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NIEKAS

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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DARK FANTASY · ESSAYS BY MIKE ASHLEY · DON D'AMMASSA
· BEN P. INDICK · S. T. JOSHI · SAM MOSKOWITZ · DARRELL
SCHWEITZER · (& OTHERS) · EDITED BY JOE R. CHRISTOPHER

NIEKAS

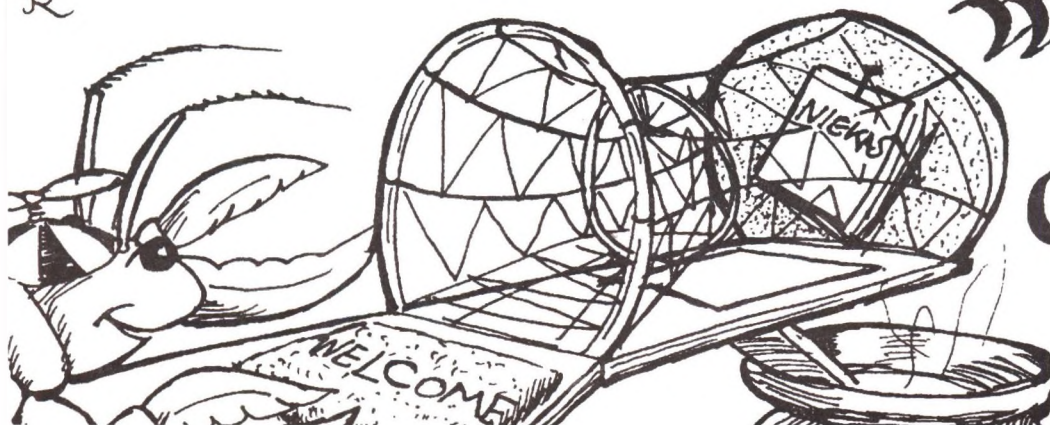
SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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Welcome to our Chamber of Horrors

by Joe R. Christopher

Welcome, gentle readers, to our chamber of horrors. Beware of that cobweb there—the spider has a most peculiar bite. And do not go too near that Iron Maiden—its door seems to swing shut at odd times.

We are not *creators* of these horrors. We are critics and appreciators. Like reporters after a grisly murder—or perhaps even like the lab men for the police department—we show up and discuss what has been done. Perhaps we measure the chamber and take samples of various—ah—messy details.

Why are people interested in the horrors rather than pleasant sunsets and a glass of wine with a friend? (Ed Meskys in a later article asks this question in essence.) Perhaps it is because horrors are also part of life. Steve Rasnic Tem, in an issue of *Fantasy Macabre* about ten years ago, commented, “I’ve suspected that one major thread which led to such folklore creations as werewol[ves], vampire[s], and [the] living dead was the memory of childhood abuse . . . parents suddenly turned into monsters.” Even children of non-abusive parents have fears. Perhaps some people end fixated on childhood fears. Perhaps others do not mind revisiting the problems of childhood at a literary distance later. (I do not assume all creation and all appreciation is quite the same in its intensity.)

Perhaps others think of the horrors that still exist in our world.

As I was editing this volume, I noticed a news story in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. It appeared on the front page on October 30 one year—obviously it was intended as a Halloween story—but it was curious. It told of bodies in eighteenth and early nineteenth century New England graves which had been dug up near the time of burial and disarranged—beheaded, in at least one case. Dr. Paul Sledzik of the National Museum of Health and Medicine was quoted as saying that New Englanders of that period thought consumption (pulmonary tuberculosis, we’d call it) might be caused by vampires, and so they dug up recent victims and made certain they were not walking the nights. The horrors that exist in our world . . . (I regret that Nathaniel Hawthorne never tackled this aspect of his region.)

Let me introduce you to your guides through our chamber of horrors.

Although his early books, such as the four-volume *History of the SF Magazine*, were in the area of SF studies, **Mike Ashley** moved into fantasy and horror with his anthology *Weird Legacies* and the reference work *Who’s Who in Horror and Fantasy Fiction*. He has edited other fantasy/horror anthologies, including *Jewels of Wonder* (stories of heroic fantasy), *The Mammoth Book of Short Horror Novels* and two Arthurian anthologies: *The Pendragon Chronicles* and *The*

Camelot Chronicles. (A third, *The Merlin Chronicles*, should be out before this issue appears.) He also helped Frank Parnell compile his index to weird fiction magazines, *Monthly Terrors*, and has recently completed a major index to all anthologies of weird, horror, and supernatural fiction, *The Supernatural Index*, which also should be out before this collection. In total, he has published thirty-three books and some five-hundred articles.

John Boardman shares a name with a British classical archeologist, but until his retirement in 1995 this Boardman taught physics at Brooklyn College and is renowned as the inventor of postal *Diplomacy*.

Marion Zimmer Bradley is a well known pro. In an essay here, Pat Mathews discusses some of her Dark Fantasies—although Bradley is best known for her Arthurian novel, *The Mists of Avalon* and, among fans, for her Darkover future history. She also edits *Marion Zimmer Bradley’s Fantasy Magazine*. I heard Bradley give a talk on *Dracula* a number of years ago at a Mythopoeic Society conference, and she was gracious enough to try to recapture something of that talk for this collection.

Mary Ann Brandenberger, who contributes two essays to this collection, is a high school English teacher in Clifton, Texas. She is married to Ronald Bain.

I met **Anne Janet Braude** for the one and only time at the first Mythopoeic Society conference, well over twenty-five years ago now. She has retired to Scottsdale, Arizona, where she contributes to NIEKAS, celebrates moles (the animals, not the spies), and occasionally writes sestinas. Actually, more than just contributing to NIEKAS, she is its associate editor, and the editor of one of its special issues, *Andre Norton: Fables & Futures*, and co-author/compiler of “A Reader’s Guide to the Commonwealth” in a volume from NIEKAS Press, *A Silverlock Companion*, ed. Fred Lerner. Her sestina, “Lancelot in Winter,” which also appeared in NIEKAS, was a Rhysling finalist in the contest run annually by the Science Fiction Poetry Association. She has graduate degrees in Medieval and Renaissance literature from the University of California at Berkeley, and she was a participant in the tournament in Diana Paxson’s back yard that eventually inspired the Society for Creative Anachronism. She just sold her first short story, “The Quincunx Solution,” which will appear in Andre Norton’s anthology *Catfantastic 4*.

Bruce Byfield, a Canadian, is the author of *Witches of the Mind: A Critical Study of Fritz Leiber* (1991); he is currently editing a collection of essays on Leiber. One year at a Mythopoeic Conference, he, our wives, and I shared a far table at the banquet and talked of Leiber . . . and of related matters.

J. Jordan Cannady was the owner of the Santa Fe County Taco Company—a restaurant—in Stephenville, Texas, when he wrote his essay collected here; he since has moved to Providence, Rhode Island.

Essays on Dark Fantasy

He is very active in Republican politics and writes conservative editorials for newspapers and political satire for some journals. (In his youth, he sang protest songs at liberal rallies.)

I first saw **Margaret L. Carter** at a Mythopoeic Society conference at which, on the evening of the masquerade, amid the multitude of Galadriels and Hobbits, appeared one vampiress: it was she. (I don't know if it's politically correct to use vampiress these days; but, in the iconography of vampires, there *is* a distinction.) Carter is married to a naval officer, and has four sons and two grandchildren. She also has a B.A. from the College of William and Mary, an M.A. from the University of Hawaii, and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Irvine—the results of naval moves, I assume. She has published fiction—most recently in one of Marion Zimmer Bradley's anthologies, *Towers of Darkover* (1993); essays—such as one in Rosemary Guiley's *Compleat Vampire's Companion* (1994); and books—most recently, *The Vampire Literature: A Critical Bibliography* (1989). In May of 1994, she sent me an update for her bibliographic essay in this issue: "Since the writing of the article, P. N. Elrod and Elaine Bergstrom have become major vampire authors, and some novels to add to the 'must read' list *The Children of the Night*, by Dan Simmons; *Lost Souls*, by Poppy Z. Brite; *Anno-Dracula*, by Kim Newman; and *Blood and Roses*, by Sharon Bainbridge."

Stephanie Chidester teaches at Dixie College, St. George, Utah, and she is a member of the Science Fiction Poetry Association—which may explain why she is writing about a fantasy poet here.

Don D'Amassa has been a long-time contributor of "The Haunted Library" to NIEKAS. His novel *Blood Beast* was published in 1988, and his book-length horror bibliography is forthcoming from Borgo Press.

A graduate of Howard Payne University (Brownwood, Texas) in 1993, **James David Fay** is currently working on his master's degree in English at Tarleton State University (Stephenville, Texas). His primary area of interest is folklore and superstition, and he hopes to do a thesis on a more limited area than just "A History of Vampires: from Myth and Folklore to Literature and Film." After receiving his M.A., he plans to teach, continue his studies of folklore, and write. As a student, he currently lives in Stephenville, is single, and enjoys an occasional game of tennis. (His paper cites the Pearl Poet's *St. Erkenwald* in Brian Stone's translation, not the original Middle English, but the paper does not depend on precise phrasing to make its comparison.)

W. Paul Ganley basically explains his publishing profession in his essay; suffice it to say that he edits and publishes *Weirdbook Magazine* and a series of novels and short-story collections by name authors in the small-press field (including another of our contributors, Darrell Schweitzer). For that matter, he published a couple of my stories in *Weirdbook*, so one can hardly say he is hung up on such name authors. The one time we met was, appropriately enough, at the World Fantasy Convention. That was when it was held in Fort Worth—as close as major airlines will take a person to Robert E. Howard's Cross Plains.

Cynthia Whitney Hallett, as this biographical sketch is written, teaches part time at St. Mary's University (Halifax, Nova Scotia) and is working on a dissertation for the University of South Florida—"Minimalism and More in the Daughters of Raymond Carver: Measuring the Short Short Stories of Amy Hempel and Mary Robinson." She spent the spring of 1994 in Japan. Her essay here was originally read at the Tenth Annual Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts, in Fort Lauderdale, 1991.

Ben P. Indick, who is a retired pharmacist and an active member of the Esoteric Order of Dagon, has had some plays produced by regional theaters, two of them national-competition-award-winning. A commissioned play had over 100 performances in and around the New York City area. He recently wrote a screenplay—hoping, he says in a letter, "to get into Guinness as the Oldest Debuting Screenwriter!"

Essays he has written in the Gothic field include "Stephen King as an Epic Writer" (1985), which is a substantial comparison of *The Stand* to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and "Sardonic Fantasists: John Collier" (1988). Less closely related to this field are two chapbooks: one on Ray Bradbury as dramatist and one on George Alec Effinger.

Marsha Jones, who reviewed children's fantasy books years ago for NIEKAS, currently is the main proofreader for DAW Books. That is on a free-lance basis; her full-time job is writing user manuals and on-line help files for computers systems for "a major accounting firm," as they say. Her essay, in toto, and Braude's, in part, deal with Tanya Huff's novels about a private investigator named Vicki Nelson (both are in the "Slew of Psychic Sleuths" section)—Jones's essay is an appreciation, Braude's is an analysis. Probably the reader will enjoy them more if he or she reads them in the order they appear—first Jones, then Braude.

