected from other types of Mythos fiction.

By "new" tales, Campbell meant "less familiar treatments" of Mythos ideas, but ones in which writers returned to "the first principles of the Mythos—to give glimpses of something larger than they show, just as Lovecraft did." The type he appeared to be setting his "new" tales against were the ones that had begun to conventionalize the Mythos. These stories had been produced by writers who "found it easy to imitate Lovecraft's more stylistic mannerisms and some of his ideas" but more often than not neglected "his skill in organizing his material and in atmospheric preparation, or his originality."

Campbell singles out his own early efforts and stories appearing in fanzines as examples, but actually this type of story can be traced back to first generation Mythos writers and to Lovecraft himself (particularly in his revision work), in tales where the playfulness of naming creatures and books takes precedence over the supposed function of these elements: to show in an original and frightening way how the unknown intrudes upon and dwarfs human consciousness.

There are, then, two types of Mythos story. In the first, the terrifying impact of Mythos entities, books and locales derives as much from the way the story is told as from what it tells (e.g., "The Call of Cthulhu," in which fragmented events are put together to reveal a whole greater than the sum of the parts). The second treats the Mythos elements as ends in themselves (e.g., Derleth's Trail of Cthulhu stories, in which the Mythos is taken for granted and the focus of the story is a battle or engagement that ends with the story's conclusion). These are the

two poles around which Mythos fiction revolves today. We can avoid the argument that the former is better than the latter, or that the second type is admissible because it vastly outnumbers stories of the first type, if we note that most Mythos fiction written today issues from the gray area between these two extremes. Rather than try to force artificial "Column A/Column B" labels on these stories, maybe the best approach is to consider how well they work as stories before worrying about whether they're the "right" type of Mythos tale.

Anyone of the opinion that the old style Lovecraftian story—replete with unassimilated facts and an ignorant narrator who puts things together a little too late for his own good—is moribund should get a copy of Deathrealm #2 (\$3.00; Mark Rainey, 8812 Jody Lane #2A, Des Plaines, IL 60016). Editor Mark Rainey's story "Threnody" adopts the classic Mythos story form and proves that it is still a very effective way to tell a story.

Don't be too surprised to hear that there's not a single familiar Mythos name to be found in "Threnody." The story takes off very tangentially from "The Music of Erich Zann," with its suggestion that music can be used to "open up gateways to other existences." It concerns a young man who returns to his abandoned family home in Virginia. He discovers there a book of music theory by the slightly eccentric Maurice Zann, and a tape the man's grandfather made based on those theories. And when he decides to play that tape . . .

Suffice to say that Rainey uses the remote atmosphere of the Appalachian mountains intelligently to set up the menace of the story and to keep that menace isolated yet imminent at the end. He can be forgiven a gothic excess or two (and perhaps a bit of fudging on whether the volume or the frequency of the sound should be the turning point of his story) if for no other reason than the shock climax, which catches the reader un-

aware even though it arises naturally out of the events that precede it.

One of Deathrealm's regular contributors is Wil Pugmire. The third issue of the magazine contains "A Piece of Stone," one of Pugmire's tales of the Sesqua Valley (a series that also includes "Swamp Rising" in Grue #4 and "The Winds of Yith" from Chronicles of the Cthulhu Codex #3). The Sesqua Valley is a Mythos locale that does not take kindly to strangers, dispatching a man who fathered a child by a Sesqua woman in "Swamp Rising" and a publisher who wants to print a book by a late native son of the valley in "A Piece of Stone." The stories differ from most other Mythos tales in their development of the personalities of the Sesqua residents. They are a rural yet sophisticated folk, who are wary of strangers because they are in close communion with things strangers wouldn't understand. The closest parallel to one of Lovecraft's towns would not be Arkham or Dunwich, where the actions of a few cast a pall over the generally innocent majority, but rather Innsmouth, where virtually all residents share a common spirit. Unlike Innsmouth's citizens, though, the Sesqua people are fairly human, and Pugmire presents them in such a way that you feel more compassion for them than for the occasional foolish intruder.

To date, no Sesqua tale has been a stunner. "Swamp Rising" borrows noticeably from "The Dunwich Horror," "A Piece of Stone" falls back on a Lovecraft-by-way-of-Poe ending and "The Winds of Yith" is more a poetic vignette than a fully developed story. Still, taken together, these stories represent an interesting attempt to create an original and atmospheric Mythos setting.