S. T. Joshi is the managing editor of the literary criticism division of Chelsea House Publishers, author or editor of five books on H. P. Lovecraft—at least, five when I last counted—compiler or co-compiler of two annotated bibliographies of Lovecraft criticism, and editor of one collection of Lovecraft criticism. However, of his books that I have seen—and I haven't seen them all—I like best *The Weird Tale: Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M. R. James, Ambrose Bierce, H. P. Lovecraft* (1990), in which Joshi discusses not just the content and aesthetics of his six authors but also their philosophies.

Robin M. Latimer has deliberately bounced around from job to job during the years that I have been acquainted with her—one mutual friend calls her "a Robin that never alights long"—but she is currently teaching at Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas.

Fred Lerner, a regular contributor to NIEKAS, has a doctorate in library science and has been doing bibliographic work in recent years—as is revealed in his essay.

Tamar Lindsay, a native New Hampshire Yankee who is a regular columnist for NIEKAS, is enjoying being happily married to Dick Eney—she reports—after working seven years in word processing. She is enmeshed in writing a nonfiction book about labyrinths, finally putting her B.A. in English literature to creative use. Another book, about mythic archetypes in modern Western entertainment, is "on hold." A life member of Mensa, she is also a member of Foundation, a modern mystery school. She has attended science-fiction conventions and Society for Creative Anachronism events since 1972 and holds the rank of Founding Baroness (Emeritus). A favorite hobby, not to say obsession, is deconstructive analyzing. She showed up with her current contribution at Mythcon 25, held in Washington, D.C., in August 1994, offering it to Ed Meskys when I, sitting at the same table, nabbed it. She adds, in a letter, that the only good thing about icy Maryland winters is that one can't shovel ice, so one doesn't have to.

Pat Mathews of Albuquerque, New Mexico, contributes comments on two writers about psychic sleuths, including—as was noted above—one of our contributors, Marion Zimmer Bradley. A science fiction and fantasy fan since childhood, Mathews is a member of the Science Fiction Writers of America and the Southwest Writers Workshop. She has published thirteen short stories in various magazines and anthologies since 1980 and a short novel in Andre Norton's *Witch World Chronicles*, Vol. 3 (1994). Besides the non-fiction she has done for NIEKAS in the past, she published "C. L. Moore's Classic Science Fiction" in a collection of essays in 1982.

Ed Meskys, a one-time college physics teacher—and, indeed, chairman of a department of physics (until the college collapsed)—now is much involved in the National Federation of the Blind. Twice its national convention has been at the hotel at the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, and I have driven over to have lunch with Ed and talk about science fiction and fantasy. He also—ahem!—publishes NIEKAS.

Essays on Dark Fantasy

The late **Sam Moskowitz** is best known for his biographical-cum-historical essays on science-fiction, collected in several volumes; but he also was well acquainted with fantasy fiction and edited a number of anthologies in the area of horror. (There is a good write-up of his contributions to the Gothic field in *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*.)

I first met **Sheryl A. Mylan** at the Fantasy and Science Fiction session of the South Central Modern Language Association (in whatever city it was meeting that year), when she was reading one of her papers—indeed, her paper here began as a presentation there. She is now teaching at Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

Andrew J. Offutt is a pro whose heroic fantasy novels include six about a fifth-century hero named Cormac mac Art (developed, I believe, from the four stories about this character that Robert E. Howard wrote but failed to sell), three about Howard's Conan, and others. He also edited five anthologies of original heroic fantasy stories—*Swords against Darkness*—which he considers his best contribution to that sub-genre. Even so, he is probably best known for his two novels and seven novelets about Hanse, the sorcery-hating cat-burglar and danger-junkie called Shadowspawn. About his contribution to this collection, he says, "I perpetrated 'Black Sorcerer etc.' in love, back before I had the guts to admit to being a lover of heroic fantasy." He has read the story aloud, usually very late at night and accompanied by both hisses and laughter, at nearly thirty conventions. Obviously, one of the assumptions here is that, while heroic fantasy may take its plot lines from adventure stories, it nearly as often takes its dangers from the Gothic tradition. And in Offutt's example . . .

Nancy-Lou Patterson retired as a professor of art from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, several years ago and now, in her own studio, works on commissioned textiles, stained-glass windows, and other projects. Besides writing professional essays on Amish and Mennonite art, she has reviewed books for *Mythlore* on C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien for many years, and written essays on those and other fantasy authors. She also has published two novels—young-adult novels, they'd probably be classified in the United States, although the first was not intended as such: an imitation Machen titled *Apple Staff and Silver Crown*, and the second—more appropriately for this compilation—a ghost story titled *The Painted Hallway*.

Darrell Schweitzer is interviewed in this issue. Here it is enough to note that he is editor of a commercial magazine, *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror*, and, of his several books of fiction, probably the most Gothic is a recent short-story collection, *Transients and Other Disquieting Stories*. (And that book is published by W. Paul Ganley, who is listed above.)

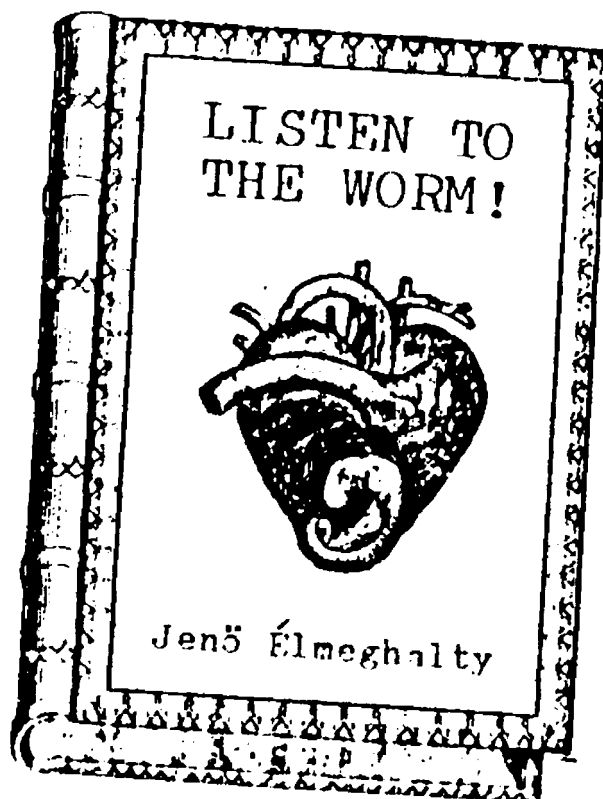
Tom Whitmore is a partner in The Other Change of Hobbit bookstore in Berkeley. (In 1994 he moved to Seattle, Washington, but he still gets to Berkeley to work in the store one weekend a month.) In his essay on John Bellairs' fiction, he praises *The Face in the Frost* (as who would not?). But let me mention a detail that interests me: in one chapter of that novel, a deck of Tarot cards is used to create a storm. I asked Bellairs the one time I met him if that was deliberately modeled on an episode in Charles Williams' *The Greater Trumps*, and he said it was. I mention this partly to show tradition within the Gothic field (of course, Bellairs' treatment is lighter and less metaphysical—that is, he has made it his own), but mainly to drag in a reference to Williams—who is one of my favorite Gothic writers and about whom I did not get an essay.

Catherine Jewel Wilterding, her husband, Dan, and her daughter, Shawna, live in Granbury, Texas, while Wilterding is an English instructor at Tarleton State University in Stephenville. She received her B.S. in Biology in 1976 and her M.A.T. in English in 1982. Before beginning her teaching career, Wilterding was a theater technician with

the Tarleton Players and at the Granbury Opera House and the Dallas Theater Center, where she began her graduate studies. After about seven years of building sets, hanging lights, stage managing, and various other backstage endeavors (plus working at restaurants, mowing cemeteries, and winding courthouse clocks to make "extra" money), she began an eight-year stint with a small newspaper in Stephenville. Here she applied her mechanical skills as an offset press operator, her editing skills as a typesetter, her writing skills as a columnist, and her design skills in the production department. After the newspaper business, she tried her hand at being a data-entry person at a nuclear power station in Glen Rose, Texas, until down-sizing caught her in the stream out the door. She returned to the newspaper for a short period before beginning her career at Tarleton as a composition, technical writing, and literature instructor. Her essay is about *Frankenstein*, but the horrors of the novel appear to be in the relations between the sexes. . . . (Interestingly enough, *Wilterding* was not the original by-line of the essay; despite the essay's content and after a number of years of raising her daughter by herself, the author recently married again.)

And who am I, you may ask, who has arranged this chamber of horrors so attentively? I am one who, when he was seven or eight years old, went to the Osage Theater in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, to see *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* on its first release. I had nightmares for months afterward. (Even children of non-abusive parents have fears. . .) I am also one who needs forgiveness of the readers of this collection for including my clearly non-essayic "A Foretaste of Blood to Come" in the vampire section. At least, I put it last in the section. (I am counting on NIEKAS's traditional hospitality to puns, for it includes a few.) And I am one who would like to thank Ed Meskys and the others at NIEKAS for letting me take over this publication this time.

And now, let's push hard against the door—it creaks and grinds against the floor, but it will move—and now let's enter. . . .



Why Horror Fiction?

by Darrell Schweitzer

Why horror fiction? Lots of people want to know. They stare at us aficionados as if we had three heads and fangs—and of course if we did, that would be horror fiction.

Well, it's neat. That's why. Ask any ten-year-old why he likes scary stories, monstermovies, or, for all it may bode ill for the future of our culture, slasher films, and you'll get an answer like that, very basic, very elementary, explaining everything and nothing.

The usual objections from Regular Folks are that stories of ghouls and graves are morbid or unpleasant or even sadistic, since they contain descriptions of people in physically, mentally, or spiritually painful situations. And we're supposed to enjoy this? We must be a bunch of sickos, right?

But all fiction involves situations we wouldn't want to experience ourselves, even the fluffiest situation comedy with its betrayals, embarrassments, pies-in-the-face, and dirty tricks. You and I would prefer a quiet evening at home, or maybe some sight-seeing, but that would make a dull story. A story needs excitement, and excitement is more fun to read about than live through. The characters in *Moby-Dick* are not having a good time, and Sam Spade does not enjoy *The Maltese Falcon* after Miles Archer is shot. And, to take an example from a recent television comedy, I doubt Homer Simpson much enjoyed getting lost in the woods without his clothes, being mistaken for Bigfoot and made a fool of in front of his family and neighbors.

One thinks of Michael Valentine Smith's attempt to "grok" earthly humor: "It hurts," he said.

As someone in *The Lord of the Rings*, either Frodo or Samwise, commented, adventures, which make glorious stories when you relate them later, are "just trouble." Ninety percent of most plots can be boiled down to pain and situations leading up to pain. Indeed, at writing workshops it is commonplace to define the protagonist of the story in terms of "Who hurts?"

So, given that horror fiction, like all others, partakes of pain and trouble, and not necessarily to an inordinate degree, what makes it different from other types of storytelling?

Horror is not quite as elusive as science fiction, for which there are as many definitions as definers. Most modern practitioners will agree that it's a matter of mood, not of specific content. A story can be

horrific without being supernatural or even fantastic, as much of Edgar Allan Poe readily demonstrates. In the simplest sense, a horror story is one that scares us.

We like to be scared. Trust me. We do. This is the whole secret of storytelling, any sort of storytelling. You would not want to journey through the Mines of Moria or up to the top of Mount Doom, but wasn't Tolkien's description of Sam and Frodo's trouble enjoyable? Come on. Admit it.

Let me qualify further. "Horror" has been so degraded as a label for violence-pornography movies that the general public thinks that the point of horror fiction (or films) is to be as gross as possible. To which I reply, in the words of (was it M. R. James?), that the idea is to make the hair stand on end, not the gorge rise. If your immediate impulse is to reach for an air-sickness bag, that wasn't a horror story.... And as far as films go, arguably there have been no real horror films in a long while. Certainly less than one a year for the past twenty years. I have



to grasp to come up with any at all.. *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Lady in White*, *Fanny and Alexander*, *Night of the Living Dead*—and, and—? Not many. Huge amounts of gorge-risers, lots of kill-porn, but proper horror films? Very few indeed.

Horror does not require a huge amount of gore, still-steaming viscera, or a motivationless maniac with a knife. In fact, it seldom flourishes under such conditions.

A contemporary distinguished horror writer, Thomas Ligotti, suggests in his book *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (Carroll & Graf, 1990) that ultimately the tale of terror seeks to be "magic, timeless, and profound."

I would add that such a story deals with dark and, yes, terrifying elements which fascinate and attract, in exactly equal proportions to how much they frighten or repel. If the contents of the story are merely ugly, the reader can so easily put the book down. There has to be something more. Quite often, in the hands of a master such as Arthur Machen, Robert Chambers, or Shirley Jackson, a horror story will strike a note of unearthly beauty at precisely the same moment it strikes terror. So we keep on reading.

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Essays on Dark Fantasy

The horror is not so much physical pain, or even death, but the inexplicable. The menace is an abnormality, an intrusion into our everyday existence, which by all the rules we hold near and dear, should not be. But there it is. That is the horror of it.

This is so even in such an overtly physical story as Stephen King's "The Raft." In it, several teenagers go back to their summertime vacation site in October for one last dip in the lake. Alas, the lake is now inhabited by a nameless, shapeless, black blot which traps them on a raft and eats them one after another, even dragging a victim bodily through an inch-wide crack between the boards, mashing him to a pulp in the process. But the story is about how the characters face death, what they (or the readers) learn from the experience. Mere descriptions of people being eaten or terrorized won't do. The point to "The Raft" becomes clear at the end, when the last survivor lets slip his one authentic chance to escape. Just as someone near and dear to our hero is dying hideously, he could get away, if only he were so heartless as to abandon her and strike out for shore while the monster is occupied. But he can't and as the story ends, the opportunity is gone. That is the horror. That if only he could have found that brutality within himself, he might have made it. Life is not fair. The monster is implacable. The whole situation is a violation—physical, scientific, moral—of the way we think the universe ought to work. But, the story is telling us, the universe never asked our opinion.

H.P. Lovecraft considered horror to be a matter of man against the unknown universe. In his seminal "Supernatural Horror in Literature" he wrote:

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and a portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos in the daemons of unplumbed space.

In other words, the horror story gives us a glimpse of something beyond knowledge and experience. Only in a horror story can we explore the other side of death—what it would mean if the dead returned, or if we could continue to exist, neither dead nor alive, as a vampire. The horror is not so much the physical depredations the monster may inflict, but the implication of the monster being there at all. One more bucket of blood here or there hardly matters, but a convincing sense of unreality, of our conceptual universe coming apart at the seams—that's terrifying.

Even when it's being overtly bloody, the horror story should be subtle, and of course it is not necessary to be bloody. To my mind the best horror novel of recent years was Jonathan Carroll's *The Land of Laughs* (Viking Press, 1980), which I like to describe (half-jokingly, but only half) as "what would have happened if Philip K. Dick and Franz Kafka had collaborated to write L. Frank Baum." There is scarcely a drop of blood in it. Our hero, an admirer of the works of the great (and imaginary) children's author, Marshall France, meets a like-minded heroine and journeys to the midwestern town where France lived his whole, rather short life. After some resistance, he is accepted by the townspeople and France's daughter as the correct person to write the definitive biography of the late, great author. To this point, half way through the novel, we have a warm, lovely, often slyly funny story about people who love books and strive for art. But the story darkens. It seems that the real purpose of this biography is to bring France back to life, literally, after which point the townspeople (some of whom may be characters imagined by France) plan to murder the biographer and go on forever in a solipsistic dream. The first real stab of horror comes, not when somebody gets disembowelled as they

would in the first five minutes of a *Friday the 13th* movie, but, more than half-way through, when a dog begins to speak. Unreality has begun its invasion. From that point, it never lets up. The hero slides into fantasy, possibly into madness as well, and in the end he has fled to Europe, possibly accompanied by his own dead father (a famous movie star), busily killing off agents of Marshall France's reality as they continue to appear. He is trapped. There is no end to this, no way he can return to his normal life. That's horror.

For all its quirks and specialized tropes, the horror story is like any other in the end. It has to have a point, a theme. It is more complicated than a child in a mask jumping out from behind a tree shouting "Boo!"

(Now if it were an adult in the mask shouting "Boo!" you might have a horror story, about the appalling circumstances which have caused this abnormality. Imagine it, a deft mixture of pathos and savagery, as the grown man shouts "Boo!" at first, but then when this isn't enough finds that he must genuinely become a monster, because somehow his twisted psyche demands that there be monsters.)

It has to be about something. But, however abstruse its concepts, such a tale must work on the emotions of the reader. If we can define the horror story at all, it is in terms of its specific emotional impact.

The true horror story requires a sense of evil, not in necessarily a theological sense; but the menace must be truly menacing, life-destroying, and antithetical to happiness. Where this evil comes from varies with the times. When Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, evil could plausibly come from the Devil, though the bard was too shrewd an observer of human nature to ignore the fact that the Devil did no more than fan the fires of Macbeth's ambitions. In Poe's time, evil came from within the mind. In Bram Stoker's, it could be an infection, something from far away which polluted the familiar world and irreparably changed innocent people, as Dracula changed Lucy, into something quite different and terrifying. (It would be quite easy to make a case for Dracula as an allegory of Victorian perceptions of syphilis.) In Lovecraft's time, as Einstein and Hubble suddenly revealed a vast and chaotic universe, evil came from outer space, threatening to erase the insignificant flyspeck of mankind without so much as a shrug of a tentacle. Today, a surprising number of horror stories are about the loss of identity. *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is only the most obvious example. We have seen the horrors of totalitarian movements, mind-control cults and the painful anonymity of life in our cities. Evil can erase us as individuals.

As all stories, the horror story must have characters we care about. This is Stephen King's great strength. His monsters, by and large are, second-rate, strictly off-the-shelf. But he writes so well about suburban teenagers, small town folks, fathers who love their children, broken families trying to cling together, that when a vampire or dripping, slobbering Thing intrudes we are caught up emotionally. We are alarmed, scared. He's got us. Clive Barker, on the other hand, is far more inventive, but sometimes suffers from the "lunchmeat syndrome." That is, his characters seem to exist only to be sliced. It's hard to care.

Otherwise, the rules of the horror story are like those of any other sort of fiction: coherence, clean prose, logical consistency, a climax which somehow resolves (or at least alters) the conflict. It's all basic storytelling stuff, which has been with us ever since one of our paleolithic ancestors got tired of telling about last week's mammoth hunt and started spinning a yarn about the three-headed, ravenous, shambling monstrosity which bites your head off in the dark, but is so subtle that it may have already slipped past you, the audience, and already be waiting inside the cave when you get sleepy and retire to your bearskins....

Boo!

NIEKAS interviews Darrell Schweitzer

Conducted by Joe Christopher

Niekas: As we do this interview, you are in the process of shifting from editing a magazine named *Weird Tales* to the same periodical, only now named *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror*. We'll come to the new title in a while, but let's begin with history. You were the ninth editor of *Weird Tales* if we list your two co-editors—as you started—ahead of you. Do you want to say anything about the historical importance of *Weird Tales*?

Schweitzer: For all practical purposes, the very idea of a fantasy-fiction magazine begins with *Weird Tales*. There are variously-claimed antecedents, including a few "magazines" from the Gothic era of the early 19th century—which may have been more a matter of cheap, and probably pirated, pamphlet condensations of Gothic novels—and a few foreign-language periodicals which may have some claim to priority until Sam Moskowitz relentlessly hunts them down and unmasks them, but *Weird Tales* remains the first *significant* magazine of imaginative fiction in any language. It didn't merely publish one or two issues in 1923, then fade; it *survived* for quite a long time, establishing, first, that there would be at least one reliable source for imaginative fiction in English during the years in question, and, second (as I and my predecessors perhaps discovered to our chagrin), the precedent that a fantasy magazine is not necessarily something that generates vast fortunes, but is, in itself, a precious institution which the editors struggle to keep alive, making heroic, even ridiculous sacrifices in the process.

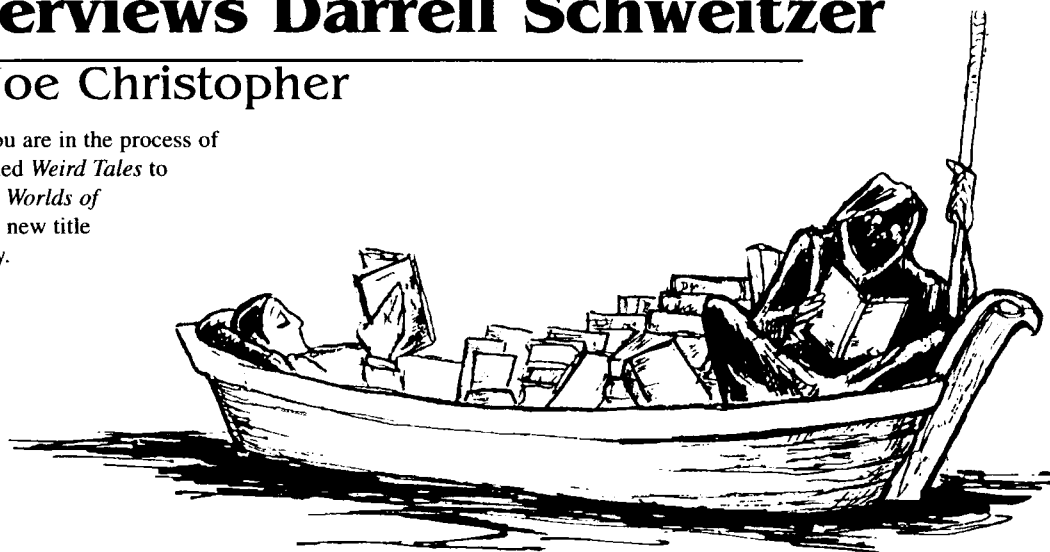
That has always been an important part of the *Weird Tales* psychology. You might call it a siege mentality. We are hunkered down, preserving something which might otherwise perish without our efforts.