Whether or not "The Winds of Yith" is the best story in Chronicles of the Cthulhu Codex #3 (\$5; Fungoid Press, P. O. Box 8044, Lowell, MA 01853), it is certainly the most original. This issue of

the magazine also carries Edward P. Berglund's "The Eyes of Darkness," in which Yog-Sothoth is summoned to a black mass in a small Oregon town every Halloween to snack on a human sacrifice (local townsfolk do the carving and dressing). Rather than the two endings we're used to seeing in a Mythos story—the end of the narrator's experience, and the awareness that grows out of and extends beyond that experience—Berglund has his narrator assume his ordeal was a dream and his friends prove that it was not. The result is that we get the same ending, twice. A familiar shortcut used to set the reader up with the necessary information—having the journalist narrator bone up on the Mythos by reading the Necronomicon and several other texts during an extended lunch hour at the University of Nyingtove library—seems all the more amusing if one has read Albert Manachino's amusing "Eugenia and the Necronomicon" (#9; \$9.95; The Strange Company, P. O. Box 864, Madison, WI 53701), in which a detective buys a paperback copy of the Necronomicon at a stationery store and remarks, "I need some briefing on this black magic crap."

Henry J. Vester III is present with "That Noble Dust," a story about what might happen if somebody with the hobby of Charles Dexter Ward got ahold of the "essential Saltes" of Lovecraft. This story is more of an homage to Lovecraft, in the manner of Derleth's "The Lamp of Alhazred," so it can't really be judged in the same context as Mythos fiction. But Vester makes it flippant enough at the beginning that one wishes he'd followed through and had the reconstituted Lovecraft stand up, remark "You fool, I don't believe in the afterlife!" and crumble back into dust, rather than have him act the way he does.

Using Lovecraft as a character, either by having him appear in person or by suggesting that what he wrote was fact, not fiction, is a

popular conceit of Mythos stories. It can work, as it does in T. E. D. Klein's "Black Man with a Horn," to enhance the story's feeling of authenticity. More often, though, as in Armas Salminen's "The Creature Found in the Bog" in Etchings and Odysseys #9, it's used to get around having the Mythos creep up slowly on the narrator. The title of this story pretty much tells it. A man finds a mummified creature beneath a cairn in the Miskatonic region. He summons a professor from the University who is organizing "the Lovecraft collection of curiosities" and the professor is astonished to discover that the creature is half Cthulhoid. Between the narrator's own digging through local lore and a few long distance trips made by the professor, the two discover that the thing is linked to the Medfords, a family of local outcasts, one of whose women has taken up by a "tentacled monstrosity" and who later gave birth to the buried creature. They put the thing in cold storage under an Elder sign, because "you never know if that which spawned this beast might decide to return to claim its own."

It gives away none of the surprise at the end to let you know this because there is no surprise. Salminen's story is a clear case in which the existence of the Mythos is given. The professor already knows a lot about it from his work with the Lovecraft collection, and it's just a matter of figuring out how to apply it to the chain of events before everything falls neatly into place. Since those events lead to no discovery that isn't already clear from the start, the elaborate family history Salminen gives his characters, told in the same meticulous manner Lovecraft used when he wanted to bury a clue or two, serves little purpose. The story is well told, but the real Mythos story would have been the bizarre experiences of the Medfords, and not the relatively innocuous experiences of those who find out about them a century later.

Salminen leaves his characters experiencing at least a remote sense of uncertainty at the end of "The Creature Found in the Bog," and this seems a reasonably important part of Mythos fiction, something that distinguishes it from standard monster stories. A monster can be thwarted. Mythos creatures can be thwarted, too, but the very fact that they exist should leave the reader horrified at mankind's terminal vulnerability. This doesn't happen in Duane Rimel's "The Hills Behind Hampdon." This short story tells how Bart Wolf gets ahold of The Chronicle of Nath to pierce through to another dimension, does so and gets pierced through himself. The linear simplicity of the eyewitness narrative makes it read more like an abstract of a Mythos story, as does the sense of security the narrator feels when Wolf's notes are burned. (Of course the mere fact of this being a new Mythos tale by one of the original Lovecraft Circle lend this story more than average interest.)

If it seems that too much emphasis is being placed on Mythos fiction's one main gimmick, the build-up toward that final mind-boggling revelation, consider what can happen when that gimmick is absent. When Mythos elements are used solely for appearance sake and not for any far-reaching implications they may have, there is no urgent need for them to build up to the final unforeseen discovery, and they end up sounding unspectacular just when they should be bowling us over. Such is the case with Charles Baker's three-part serial "Shadow of the Immortal" (begun in Eldritch Tales #11 and concluded in #14, having skipped an installment in #12). The story spends its first two sections establishing that an obscure Chicago bookdealer who sells an unusual amount of Necronomicon originals is actually writing them himself because he is the latter-day incarnation of Abdul Alhazred. This is just a prop the reader will have figured out long before the narrators do. The cen-

ter of the story, an interlude on why a book bound with human skin sweats, is a better-built prop. When we come to a showdown at the end, though, the props prove to have been the story's major attractions. Alhazred is prevented from letting the Old Ones back into our world by a Molotov cocktail, and in spite of a two-page long anticlimax at the end, we never learn why Alhazred is back at this time, and in Chicago.

The most conspicuous use of the Mythos solely for the sake of appearance is what might be called "the shaggal dog story"—it has little or no plot, and exists solely for the purpose of seeing how much Mythos material can be jammed into it before the reader's patience wears out. A good example is Leon Gammell's "Sword of the Necromancer" in Etchings and Odysseys #8. Gammell's unwilling warrior Gedor is pressed into a quest for the Sword of Nythrax. To get it, he has to meet up with nearly every monster in the Mythos, peripheral and otherwise, each of whom informs him that the sword has been passed on to the next one in the pecking order. Each gives Gedor a charm for protection until by the end of the story, he's dripping with more trinkets than a little old lady at a Macy's jewelry sale. The story is nothing more than a tableau for these confrontations, which wear thin by about the third time around. (By the way, Gedor eventually gets the sword and throws it away, but that's the least of our concerns here.) It would be easy to say Gammell had written this story tongue-in-cheek if he didn't do the same sort of thing again in "Tales of Zid Yargoth" in Etchings and Odysseys #9. This narrative is comprised of several interlocking exotic vignettes that can only be brought together by that most unexotic ending, having the main character die of fright at something that never happens and that he has been anticipating for an entire year.

Stories of this kind lead natu-

rally to a growing offshoot of the Mythos, in which the cosmic is changed to the comic. The comic Mythos works on the premise that if you stretch credibility for Mythos fiction far enough, eventually it will come flying back in your face with the impact of a well-tossed pie. The best (or, considering the way you feel after reading one of these stories, the worst) of the bunch is Peter Cannon's "The Thing in the Bathtub" (Eldritch Tales #12; \$6; Crispin Burnham, 1051 Wellington Road, Lawrence, KS 66044) which ambitiously satirizes the New York horror writer community and the structure and content of the Mythos without ever coming close to the story its title evokes. Ironically, one gets a very good idea of Mythos mechanics from a story like this because the point where observance of Mythos elements ends and the flight into whimsy begins is always clearly marked. Many readers will say that there is no place in the Mythos for stories like J. J. Travis' "Halloween in Arkham" (Eldritch Tales #13) which comes up with a new test for a babysitter's sincerity; Albert Manachino's "Eugenia and the Necronomicon" (Etchings and Odysseys #9) which shows how Mythos creatures can be as perplexed about being summoned as the people who summoned them; and Randall Larson's "From out of the Past" (Eldritch Tales #13) which advises you to read the fine print of your eldritch grimoire. They could be right. But to put these stories in the proper perspective, ask yourself, would you rather laugh at a Mythos story that was trying to be funny and succeeded, rather than at one that was trying to be taken seriously and failed?

* * *

Readers should note that there are other good reasons for picking up the magazines mentioned above besides (or in spite of) the Mythos fiction. Those with a Howardian bent will be interested to know that the four-part serialization of Joe

Lansdale's Dead in the West has finally concluded in Eldritch Tales #13. The story tells of the irreverent Reverend Princess, who spreads the word of the Lord and frontier justice throughout the West (Solomon Shane?), and his adventure in a town whose dead have come back for revenge. For all the strength of Princess' development, though, Lansdale doesn't give him much to do when the fireworks start, and the story is surprisingly limp for a writer of the author's talent.