And without *Weird Tales*, where would the fantasy field be? The idea of the magazine, more than any particular issue, provides a focus for *fantastic* horror fiction, as it did in the days of H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, or early in the careers of Fritz Leiber, Ray Bradbury, and Richard Matheson, to name some illustrious *Weird Tales* alumni. We would all be impoverished without it. A reader recently defined the *Weird Tales* story as "ominous and magical." That's a very good description of what the magazine has always been about.

Niekas: What have you achieved as editor of *Weird Tales*?

Schweitzer: Nineteen issues, and footnotehood in fantasy reference books until the end of time. I *am*, however insignificant, a successor to Farnsworth Wright, and shall have to be so listed in those reference books. But, beyond that, Jason Van Hollander gave me the lovely image of the things you do in your life which you put in your death-boat to justify yourself before the gods. He's the one who suggested that *Weird Tales* 290-308 go into my death-boat, to stock the lending libraries of the Netherworld, but also to show that here is something which would never have existed had not I and my colleagues wrought it. Each issue is strong enough, I think, to justify the effort that went into it, for its own sake. So our primary accomplishment has been to make the run of *Weird Tales* longer than it used to be.

My chief policy accomplishment, I think, was articulated from the very first in a slogan we've quoted in the magazine from time to time,



but never put on every issue: *Weird Tales*, a revival, not an exhumation. The whole idea has been to create *Weird Tales* as a living, contemporary magazine, what it would have evolved into had it continued up to the present uninterrupted. We were never interested in making it read like a product of the 1930s, or in digging among the old bones of that era, publishing bits and scraps and old rejects by writers of half a century ago. If a new Robert E. Howard or H.P. Lovecraft story were to turn up, we would only want to print it if it were *good* rather than merely of historical interest. Our audience, like that of the old *Weird Tales*, does not consist of scholars, but of general readers, who want to be entertained, not told, "Well, we know this is terrible, but it's the sole unpublished work of Bertram Batrachian Hackwort, who is still fondly remembered for his Alphonse Slime, Psychic Investigator, series of 1923-25."

No. That's fine for *Crypt of Cthulhu*, but not for us. On the fan/scholarly level, the publication of every last scrap by significant figures from the field's past is very important, and I applaud it. But *Weird Tales* is not a fanzine or a scholarly journal.

In 1935, Lovecraft, Howard, Smith, and the rest were contemporary, cutting-edge talent. Today Tanith Lee, Thomas Ligotti, Jonathan Carroll, and Charles de Lint are. That's who we publish, along with such remarkable survivors of the pulp era as Hugh B. Cave, who can *still* turn out a story that doesn't need any excuses made for it.

Niekas: Certainly one of the aspects I have enjoyed of your *Weird Tales* has been the emphasis on a different, current writer each issue—well, different except for the repeat of Tanith Lee. It has allowed me to become acquainted with a number of the modern authors, through the stories, the interviews or profiles, and the lists of works you ran at first (until I wrote in about the Tanith Lee list being incomplete—I'm sorry if it was I who killed that idea).

But let me go on to *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror*. By the time this interview appears, you will have already explained to your readers the reason for the name change. But let me give you an opportunity to add anything you want to say on the matter—and to explain what you hope to accomplish in *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror*.

Schweitzer: Continued publication. We hope to keep on putting out issues that would have been *Weird Tales* if we still retained the title. Yes, we explain the reason for the name change in the first issue of the "new" magazine, but for the benefit of NIEKAS readers who have not seen that editorial, I will briefly explain it here: *Weird Tales* Ltd.,

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which owns the title, had very sensible and pressing reasons for taking the title elsewhere. I would have done the same in their position. Therefore our parting of the ways was entirely amicable. Meanwhile, our main distributor thinks we can get away with the title change without any loss of sales. After a couple of issues, most people won't know the difference, because most magazine buyers are casual browsers, who are not necessarily aware of previous issues of what they pick up. This will be a loss for tradition, and the hardcore fans will know the difference, and I can only regret the change. But at the same time, my priority has to be to maintain a living magazine, whatever it is called. We'll still be publishing the same stories.

Niekas: What sort of mix of stories did you try to have in *Weird Tales*—what percentages of different types of stories, I suppose I mean. Are you going to try for the same mix in *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror*? It's difficult to illustrate exactly what I have in mind. But you didn't print just the-monster-eats-the-protagonist or the-protagonist-kills-the-monster stories—you also had heroic fantasy, of a dark sort; science fiction (I remember Gene Wolfe's story); stories about children with strange powers; and so on. You no doubt know the categories better than I do.

Schweitzer: We really don't have much science fiction, only very occasionally, and only if it has some particularly bizarre aspect to it. You may recall that the Gene Wolfe story you refer to, "The Other Dead Man," was blurbled (we couldn't resist it) "a weird tale of interplanetary doom"—and it was.

We want *imaginative* fiction, whether it be horror, imaginary-world fantasy, or whatever. Many of the manuscripts we receive are rather mundane horror stories, which, even when well-written, may have only a certain visceral power—but no real creative imagination behind them. That is, they don't seem to contain anything we haven't seen in other stories. We do want good, vivid horror stories, even ones which push the envelope of what is supposed to be acceptable—although, of course, in horror today that envelope has been pushed pretty far already. And we don't want stories which shock for the sake of shocking. It is not necessary to go for the gross-out to hold the reader's attention. We are beyond all that by now.

Sword-and-sorcery, as such, doesn't seem to exist much anymore. It quite naturally evolved into the imaginary-scene fantasy, since sword-and-sorcery was defined by a very narrow set of characters and situations. Is a story about a shoemaker whose marital problems are complicated by the ghostly appearances of his dead, previous wife to be classified as sword-and-sorcery because it takes place in a world in which Conan *could* exist? I don't think so. That's where sword-and-sorcery went. It evolved away from easy labelling. But even the imaginary-scene fantasy stories—beyond a certain number of completely prefabricated, generic products which may or may not be based on someone's role-playing game campaign—are not very common anymore. We don't get a lot of them in the slush pile, not nearly as many as we did at *Amazing*. In the present magazine, well, I write that sort of thing, as do Tanith Lee and Keith Taylor—Taylor being actually very close to traditional sword-and-sorcery—but otherwise we don't have a lot of it. Forms evolve. Some become obsolete. We'd be happy to publish a good Lost Race story, if one could still be written.

We want *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror* to be unpredictable. If the magazine consisted of *nothing but* horror stories, then you would know in advance how a lot of them turn out, and it would begin to get boring.

Niekas: You keep saying "we," which I assume is not just an editorial we, but refers to the whole editorial and publishing team. But let me ask something more specific to editorial judgment. To what degree can an editor satisfy his own taste in his choosing of stories? For example, you published several stories by Lord Dunsany in *Weird Tales*—stories appearing for the first time in America, of course. But if your choices do not rate highly with the readers, can you continue that

line, even if you think it is important? Can you say, "This is my chance to educate the readers?" Or do you have to say, "This sort of material will have to be left to the semi-pro press?"

Schweitzer: The "we" of course refers to my own incipient divinity. On the best precedents, I shall shortly announce my own deification. Then I don't have to write letters anymore. I get to speak through a burning bush.

But, meanwhile, *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror* is very much of a team effort. I don't want you to think I do it all alone—or even select all the material alone. A great deal of the credit must be shared with George Scithers, Carol Adams, Diane Weinstein, and others. Stories are bought not entirely on my say-so. It is unusual, but I *can* be overruled. I am, I suppose, somewhat more than nominally first among equals, particularly because of my extensive involvement in the horror field, which makes me more likely to know who the important new writers are and what their work is about, but the basic principle is that the decision is divided between myself; George; and everyone else, who count collectively as one vote. Best out of three wins. If the item in question is *by* the editor, then I don't get to vote, and it has to be unanimous. I can be—and have been—rejected from my own magazine.

So, no, I don't get to indulge whims at the expense of the readership. The readers have to *like*—or at least not write in and complain about—everything we do, since, rather obviously, they are the ones who are keeping us afloat. We don't get any grants, you know. This magazine has to sell to stay alive. Fortunately, reader response to the Dunsany pieces—and my own—has been favorable. More than once I've had the bad grace to upstage the featured author in the most-popular-story voting, although, for all my "To Become a Sorcerer" got a World Fantasy Award nomination, I was put firmly in my place by Thomas Ligotti in *Weird Tales* 303 (that is, his "Nethescurial"—a brilliant story, by the way—was the clear winner.)

What we leave to the semi-pro or fan press is literary archaeology, broken shards of interesting stuff from the remote past, as well as fragments and rejects by old-time writers.

Niekas: Certainly times are different from when Farnsworth Wright was editing *Weird Tales*. *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror* is competing not just with occasionally other pulps and with some movies. Today you are facing competition from some professional magazines—the only one I subscribe to is *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, which has some overlap with your area—and from a number of semi-professional and amateur magazines, from many movies, and from a flood of paperbacks. Is this a good time or a difficult time to try to keep a dark-fantasy magazine afloat?

Schweitzer: Yes, it's a very different scene, but not in the way you think. *Weird Tales* in the 1930s was a pulp magazine among pulp magazines, distributed by what was, until the early '80s, the only method possible, the traditional newsstand route. In the early '80s, this began to change, as independent distributors began to take magazines directly into bookstores. You'll notice that suddenly there are a *lot* of little magazines in bookstores now, literary magazines, new age, small press horror and SF, everything. Probably the first magazine to really break into this market in our field was the late, lamented *The Horror Show*, which was doing very well before the editor decided he wanted to give it up and become a writer. *Fantasy Book* also made some inroads into this market, but I don't have a good idea how far they got. I did see it in the chain stores sometimes.

We don't compete very strongly with *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. We're distributed differently. The content and image of *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror* are sharply different. If we "compete" with anyone, it's with *Cemetery Dance* and *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine*. They share our distribution patterns, as did, for that matter, less efficiently, the recent glossy *Amazing Stories*. But another profound difference between now and 1930 is that the reader

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can probably afford to buy more than one magazine. In that sense, a lot of fantasy/horror magazines in the stores may complement one another rather than compete.

Is this a good or bad time for running a magazine? In the sense that this whole new area of distribution has opened up, it is a very good time. What we are doing wouldn't have been possible as recently as, say, 1980. Just about anything with a cover on it can get some bookstore distribution. Is NIEKAS in the bookstores? I bet you could get someone to carry a couple thousand copies.