Each of the last few issues of Eldritch Tales has carried a poem or dream vignette by the ever reliable Steve Tem. Tem is also present in Grue #5 (\$4; Hell's Kitchen Productions, P. O. Box 370, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108) with his touching but chilling "Mother Hag." Also to be found in Grue #5—quite possibly the best reason for buying the magazine—is Thomas Ligotti's nightmare of the psychic residue left behind at "Dr. Locrian's Asylum."

Etchings and Odysseys continues to provide valuable bibliographic information. Mike Ashley, the patron saint of pulp magazine information, continues his history of Weird Tales in issue #8 with a short chronicle of the magazine's publishing history in the U.K., "Weird Tales—English Style." It doesn't generate the same smothered chuckles as Ashley's look at the Canadian printing history did in issue #6, but it's still required reading for fans and collectors. On the subject of Weird Tales, the centerpiece of Etchings and Odysseys #9 is Hugh Cave's "Spawn of the Inferno," from the October 1932 issue. The most interesting point Audrey Parente brings out in the accompanying interview and appreciation of Cave is that although he respected Lovecraft, he wasn't exactly knocked over by him. This makes for an interesting comparison to Duane Rimel's "A History of the Chronicle of Nath" and "Lovecraft Years I," which appear in the same issue. Both discuss Rimel's long-lived

idolatry of Lovecraft as his mentor.

Finally, anyone who has bought The Strange Company's annotated versions of Lovecraft's "Epistle to Maurice Moe" and "Epistle to Francis, Ld. Belknap" will want to make a trio of it with Steve Mariconda's "On Lovecraft's 'Amissa Minerva.'" The poem, reprinted in full, is another of Lovecraft's satires on the "transient madness" masquerading as the poetry and literature of his age. Mariconda's introduction and annotation are thorough, pointing out more what Lovecraft appreciated in Virgil, Milton, and Wordsworth than what he obviously despised in Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, and Edgar Lee Masters. He supports his remarks with references to the Selected Letters as well as the classical works that Lovecraft specifically touts.

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

(continued from page 33)

And to make a point in passing—I resent being referred to, even casually, as a "good ol' boy." If I may elaborate—though I do live in a notoriously backwater state, I neither play the banjo, swig moonshine from a clay jug, nor chew on a piece of straw as I go about feeding my chickens, slopping my hogs, or shovelling the endless piles of chicken-manure in my front yard.

Lastly, please allow me to put forth as a follow-up to this rebuttal, a few authors in my own Revelations from Yuggoth (and this is in the first three issues alone): M. E. Counselman, J. A. Salmonson, Alice I'anson, Janet P. Reedman, and Cathy Miller, to name a few. Perhaps I might be spared from future accusations now that you have seen that I am not awash with archaism?

--Shawn Ramsey
Anderson, IN

"DANCEHALL" CHURCH RAZED

Sometime during a violent thunderstorm on the weekend of July 25, 1987, the infamous "dancehall" church near the rotting wharves of Red Hook—formerly St. Steven's parish church—and the site of Malone's nightmarish confrontation with the forces from the outside in "The Horror at Red Hook," was rocked by a partial collapse. The building, long abandoned, suffered from a weakened structure, which is why it was abandoned when the parish shrank to a few dozen members sometime in the late 1950s.

Eyewitness accounts differ as to the cause of the collapse. Some residents of the benighted area spoke of lightning hitting the building sometime during the storm; others claim the roof collapsed under the weight of the sudden rainfall (which measured about two inches in less than an hour). In any case, sometime after midnight, July 25, the roof caved in and the east wall was rent by a three-inch break.

It was during the first week in September that the landmark Lovecraftian site was razed. Now nothing remains but an empty lot, and even attempts to salvage a brick from the structure were in vain. The haulers removed all debris within twenty-four hours of demolition and surrounded the site with a large metal fence.

This is a sad day for all Lovecraftians, but the rotting structure was sure to collapse under its own weight in time. Though the Catholic diocese was often approached by locals to reopen the church, the small congregations in the area belied any interest in the dying religion. Now the infamous "dancehall" church on the edge of Red Hook is no more than a fading memory.

--Reported by Red Hook
denizen Mark A. Cerasini

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

I recently got a peek at a film script called Lovecraft. I recalled hearing of a mysterious film by that title announced last year in Variety and wondered if it was about our Lovecraft.

The mystery is solved. It is. And it isn't. How do I describe Lovecraft?

Set in 1996, science has been replaced by magic. Everybody uses magic to do everything from build houses to solving personal problems. Except our hero, H. Phillip Lovecraft—better known as Phil. Phil Lovecraft is a private eye, hopelessly stuck in the past (read: 1950s) who is hired by an old geezer to recover a mysterious tome, the Necronomicon. The old geezer wants to open up the Gate and let in the Old Ones, and he knows that Phil won't be tempted to keep the book for himself because he abhors magic.

Phil is a Sam Spade type, wise-cracking and bored. There's the usual PI trappings of the nightclub, its crooked owner and chief singer who is Phil's lost love.

The so-called Lovecraft touches are absurd. The nightclub is called "The Dunwich." The old geezer lives on Miskatonic Lane. Entities to be summoned include Cthulha, Trathogyua and Yog-Sothoth. The plot fails because the virgin to be sacrificed—surprise!—isn't a virgin after all. (That's the same ending, practically, to the recent Monster Squad.)

It reads awfully. I hope it never gets made. It's sort of The Dunwich Horror Meets the Maltese Falcon and set in a Blade Runner-style future.

I kid you not. This is all true.

I also heard that The Lurking Fear has been put aside while the director does something unLovecraftian. So much for Lovecraftian movie news.

--Meldrum Hawkins
San Diego, CA

In a recent "Mail-Call of Cthulhu" department, Will Murray, I think it was, refers to "Lovecraft's famous Brooklyn mugging." HPL was never mugged, in Brooklyn or otherwise. He was out late one night—into the small hours, in fact—and when he returned to his lodgings he discovered that two suits, and some other articles, had been stolen. This upset him, of course, but not to anything like the extent that has been implied. He did not look upon it as disastrous. I called the following day, and he told me that George Kirk, who occupied the Barnes Street apartment upstairs, had supplied him with some needed things, etc., and helped him get in touch with the police.

Sprague redefined "schizoid" in another fairly recent "Mail-Call" department, and the disagreement I had with him concerning the term in relation to HPL—in Twilight Zone, etc.—is now gone. By widening the term to include so broad a spectrum of highly creative writers he makes applying it to HPL no longer unsound.

--Frank Belknap Long
New York, NY

You might appreciate a little tale that I love to tell about the Cthulhu Mythos. Years ago I had lunch with Frank Long and asked him how HPL pronounced "Cthulhu." Frank didn't even look up from his soup bowl, paused between spoonfuls, and with little or no hesitation replied: "Damned if I know, I don't think Howard did either!"

--Dick Fawcett
Uncasville, CT

I cannot help but consider that the thrust of Leon Gammell's essay, "A Pre-Lovecraft Cthulhu Dreamer" (Crypt #45), is focused on the wrong individual in the Lovecraftian Circle. Though I haven't read Shortt/Matthews The Rod and the

Snake, the synopsis provided by Gammell would suggest more of a tie-in with Robert E. Howard's tales of the macabre rather than HPL's. Take the Snake-Rod. Nowhere in Lovecraft's body of works do we find the presence of a rod. Howard, on the other hand, uses a rod in his Solomon Kane tale, "The Hills of the Dead," in which the black shaman, N'Longa, gives it to the Puritan adventurer. In "Footfalls Within," an Arab slaver sees the rod, and relates its history, telling how it was used to fight evil in the Elder World. In both cases the two rods come from Africa, though from different coasts.

Even the blatant racism in some of Howard's fiction seems to have direct links to the racism exhibited in The Rod and the Snake. In fact two of his tales, "Black Canaan" and "The Moon of Zambabwei," seem to have their roots in the Shortt/Matthews tale. In "Black Canaan" we have the presence of Saul Stark and the mulatto girl he brings with him. The girl bears the same qualities of Samero, the "half-breed black" villainess. In "Moon of Zambabwei," the same scenario appears. John de Albor, the villain, is also a half-breed who lusts after the hero's love, and unleashes powers he can't control among his followers. Shortt/Matthews' other supporting villain, Brisac, is also a "half-breed Haitian adventurer" who also falls in love with the protagonist's love, and tries to save her from being sacrificed to the Ape (as de Albor tries), and fails. In both "The Moon of Zambabwei" and The Rod and the Snake, an ape is a central force, even if the latter appears to be a supernatural manifestation, while Howard's is an evolutionary misfit.