The down-side of this is that there are a lot of shoddy magazines out there, and there is sure to be a winnowing soon. Further, "a couple thousand copies" may be the operative words. This kind of distribution may be a box, with upper and lower limits. It's great for small press or semi-professional or little literary magazines, where you're thrilled to sell four thousand copies, but I haven't seen anybody—not us, not *The Paris Review*, not *The Shaman's Drum*, not *Cemetery Dance*—break out and suddenly sell forty thousand copies.

I note with considerable interest that the *SF Age* people are apparently doing well with a completely professional, traditionally newsstand, fantasy magazine, *Realms of Fantasy*, edited by Shawna McCarthy. They've got the money—and the smarts—to do it right. *SF Age* is one of the great success stories of our time. If they were to add a horror magazine to their lineup, the results could be quite significant. The reign of the small-press horror magazine might quickly be over.

You're going to ask me now whether *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror* should be considered a small-press magazine like *Grue* or a completely professional magazine like *Asimov's Science Fiction*. The answer is that we're somewhere in the middle, pushing at the upper end of the bookstore-distribution box.

Niekas: I remember reading that the old magazine distribution system had collapsed and a new, less unified system had developed; but I didn't realize the practical effects. Interesting. A couple of decades ago I knew some editors of literary quarterlies and they seemed to spend a lot of time driving from book store to book store, trying to find places that would put their journals up for sale. Perhaps it's less of an individual effort now.

Well, that answer came from an attempted comparison of the past and the present. Let me ask another. In the heyday of *Weird Tales*, one characteristic of the magazine was its series—Lovecraft's and others' use of the Cthulu background, Howard's Conan, Moore's Jirel of Joiry, Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin, and probably many I'm not aware of. To some degree, Paul Ganley plays series up in *Weirdbook* today. I realize impulse sales depend partly on name authors' names on the cover—such as Joyce Carol Oates on the first issue of *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror*—but how valuable are series in holding readers? You don't seem to emphasize them.

Schweitzer: We don't seem to get very many series stories. Some of Keith Taylor's stories have been related, as have been some of mine, and some of Ronald Anthony Cross's have in fact been sequels to one another. But the real problem here is that our inventory and schedule (particularly when the schedule gets a bit erratic; there were only two issues in 1992) don't allow us to buy enough often enough. Series work a lot better in a monthly magazine. In a quarterly (or less), series also probably make far less impact, because the newsstand buyers (as opposed to subscribers, who get every issue anyway) see the issue in a far more scattered way. I'm guessing here, but my guess is that if you've got a monthly magazine, which is therefore almost constantly visible on the newsstands, then the browsing reader will say, "Oh, that issue has a Conan story in it. I'll buy it." But a quarterly appears on the stands, and while it theoretically stays there until the next issue appears, in practice it may not. It might sell out and not be reordered, and that bookstore then does not display the title at all for two months.

My hypothesis then is that series stories really work only if the title itself is constantly present, as it was, say, when Frederik Pohl was edit-

ing the monthly *Worlds of If* and hooked his readers not only with three or four major series running at once (Berserker, Gree, Known Space, Retief) but overlapping serial installments. None of this applies in a quarterly.

But then, as you say, Paul Ganley exploits series successfully in *Weirdbook*. . . What this does to his sales, I don't know. I suspect the strongest continuity he's got is a steady diet of Cthulhu Mythos material by Brian Lumley, for which there is constant demand. I can't say that we'd refuse a series. It's just that we, like Paul, couldn't publish installments of it very often.

Niekas: Another comparative question. I've read that Anthony Boucher, when he was editing *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, essentially ran on a two-full-work-period day, editing the magazine during one period, and writing his mystery reviews during another period, with a long nap between them. Of course, his was a monthly magazine. Obviously, you're not editing full time—you are writing and selling also. But how much time does your editorial work take? For that matter, it would be interesting to know exactly what an editor does besides read submissions and decide on which ones to purchase.

Schweitzer: It's hard to say. Under normal circumstances I make myself available for this kind of work three days a week (evenings, really), although in such a period I may well read no manuscripts. We are also the publishers, remember. I may spend quite a lot of time with petty correspondence, answering inquiries from subscription services, complaints from customers whose issue got lost, etc. In many cases, I am also the shipping department. I can spend the whole day putting things in boxes.

There is a lot of computer work putting an issue together, most of which George does. This involves typesetting and the like. Issues have to be planned, first with rough counts of how much space each story is going to take up. Then artwork is assigned. Artwork, once received, has to be taken out and photographed. The issue has to then be planned much more precisely, on sheets with little rectangles representing pages, so we know if the seven-page story faces its illustration properly or not, whether there is enough room at the end to fit in a poem, whether there have been sufficient pages left blank for ads, etc., etc. So we do all that. I write and edit the editorial and letter column pretty much by myself, and am responsible for most of the blurbs.

Actually, George does most of the first reading. I read anything anyone has put aside with any question at all. Carol Adams writes most of the rejection letters. So there is a lot more than just deciding what to buy, and I don't do it all myself. Each of us, at various times, fulfills the functions of what would be a whole department at a large publishing house. I am (most of the time) the contracts department. George writes the checks.

Niekas: The contrast to Boucher is striking, since he was simply doing the editing, writing of introductions, and book reviewing for *Fantasy and Science Fiction*—the publishing was across the continent from him. It would be like you being on one side of the country and Scithers on the opposite. But maybe we should jump from your editing to your own writing. I believe you have published two novels. The one I own, and have enjoyed reading, is *The White Isle*. The book certainly has Gothic elements—I'm thinking of Evnos of Iankoros' journey into the land of the dead, a variation on the Orpheus legend. I suppose, but Hades was much tamer than your picture of the afterlife! For that matter, Evnos' journey beneath his castle to where he has laid the body of his dead wife has traditional Gothic elements. Could you comment on your novels in terms of the dark-fantasy emphasis of this issue?

Schweitzer: I am the author of two published novels; the other one is *The Shattered Goddess* (1982), which is, I think, a considerably better book than *The White Isle*. It has all the natural improvements of a second novel over a first, particularly a greater unity of the overall structure. *The White Isle* was written in 1975, serialized in *Fantastic*

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in 1980, but through a series of accidents not published as a book until 1989—when it was revised as I typed it into a computer for typesetting. A third novel, *The Mask of the Sorcerer*, expands my novella “To Become a Sorcerer,” from *Weird Tales* #303. The novella, as I mentioned earlier, was a World Fantasy Award finalist. Purists will be pleased to know that I have not rewritten or padded it out. Almost verbatim—the names of some of the gods were changed for consistency; the chapters in the novel have titles where those in the novella did not—it comprises the first four chapters of the 180,000 word novel, which then continues on from where the novella left off. It is by far my most ambitious fictional effort. It has recently been sold to New English Library, although there is no American publisher at the present.

All three of these are “dark” fantasies, although not in the way the term is currently used. That is, they don’t have contemporary settings. “Dark fantasy” is simply a euphemism for horror fiction—it sounds more elegant and allows a greater sense of literary importance—and in genre horror fiction, settings must be contemporary or nearly so. Horror readers—and many editors—have trouble with anything outside of their own immediate frame of reference. *The Mask of the Sorcerer* is about a boy whose father is a dreaded sorcerer with lots of enemies. The boy grows up as an ordinary kid, despite his father’s disturbing habit of inviting shambling corpses into the house at night, the weird smells and sounds that come out of the laboratory, etc. The father wants his son to grow up “normal,” rather the way the elder Corleone in *The Godfather* wanted the same for his son...but with similar results. The family structure breaks down entirely. The father murders the mother, and eventually induces his son to murder him, because when you kill a sorcerer, you *become* that sorcerer. It’s the only way for the father to live on and continue his work—in his son’s body. So the boy, aged about fifteen, suddenly finds himself a multiple personality, sharing his body with his own father—whom he fears and has tried to love—and everybody his father ever murdered, and everybody *they* ever murdered...a couple more are added in the course of his adventures.

This is a very dark fantasy indeed, very Oedipal—there is even a failed quest into the afterworld for the mother—and, I can assure you, if it were set in contemporary Manhattan, with the father being a member of some centuries-old occult order, it would be, quite unambiguously, published as a horror novel.

But it’s set in pseudo-antiquity, in an imaginary world, much of the action taking place in a wooden city on stilts in the middle of a papyrus swamp, the rest in the City of the Delta, which vaguely resembles Hellenistic Alexandria. That means that it’ll be published in the Fantasy category, and many horror readers may well avoid it because they’re sure fantasy is all cute elves and quest trilogies.

The Shattered Goddess is filled with horrors too, but it’s “fantasy,” or maybe “science fantasy” in publishing terms, because it is set in the remote future, in the manner of *The Dying Earth* or Clark Ashton Smith’s Zothique series. I am reluctant to compare it to *The Book of the New Sun* because, if you pay attention, you’ll see that Wolfe is writing science fiction, even hard science fiction, for all his characters don’t know it. I am not. The one real difference between my sort of novel and what is published as “dark fantasy,” other than setting, is that my works address mythic material directly. The gods are real and alive—or, in the case of *The Shattered Goddess* recently dead—and can come on stage. The universe is not our universe, but one pervaded with the supernatural.

Niekas: I think we define Dark Fantasy a bit differently. For me, the Gothic fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the Dark Fantasy of the twentieth form a continuum. Horror fiction can be either realistic or supernatural. But the word *fantasy* in Dark Fantasy limits the term to that involving the supernatural. I’m oversimplifying, I know: not all Gothic fiction involved the supernatural, but most of it

did—ghosts and demons, often. And I use Dark Fantasy to mean the same sort of material today, even though it has more vampires than demons! But I admit there are bothersome borderlines—a number of today’s vampires are rationalized: they are a separate, parasitical race, sometimes. And because of tradition I’d include those in Dark Fantasy also. I’m tempted to go into a discussion of genre—I’m playing the term rather loosely in the issue of NIEKAS we’re doing this interview for, in order to include as much as possible—but this is supposed to be your interview! Besides, a discussion of definitions is pointless—as long as each of us knows what the other means by a term, there’s no confusion.

So let’s get back to your fiction. I think you have published three books of short stories. One of them, *We Are All Legends*, is a short-story sequence actually—what is called a novel when Bradbury drops the story titles and calls the result *Dandelion Wine*. (Bradbury’s is not a very unified novel, but it’s a good story sequence. *The Martian Chronicles* is a more open—and hence more honest—sequence.) Your most recent collection is your most Gothic, *Transients and Other Disquieting Stories*. I particularly liked the title of “The Man Who Wasn’t Nice to Pumpkin Head Dolls,” although I think “Transients,” for example, is a better story. Is it fair to describe most of your first two collections as Dunsany + heroic fantasy? (I think I remember a short play in *Weirdbook* that was influenced by Dunsany also.) Again, could you discuss your short stories in terms of our dark-fantasy emphasis?