Frankly, a more logical title for the essay should have been, "A Pre-Howard Elder World Dreamer."

--Tom Rathgeber
Coram, NY

The horror! The horror! to coin a phrase. Your 50th issue's selec-

tion of Ramsey Campbell juvenilia is truly horrifying, but probably not in the way young Master Campbell hoped at the time. This will, I suspect, be one of your most amusing unread issues ever. The very thing for completists, either for Campbell, or for Crypt of Cthulhu. (Truly, you will know I'm dead when my run of Crypt changes hands.) But I wonder, how many folks actually read the whole thing? It's fun to dip and skim. In short doses the Ghostly Tales are very funny indeed. But I didn't feel any inclination to read every bloody (in every sense) word. In fact, the prospect fills me with nameless dread . . . or maybe eldritch dread. One of those dreads.

I wonder, too, if by publishing them Campbell has truly protected himself from literary necrophiles who will, long after he's dead, want to unearth little-known and rare tales by this master of the macabre. Then, he's probably too sentimental to burn a manuscript that must have meant a lot to him at one time.

I doubt I shall ever become so famous that I face this dilemma. I, too, have files dripping with hideous verbal ichor which have thus far remained unburnt. I even had to look through them recently, for a Writer's Digest article—for an example of what not to do!

--Darrell Schweitzer
Strafford, PA

Ghostly Tales is a real coup and a most fitting vehicle for a fiftieth issue. Thanks to Ramsey and yourself, it's a unique contribution to the genre: aside from a few HPL items, I don't recall seeing early work of those who later became professional writers, and it's interesting to see where Ramsey was coming from, a full generation ago. Muchos gracias, as they say in Liverpool.

--Robert Bloch
Los Angeles, CA

I really got a kick out of Ramsey Campbell's stories and art—

great fun. I can't tell you how much I have been enjoying all your publications. I particularly enjoy your fiction issues (which doesn't mean that I'm advocating all fiction and no articles), and you are to be commended for turning up so many enjoyable yarns. I really liked the Ligotti piece of a few issues back.

--Allen Koszowski
Upper Darby, PA

The Ramsey Campbell stories were interesting . . . they read like the sort of stories you find in a juvenile's collection of ghost and horror stories, especially if one person writes them all. Simple and obvious stories, just the sort of thing to get a kid started before he experiences the deeper, more sophisticated thrills of Lovecraft, Bierce and Poe. The illos were not so hot, however.

--Charles Garofalo
Wayne, NJ

Crypt #50 will surely become a collectors item. My favorite was the short novel "Bradmoor." The best lines, undoubtedly: "I am a private psychic investigator" (How do you know when a psychic investigator isn't private?) and "Have you ever been in a pentacle on Walpurgisnacht?" (No, but then I had a very sheltered childhood.) Ramsey Campbell deserves a free drink from everyone for having the courage to show us his juvenilia when so many other authors have burned reams of theirs out of embarrassment. And while everyone is going to get a jolly good chuckle out of how far Campbell has come, I think there are things worth noting in Ghostly Tales. For the most part these stories were concerned with the conventional bogies, vampires and werewolves all of us cut our teeth on (and us them). Not surprisingly for a ten-year-old, there's a lot of his Catholic upbringing running through them too. Campbell eventually put that behind him in his Lovecraft pastiches, but as anyone who has read novels like The Hungry Moon or Obsession

knows, a very Christian sense of good and evil has reappeared in his work. One doesn't want to make too much out of this, but it would appear that Campbell's earliest influence never completely left him, and is now coming out in a more mature and original form.

--Stefan Dziemianowicz
Union City, NJ

I am happy to see the Crypt continuing into the fifties and beyond without any slackening of its amoral fibre. The mixture of scholarship, offbeat humor and debate maintain a climate not dissimilar to that encountered in Lovecraft's own correspondence. The occasional mysteriously located epistles from such exalted personages as Mr. Curwen help place matters in a welcome perspective.