Schweitzer: You’re missing a lot. Only a small amount of my fiction, most of it very early, shows any direct Dunsany influence. There is also a sequence of satellite stories revolving around *The Shattered Goddess*. Two of the best are in my collection *Tom O’Bedlam’s Night Out*, which was intended as a sampler of my best short fiction up through 1985. There are enough “Goddess” stories to fill a book. There are five Tom O’Bedlam stories, three collected, all fantastic comedies, which show influences as wide-ranging as Monty Python and Shakespeare. (Speaking of whom, my anthologized “Caliban’s Revenge” is a sequel to *The Tempest*.)

The Mask of the Sorcerer also has two sequences of related stories, some sharing just the setting—the earliest is “The Last of the Shadow Titans,” collected in *Tom o’Bedlam’s Night Out*—and so far five about people who have met the multiple-personality sorcerer of the novella and novel.

I have a wide variety of other short fiction. I’ve even written a Sherlock Holmes story—for Marvin Kaye’s anthology, *The Game is Afoot*—and, with Jason Van Hollander, an actual, serious, no-kidding Cthulhu Mythos story, recently published in Thomas Stratman’s *Cthulhu’s Heirs*.

There’s a lot of darkness in these stories, ranging in tone from sadness to (occasionally) sinister humor. If you want to divide them up, there are those in contemporary American settings (published as horror stories, or “dark fantasy” by my definition) and those in non-contemporary settings, either imaginary-world or set in the historical past. These tend to be published as “fantasy.” I cross back and forth over this border frequently. The distinction isn’t important for me, any more than it was for Clark Ashton Smith, or, for that matter, Poe. Is “The Masque of the Red Death” a horror story or a fantasy?

I’d buy it for *Worlds of Fantasy & Horror* and not worry about the distinction.

Niekas: I suppose I’d call Poe’s story a symbolic work, although it certainly belongs to the Gothic tradition. But whatever it is, it’s popular enough. Poe is one of those authors—A. E. Housman, in a different way, is another—who speaks to adolescent melancholy, but is also interesting to adults.

Let me turn to your non-fiction. I know of only two books of that sort by you—your *Pathways to Elfland: The Writings of Lord Dunsany* and the collaborative *On Writing Science Fiction: The Editors Strike*

Essays on Dark Fantasy

Back! I own and have enjoyed the first. Unfortunately, for our present purposes, these books don't seem very Gothic. Some of the collections of essays you've edited fit better in this area. I have volumes one and two of your *Discovering Modern Horror Fiction* from Starmont, and I gather you did a *Discovering H.P. Lovecraft* and a *Discovering Classic Horror*, neither of which I've seen. By the time this interview appears, you'll have out *Speaking of Horror*, from Borgo. Am I missing anything in the Gothic area? Are there any comments you'd like to make on what you have attempted in these books—and what success you've had?

Schweitzer: You're missing *The Dream Quest of H.P. Lovecraft* (1978), a beginner's guide to the Old Gent, which is a beginner's book in more ways than one. I intend to rewrite it soon, for a new edition to be published by Borgo Press. Also there's *Conan's World and Robert E. Howard*, another Borgo Press item from the '70s, of considerably less merit, I'd say. It was written in a rush, at the publisher's behest. He just wanted anything at all about Robert E. Howard, to sell to libraries. If you don't have that one, let me recommend that you buy the de Camps' *Dark Valley Destiny: The Life and Death of Robert E. Howard* instead.

My intentions were various. The Dunsany was a labor of love, the product of many years of research into what is almost virgin territory. Think of it as a scouting mission. I am the first one to get in there and map out the landscape, examining all of Lord Dunsany's work, which is, of course, of unequal merit. I didn't hesitate to say so. Much of Dunsany's poetry is awful. His mainstream novel *Guerilla* is quite bad. While he wrote much of the best fantasy in English, he wrote so much that not all his stories are... well, exactly awesome masterpieces. This seemed to confuse academic critics, one of whom made a moronic attempt to "defend" Dunsany against my alleged assaults. But, ignoring that, my purpose in writing *Pathways* was to arouse interest in Dunsany and point the way for other critics to go in and study parts of the total Dunsany corpus in more detail than I managed. But I got there first. It's as if I wrote the very first book describing how many plays Shakespeare wrote, what they're about, and under what circumstances they were written. The whole Shakespearean critical industry would come afterwards.

Niekas: I realize how long you've been studying Dunsany, for I remember your essay in *The Eildon Tree*, that journal produced for a few issues by The Fantasy Association back in the mid-1970s. I had an essay in the same issue as yours—but mine was on Tennyson's miserable play about Robin Hood. I doubt that I will ever write a book on Tennyson, however! But you were discussing your non-fiction.

Schweitzer: Let's see...*Dream Quest* was also an exploration, but of course, other people have mapped out the territory ahead of me. Still, it is written as if it is the first book about Lovecraft that the reader has read. At the time, for many people, it might have been. Nowadays the place to start is Peter Cannon's Lovecraft volume in the Twayne Authors Series. Mine attempts depth. It is not always successful. With a mind toward revisions, I had the great Lovecraftian scholar Dirk Mosig jot down a list of his objections to the book.

The *Discovering* series—you missed the now mostly obsolete Stephen King volume, which is due for major revision soon—is an attempt to run the equivalent of a critical journal in a series of books. Here are essays introducing or exploring various aspects of major fantasy and horror writers, past and present. To my mind, the purpose of a critical article is to provide enlightenment. You should come away from the piece with some greater understanding of the subject than you had before you started. So I guess you could say that the *Discovering* books are guides to further reading or re-reading. They are intended to be educational. There is no overall plan beyond that, no ideological or theoretical basis for them beyond this insistence that critics write clearly and have something to say. If they mumble obscurely in code to other critics, I am not interested. Deconstructionists need not apply.

(Surely you've heard the joke about what happens when the Mafia discovers Deconstruction: they make you an offer you can't understand.)

Niekas: Yes, indeed! Whatever one thinks about the various Deconstructionist aims, I think it is obvious for stylistic reasons that the authors are mainly writing to each other—and to a few other literature professors who think they have to keep up with the most recent fads in criticism.

Let me, therefore, attempt a small-d deconstructionist question in clear English. In the interviews you published early in your *Weird Tales* editing, I noticed you occasionally commented on the twisted taste of the people involved in Dark Fantasy—that is, you asked in a way that amounted to an assertion that the people who wrote Gothic fiction had to have a mental twist of some kind. I wish I could quote an example, but my younger daughter, whose job is in another town, carried off most of those issues for her library—and so I haven't seen them for a while. I know that you yourself are a rationalist, so I assume a psychological explanation of the appeal is to be expected. You are not going to assume that Dark Powers—Dark Spiritual Powers—really exist. I don't want to duplicate what you've said in "Why Horror Fiction?," but, rather than the historical survey of where writers have believed evil exists that you do there—and the more general defense of horror fiction in terms of people liking to be frightened—I wonder if you would like to briefly state what you believe to be the psychological cause of people writing Dark Fantasy—particularly those who write it almost exclusively—and (although I may be pushing an editor further than he is willing to go) the psychological effect of Dark Fantasy on those who read it almost exclusively. How healthy is it?

Schweitzer: Well, of course we are all mad. That goes without saying. Many writers will attest that they became writers because they carefully demolished their lives until they weren't good for anything else. I am now, by the time you publish this, 45. I haven't ever had a full-time, 9-to-5 job. My employment record would look spotty and strange to someone who didn't understand what writing was all about. At this point I probably could move to New York and get an editorial job, if I wanted to, but I am too far along for a mundane "career." I suppose, if I had to, I could go into the used-book business in a serious way. I have a talent for relieving people of their cash in that manner.

But, as for why one writes fantasy or horror (or fantasy/horror, since much of what I write is both), I like Jason Van Hollander's theory that it is the Third Path to the Numinous. We can approach the divine through faith, which sets aside reason, or through reason, as a Jesuit would, if we can manage to convince ourselves. The third approach is through art.

We yearn for the miraculous, even if, rationally, we may not believe in it as a part of our everyday lives. But we are able to imagine what it would be like if the miraculous were part of our lives, if the world either made sense (in terms of the supernatural) or could be dismissed as incomprehensible (on the same basis). We do this as a deliberate act of the creative imagination, something a true-believer cannot do. We know what we are making up.

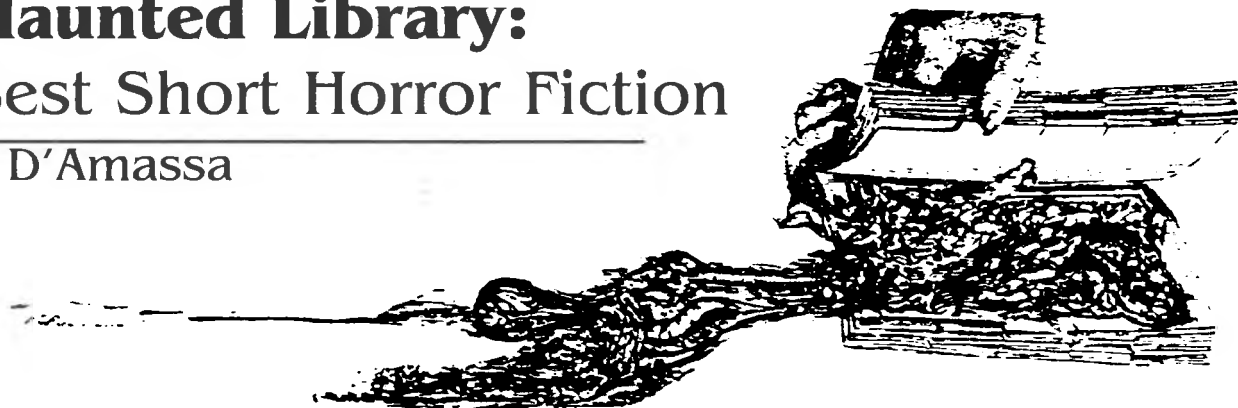
The fantastic imagination is a way of describing the real. I do not, for example, literally believe in the *evatim* described in "To Become a Sorcerer," crocodile-headed messengers of the Devouring God, Surat-Kemad, who shuffle through city streets at night summoning mortals to their deaths. But death often comes upon people suddenly, without explanation, and taking no excuses, as terrifyingly as if you heard a noise in the night, opened your front door, and there was a crocodile-headed man on the porch, announcing that he's come for you. The myths encompass the empirical. It is a way, through metaphor, to discuss things which otherwise are very hard to discuss or find meaning in.

Niekas: On that note, I believe we'll close. Thank you very much for the interview.

Continued on Page 17

The Haunted Library: The Best Short Horror Fiction

by Don D'Amassa



"A selection from "The Very Rich Hours of Edward Gein"

The subject of this installment is, more or less, the best short horror fiction of all time. It's a worthy subject, of course, particularly since there is a widely held and probably correct opinion that horror stories are most effective at shorter lengths, if for no other reason than that it is difficult to maintain an atmosphere of tension and terror for a long time. Definitions of horror fiction in themselves are almost as contradictory as those that those that seek to define SF, and indeed much current "horror" fiction consists of adventure stories, of vampire romances, or occult adventures.

A second problem arises. If one were to compile a list of the best horror novels of all time, and omit *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*, the list might be suspect. Bram Stoker undeniably wrote the most famous vampire novel of all time. But is it the best? If the novel had been written today, would it even be able to find a willing publisher? What exactly do we mean by "best" anyway? Of its time? Of all time?

So I thought about this for a while. How should I qualify what I am attempting to discuss here? The best? The most representative? The most innovative? Personal favorites? None of these labels really describe the selections I have made. So let's just call it a sampling of some of the more significant short stories in the horror field and go on from there.

H.P. Lovecraft's famous essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature" was an early attempt to do something similar, and even now, many years later, there are only a few of his choices one might argue with. Certainly Charles Dickens' ghost story "The Signalman," "The Damned Thing" by Ambrose Bierce with its invisible monster, Edward Lucas White's unsettling Voodoo story "Lukundoo," and Guy de Maupassant's vampiric "The Horla" are classics acknowledged even outside the horror field. One might quibble with his choice of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (I'd substitute "The Telltale Heart" or "The Strange Case of M. Valdemar"), but any of several Poe tales deserves to be included.

Lovecraft and his circle in turn contributed many stories that might well appear on an expanded list. Lovecraft himself produced many candidates. I'd certainly rate "Cool Air," "Pickman's Model," "The Colour Out of Space," and "The Rats in the Walls" as first rate, along with my personal favorite, "The Strange High House in the Mist." August Derleth, who helped promote Lovecraft's writings after the author's death, produced some unfortunate posthumous collaborations, but his own work included a number of good ghost stories, for example "Wild Grapes." Robert E. Howard's "The Pigeons From Hell" may well be his most effective piece of fiction. William Hope

Hodgson, particularly in supernatural sea stories like "The Ghost Pirates" and "The Voice in the Night," championed a more traditional format, as did a number of first rate writers who produced haunting (no pun intended) ghost stories such as "The Beckoning Fair One" by Oliver Onions and *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James.

Algernon Blackwood enjoyed great popularity in England, but was less successful in the US. Nevertheless his "The Wendigo" is an acknowledged classic. Other contemporary tales deserving note here include "The Sea Raiders" by H.G. Wells, Robert Hichens' "How Love Came to Professor Guildea," E.F. Benson's "Caterpillars," and David Keller's "The Worm." M.R. James produced so many high quality stories that it is difficult to point out just one, but "Casting the Runes" comes to mind as an almost archetypal tale of the man-cursed-and-how-he-got-out-of-it.

Many writers not specifically associated with horror fiction have delved in the field as well, with such notable results as Daphne DuMaurier's tale of ecology gone mad, "The Birds," Shirley Jackson's famous "The Lottery," "Sredni Vashtar" and "The Open Window," both by Saki, John Collier's absolute gem "Thus I Refute Beelzy," and a number of stories by Roald Dahl including "Royal Jelly."

If I had to choose the single writer who had produced the largest number of first-rate horror stories, it would without question be Robert Bloch. His famous tale, "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" is an obvious nominee, but at least a dozen others are as good or better, stories like "The Cheaters," "The Skull of the Marquis de Sade," or my favorite, "Final Performance." Ray Bradbury is more famous for his SF but early in his career he was responsible for "The Crowd," "The Skeleton," "The Jar," and "Small Assassin," and his "The October Game" has one of the best final lines I've ever read. Fritz Leiber also wrote horror fiction, most of it to be found in *Night's Black Agents*, including the chilling "Smoke Ghost" which eschewed the traditional image of a ghost wreathed with clanking chains in favor of a more contemporary, urban rendition. The late Robert Aickman had an unsettling tendency to cheat his readers, but he was one of the most effective creators of mood and tension in a ghost story, and his "Ringing the Changes" is one of several major accomplishments of his short career.

As we move closer to the present, it is necessary to mention Charles Beaumont's quietly chilling "The Howling Man," wherein Satan is imprisoned in a remote monastery, the omnipotent child of Jerome Bixby's "It's a Good Life," "Mr. Sardonicus" by Ray Russell, and the works of Richard Matheson, which include such famous horror tales as

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"Little Girl Lost," "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet," and "Lemmings." Having mentioned two writers whose work frequently showed up on *The Twilight Zone*, it's appropriate to mention as well Rod Serling's most effective tale of terror, "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street." Anthony Boucher's "They Bite," "Horar Howce" by Margaret St. Clair, "The Saliva Tree" by Brian Aldiss, and Julian May's "Dune Roller" were all atypical for their respective creators, unfortunately so considering their excellence.

As we reach the 1980s, perspective is lacking and it's problematic to try to decide which of the current crop of stories is likely to be reprinted and reread in years to come. Let's start with the big names. Stephen King is assured of a place in the field's history, mostly based on his novels, but with numerous effective short stories as well. "The Raft," "The Mist," "The Crate," and "The Langoliers" are all major works. Peter Straub rarely produces short stories, but the unexpanded version of "Mrs. God" is an impressive work. Clive Barker's *Books of Blood* are more effective as a body of work rather than for their individual tales, but "Hellbound Heart" and "In the Flesh" are among the most memorable. Robert McCammon's "Night Calls the Green Falcon" is one of those rare stories I read over and over again, although the horror content is minor and mostly off stage. His "Blue World" is nearly as good and more clearly in genre. Dean Koontz has yet to produce an outstanding horror tale at shorter length, although the overall quality of his short fiction is quite high.

The same can be said for a number of second tier horror writers. Ramsey Campbell, Dennis Etchison, Charles L. Grant, and Tom Ligotti have all written numerous good horror stories, but no individual tale stands out. Brian Lumley's shorts have generally been inferior to his novels, but "Fruiting Bodies" is a remarkable exception. T.E.D. Klein and Jack Cady, on the other hand, write infrequent short stories, but "An Incident at Poroth Farm" and "By Reason of Darkness" respectively demonstrate their ability to write stories that are immediately recognized as major works.

So are these the best horror stories of all time, or just the most memorable ones I could think of? I don't know, frankly, but I do know that the quality of the titles I have listed is as high as that of any other genre, and that many of these stories are fit to stand in the same company with the work of any writer, however exalted.

Twice-Ten Best Horror Novels

By Don D'Ammassa

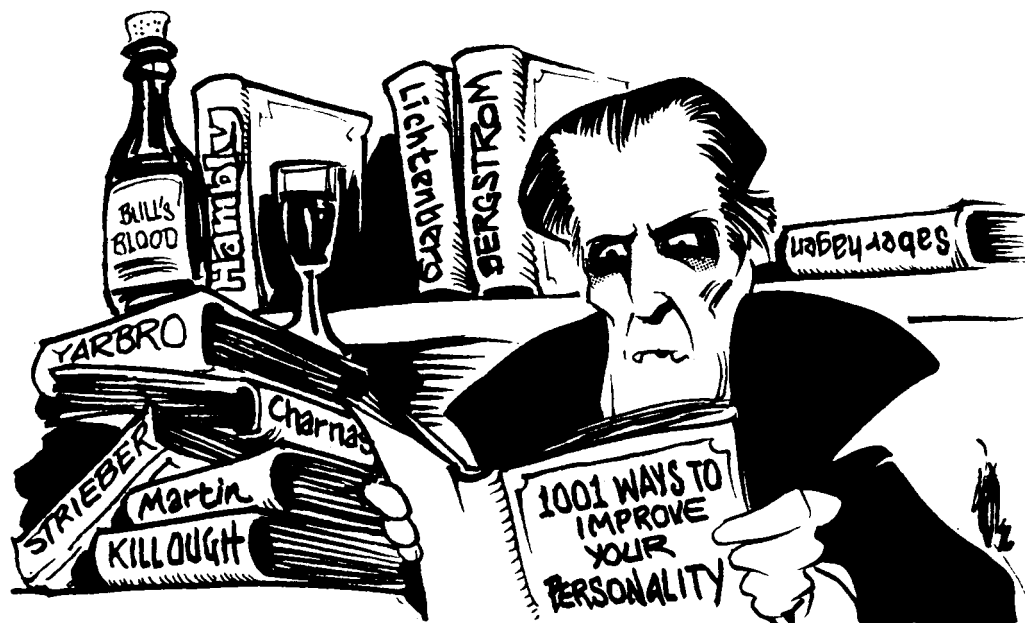
The following recommendations are from *The Haunted Library*: "Listomania," in NIEKAS, No. 38 (1989): 8-9. D'Ammassa's discussions of his choices, and regrets over titles omitted, appear in that column.

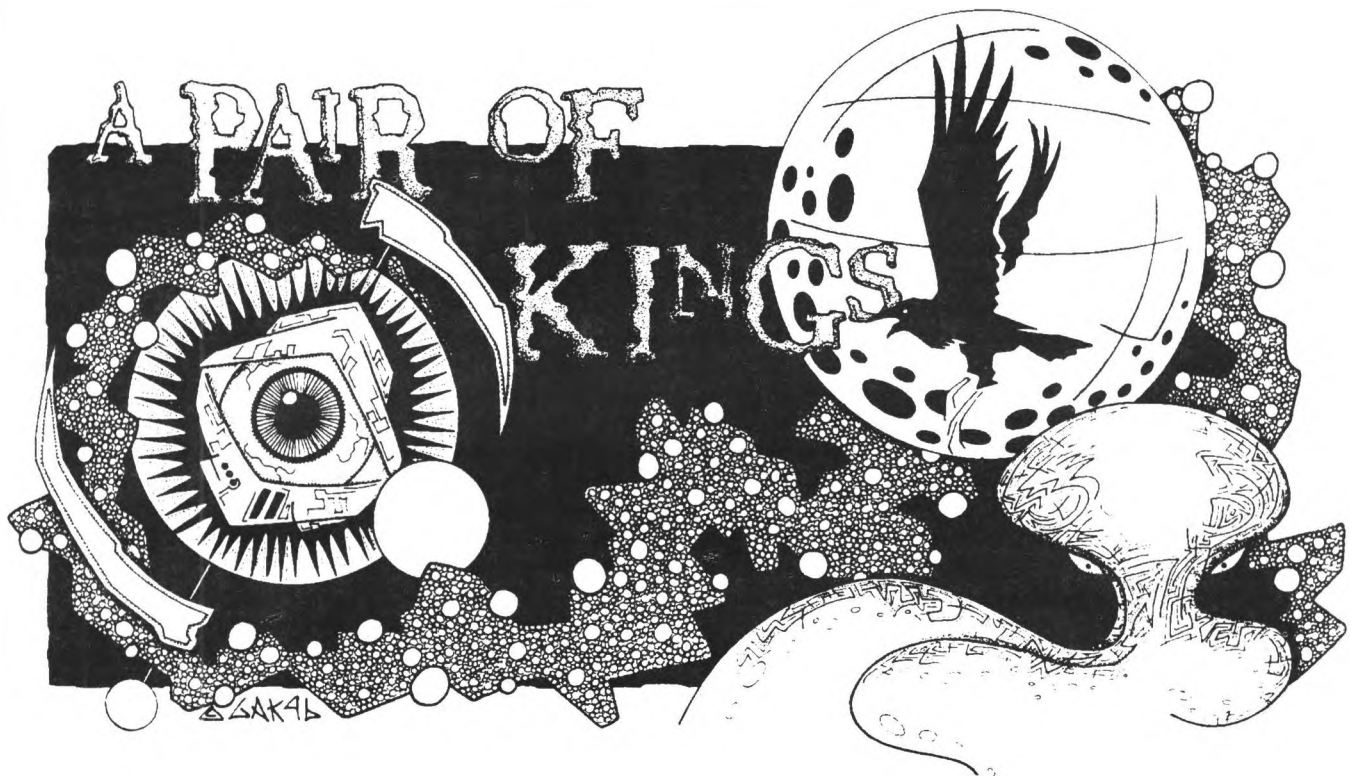
The Ten Classic Horror Novels Everyone Should Read

1. *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker.
2. *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley.
3. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, by Robert Louis Stevenson.
4. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
5. *The Werewolf of Paris*, by Guy Endore.
6. *The Phantom of the Opera*, by Gaston Leroux.
7. *I Am Legend*, by Richard Matheson.
8. *Conjure Wife*, by Fritz Leiber.
9. *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, by H.P. Lovecraft.
10. *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, by Ray Bradbury.