Campbell's Ghostly Tales, immature as they were, offered more genuine entertainment than most fiction offered in the fanzines. The occasional striking image and the frequent flatness of narrative tone made a few of the tales memorable if not entirely successful. A few others, notably "The Devil's Cart" and "Bradmoor," read like high camp variations on Hammer horror films. The speech given by the old villager in "Bradmoor," sounding like an odd combination of Lovecraftian rustic dialect and the barely intelligible ejaculations of Gabby Hayes or a fifth-rate pirate, was almost as worthy of praise as "the aforementioned skeleton."

--James Rockhill
South Bend, IN

Some comments on Crypt #51:

In "The True History of the Tcho Tcho [sic] People," you claim that "Lair of the Star-Spawn" was August Derleth's "first" Mythos story, yet I believe it was preceded by a few others. For instance, Derleth was working on "Something from Out There" in May 1931. Correspondents of Derleth refer to a story in January 1931 as his "Death-Walker," which I believe is "The Thing That Walked on the

wind" because in that story, the term "Death-Walker" is used as a synonym for "Wind-Walker." But in a letter dated 13 July 1931, Lovecraft remarks to Derleth that he read several seemingly recent stories of his "with the keenest interest, & liked "The Thing that Walked on the Wind" best of all.

It is difficult to tell in what order the collaborations with Schorer were completed, but I wouldn't place "Lair of the Star-Spawn" as early as you do. In the letter quoted above, Lovecraft expresses interest in seeing "The Horror from the Lake" (i.e., "The Horror from the Depths"); Derleth had recently submitted that story to Weird Tales for publication, and it was rejected for lifts of Lovecraft's mythology and even the very wording from Lovecraft's stories (a situation which Lovecraft conceded he actually liked. "The Horror from the Depths" seems to precede "Lair of the Star-Spawn," but since the stories were all written during a few weeks in the summer of 1931, exact sequence probably means very little.

In any case, Lovecraft wrote to Derleth on 18 August 1931 that he looked forward to seeing "Lair of the Star Spawn." Incidentally, the title of the story is one of two that Lovecraft suggested as alternates to Derleth's initial title (Lovecraft to Derleth, 25 August 1931). In the earlier letter, Lovecraft said "those Tcho-Tcho people sound tremendously interesting." I can imagine Lovecraft making such a statement only if the earlier reference to the Tcho-Tchos in "Wind-Walker" was slight (or if Lovecraft forgot it) and if Derleth hinted in a letter that he was going to address them in some detail.

To fill in for Derleth's memory lapse, I can tell you Lovecraft read "Star-Spawn" in manuscript form. He said in one letter, "I still insist that 'Star Spawn' is a good story. You boys always run down some of your best things. . . ." Considering the detail with which the Tcho-Tchos are discussed in "Star-

Spawn" and the apparent chronology of the stories, I'm inclined to think that "Wind-Walker" was really the first story in which the Tcho-Tchos are mentioned.

Personally, I think the only thing significant about the Tcho-Tchos is that Lovecraft mentioned them offhandedly in one of his stories. Beyond that, and the aside in the letter and the revision tale, who cares? The "additions" and embellishments to the Mythos by writers following Lovecraft's death are really of little importance to Lovecraft scholars, though I imagine they are of great importance to those who study the Mythos as a literary sub-sub-genre. To borrow a phrase from Jeff Newman, I think essays like yours "trivialize" Lovecraft's work. The only reason I happen to know so much trivia about Derleth's early Mythos stories is that I feel that the record needs to be set straight about the origins and development of Lovecraft's pseudomythology, and so I need to see where the distorting influences (primarily Derleth's) originated. Otherwise, I have no interest in the so-called Cthulhu Mythos and the endless additions by others than Lovecraft and the very small circle of his literary contemporaries.

I think it should be mentioned that Derleth wrote about nine or ten "Mythos" pieces before Lovecraft died in 1937, although most of those appeared in print after Lovecraft's death. I don't think that Lovecraft saw more than three or four of these, but since he does not always refer to Derleth's stories by name in his letters it is difficult to tell just what Derleth passed by Lovecraft. You ask if Lovecraft, by mention of the Tcho-Tcho people, "tolerated or even blessed Derleth's version of the Mythos." This is an extremely difficult question to answer, considering the nature of Lovecraft's usual comments to Derleth about his stories. Consider the comment that Lovecraft made above, that Derleth always ran down some of his best things. I think such comments must be

weighed carefully because Lovecraft was obviously offering encouragement to Derleth, and encouragement does not mean espousing the content of a story or a philosophical concept. You must also remember that Lovecraft tended to look toward the writings of others for unusual names to drop in his stories, and that he wasn't pushing his stuff onto other people to write for him (as you so often claim). Lovecraft's reaction to "additions to the Mythos" seems to have been cordial, but not enthusiastic. He wrote to Henry Kuttner, "I appreciate the compliment implied in the use of some of my settings & dramatic entities" (16 February 1936). Lovecraft's wording is very careful here, and I think it should be considered carefully in future study of his mythology. Derleth frequently made statements that Lovecraft enthusiastically encouraged people to expand the Mythos, but I think that is greatly exaggerated. Oddly enough, Derleth chastized Kuttner in 1936—long before he founded Arkham House and assumed the role of Defender of the Mythos—for using Lovecraft's "gods" and such, and Kuttner backed off, thanking Derleth for the advice to avoid imitating or using Lovecraft's work. Odd advice for the man who wrote more Mythos stories than anyone to be giving. You may wonder then why Kuttner wrote so many Mythos stories. I believe that most of the Mythos tales mentioned in Shawn Ramsey's article had already been accepted by Weird Tales at the time Derleth advised Kuttner to nix the Mythos.

You should have subtitled the "Limericks from Yuggoth" "Shaggai Doggerel." Truly wretched stuff.

--David E. Schultz
Milwaukee, WI

Crypt #51 was certainly packed with good stuff. Surprised to learn "Tcho-Tcho" really means something: thought Derleth just made it up! Does Tani Jantsang read Tibetan? Remember, HPL's letter to Bloch was countersigned or en-

dorsed by the Tcho-Tcho lama with his actual name written in Tibetan. I'd love to know how it transliterates into English phonemes. I think I mean phonemes . . .

This Ligotti chap astonishes me. Seems like he came out of nowhere just recently and is already an accomplished master, as far as I'm concerned. "Vastarien" was the single best story in #49, and "Muelenburg" is another gem of a story. His subtlety of effect, control of mood and atmosphere, and sheer power of eerie suggestiveness would have delighted Lovecraft himself, who admired that sort of thing but couldn't do it any more than I can.

Suggest you spin off another Cryptic sibling: Ligotti Tales, and put together everything he's published so far. He is a marvel!

Pray inform Paul R. Wilson that "eluctidation" means to surgically remove sufficient skin and meat from a living human body to expose to view the naked, pulsating, slimy organs within.

. . . Hideous enough for you now, Paul R.?

--Lin Carter
Montclair, NJ

P. S. Grey Ginter's cover drawing was excellent. Get more art from him!

The Hallowmassive issue arrived and I enjoyed it as always. But one of the statements in Shawn Ramsey's fine article on Henry Kuttner's work needs to be corrected. There was a draft of "The Black Kiss" written by Kuttner which he couldn't sell to Weird Tales or any other market: he suggested I revise it, and I did a complete rewrite. But the basic premise was his, not just the name, "Michael Leigh."

--Robert Bloch
Los Angeles, CA

Regarding Randall Larson's article "Innsmouth Spawn," please note the sculptor Jeffrey Corey in "Innsmouth Clay" was already related to
(continued on page 33)

NEXT TIME . . .

Never let it be said that there is even a scrap of Lovecraft's literary output that escapes our notice here at Crypt of Cthulhu. In fact, that's precisely what Crypt #53 is about: scraps. Our "Lovecraft's Fragments" issue says more than you would have guessed possible to say on the small set of unfinished story drafts Lovecraft left behind:

- "On 'The Book'" by S. T. Joshi
- "On 'Azathoth'" by Will Murray
- "On 'The Descendant'" by S. T. Joshi
- "The Thing in the Moonlight": A Hoax Revealed"
by David E. Schultz
- "Where Was the Place of Dagon?" by Will Murray
- "Faulty Memories and 'Evill Sorceries'" by Robert M. Price

CRYPT OF CTHULHU

Editor

Robert M. Price

Fiction Editor and Reviewer
Stefan R. Dziemianowicz

Contributing Editors

S. T. Joshi . Will Murray

Columnists

Lin Carter . Carl T. Ford

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