Ten Representative Novels of Modern Horror Fiction

1. *The Shining*, by Stephen King.
2. *Usher's Passing*, by Robert McCammon.
3. *The Nesting*, by Charles Grant.
4. *The Elementals*, by Michael McDowell.
5. *The Manitou*, by Graham Masterton.
6. *Magic*, by William Goldman.
7. *Hotel Transylvania*, by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, or *Interview with a Vampire*, by Anne Rice, or *The Vampire Tapestry*, by Suzy McKee Charnas.
8. *Ghost Story*, by Peter Straub.
9. *The Armageddon Rag*, by George R.R. Martin.
10. *The Damnation Game*, by Clive Barker.
11. *Wolfen*, by Whitley Strieber





H. P. Lovecraft and Stephen King: A Pair of New Englanders

by Ben Indick

Stephen King has never hidden his fondness for H. P. Lovecraft, although the Old Gentleman's portion of New England, i.e., Rhode Island, is somewhat south of his own Maine. King deliberately, slyly, slips in words for which The Old Gentleman had a weakness, such as "eldritch" (see below under *The Tommyknockers*), and sometimes uses his name in an adjectival manner to characterize a weird situation. The wizard Flagg in *Eyes of the Dragon* even refers, some literary centuries before its author might, to the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred's arcane book of runes, *The Necronomicon*. These are what one might call complimentary usage, but thematically several novels and short stories bear the Lovecraftian imprint, and are better understood for this recognition.

In his novel *The Tommyknockers* King pays the ultimate homage, rewriting subconsciously from old memories, and in his own manner, a classic short story by Lovecraft. It is "The Colour Out Of Space," published in 1927 in *Amazing Stories* and frequently reprinted. *The Tommyknockers* is, of course, enormously longer and infinitely more complex; it is certainly its own story, mixing science fiction and horror. It also satisfies what is perhaps most urgent to King: an obsession with the minutiae of small town life; the small town and its wide range of inhabitants is a microcosm of all human life and interactions. King establishes it and then intrudes into it a powerful outside force (cf. *Salem's Lot*, the vampire; *The Dead Zone*, the rapist, the fascistic politician; *Cujo*, the mad dog holding a family helpless, a symbol of fate itself; *It*, the fantastic symbolic figures leading finally to an alien force; etc.)

Nevertheless the outline of the short story by Lovecraft still fits the

far bolder frame of *The Tommyknockers*. At heart it is the same story, and it begins with an inadvertent invasion of Earth by a mysterious extraterrestrial force.

Science fictional invasion from space stories are scarcely new. As a rule the invaders are monsters of one sort or another, conveyed by space ships. As early as 1898, H. G. Wells in his novel *The War of the Worlds* portrayed a ruthless invasion by Martians, eschewing secrecy, and bolstered by vast technological forces. Austin Hall's short story "The Man Who Saved the Earth," published in *Argosy* magazine, 1919, portrayed no Martians, but earth-telescopes show that Red Planet scientists are using a ray to steal water from earth to save their parched world. Innumerable science fiction stories which followed presented various monsters attempting to conquer the earth. Arthur C. Clarke achieved a *coup de force* in 1973 in *Rendezvous with Rama* when he portrayed a colossally large alien spacecraft entering the solar system, pausing, then, unaware of or oblivious to the earthmen who clambered aboard to investigate its interior, refueling from the sun and departing, with never a nod to the puzzled humans.

Among the many before and after him, Lovecraft's innovation has remained one of the most unforgettable and powerful explications of extraterrestrial terror. It draws its strength from his adherence to his cosmological conception of an unknown, blindly malevolent universe, and unlike all others his extraterrestrial voyager is free of dependence on human technology, theology, philosophy, or anthropomorphism.

The plot is simple enough. A meteorite smashes into earth. On its surface is at least one "globule," strangely colored. An inquisitive scientist strikes it with a hammer, smashing it. It merely crumbles and

nothing unusual appears to take place. However, before long, fear, madness, and death devastate the family on whose farm the meteorite landed. Plants and insects grow astonishingly large, but the produce is inedible and the life spans are brief. Several members of the family vanish and are found later at the bottom of a rank well. There is a hint that whatever was in that spatial stone, within the globule, had a life of some sort, but it is unknowable. One day, however, a vast shower of sparks and color hurls itself from the farm and the well across the tree-tops into the sky. No explanation is found, no hypothesis offered. Did the family members who went mad sense something? Were those who died in the well forced there? There had been no lifeform observed in that stone, and yet there was a brooding quality in that all-pervading light before it surged into space.

This is no interstellar spacecraft story with monster or cuddly ET aboard. Yet, something within the stone, or the globule, does appear to have a form of life, even if it is not life as we know it. Possibly it draws its sustenance from living creatures around it, causing them to be altered and then destroyed. We cannot know more about it, but whatever it is, it is clearly inimical. We also do not know whether its arrival was intentional or an accident of fate. Inasmuch as its departure was so dramatic there would appear to be some sort of control, but this too is unguessable. In its few pages the story bears the fear and terror of the unknown and a sense of the emptiness of the cosmos. Lovecraft's prose is measured, richly textured, poetic in its cadence, while coldly gripping and intensely atmospheric. Consider the famous opening sentence: "West of Arkham the hills run wild and there are valleys with deep woods that no axe has ever cut."

Stephen King's novel is written in his intense and colloquial manner. Like Lovecraft he reveals very quickly the presence in a remote New England town (in his native Maine, the setting for much of his fiction) of an eons-old buried spacecraft. It had apparently crashed into the Earth, wholly burying itself, probably long before the appearance on the planet of mankind. There it remained, forgotten by time until the woman on whose property it was buried discovers it by chance, seeing a strip of metal protruding from a clump of ground in the woods. She decides to dig out the unexpected artifact and discovers it is no mere piece of metal. It is part of a vast surface. As she works at the task, there ensues a series of terrible events, causing her dog to die and her own physical self to begin changing, growing younger in some ways, but also developing weird alterations to her body. Individuals in the adjacent town also begin to suffer frightening changes. An eerie green light is seen about, a harbinger of terror. No alien form is seen, no messages sent. The gradually revealed portion of the ship lies in an apparently inert and dead anonymity. Like that innocent-looking globule in Lovecraft's "aerolite," the disastrous events have had no apparent causal agent, but have begun with the advent of the extraterrestrial object.

A close friend, an alcoholic poet, becomes aware that she is in trouble and goes to her. Together they continue digging around what they soon realize is a machine, no doubt a spacecraft and not of human origin.

It is difficult to maintain the tension of a short story in such a lengthy novel, especially in the panoramic view of the small town King likes to employ. The style he used first in *Salem's Lot* is a cross-section of the town and its varied citizens. (Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town* was his model. In *The Tommyknockers* he echoes and parodies the famous lines of Wilder's heroine Emily, writing: "It was well for the people of Haven that the big bang never did come, well for the people of Maine, New England, perhaps for the whole continent or the whole planet.") The successive scenes focusing on different individuals too often dissipate tension in lengthy, sometimes irrelevant vignettes during which the basic story line is diminished. Even as the climax approaches, after a frightening scene in the woman's shed, such digressions appear with characters who are ultimately dispatched with

grisly effect. As a dread presence the unseen but ubiquitously sensed "Tommyknockers," at least until the final revelations, are a nursery poem nightmare:

Late last night and the night before,
Tommyknockers,
Tommyknockers,
Knocking at the door....

They are bogeymen, familiar terrors, bad enough, but hardly like those vast unknown forces Lovecraft evoked in his other "Mythos" tales, terrifying to the ego itself. There were no Halloween apparitions.

King seems to be standing back a bit from his story, spinning out like an unaffected story-teller, leisurely, wryly. He slips into and out of each character, providing their thoughts, with a ripe and wholesale use of the vernacular. Too often it is redundant and one suspects the yarn-spinner is convincing himself. The section on "The Funeral" even uses the dividing tags Act I, Act II, and Act III, as though it were all a play with dialogue.

At the climax of this 50-page story, fairness to the reader makes impossible an emulation of Lovecraft's logic in "The Colour Out of Space," i.e., not specifying what the horror was. King must show the spaceship, and, at last, the remains of its crew (the "dried husks" Gardner discovers in a corner when he climbs into the ship.) However, it justifies much of what has transpired. In this climax, there are no pulp-magazine monsters to be found, only the townspeople themselves, in the act of "becoming." They are their own Tommyknockers. Beneath all the digression and even self-indulgence there has been a spine, so relentless the heroine cannot escape the gruesome fate that "becoming" entails. Only the dying Jim Gardner, who has been immune to whatever evil the ship, like Lovecraft's globule, had exuded, is able to enter the ship. Then, like the great plume of color described by Lovecraft, the ship rises and departs into space.

King offers clues to his identification with the Lovecraft story. In the latter, the author, employing a favorite and unique word, writes: "What eldritch dream world was this?". In his novel, King describes unusually tall sunflowers which in a nightmare had uprooted themselves and begun to walk, "eldritch lights shining from their centers." He also grows appendages which many readers find common property of Lovecraft's non-earthly beings when Bobbi Anderson begins to *change* physically: "at Bobbi's crotch a grotesque thatch of tentacles like sea-grass wavered from her vagina." It should be noted, finally, that the name of the family whose farm was the site of the landing of Lovecraft's meteorite was Gardner.

The influence of Lovecraft on *The Dark Half* is less pervasive than a basic story outline. It is a smaller but nevertheless vital element in the plot, the minor chord of two fantastic themes.

Classically, a fantasy tale should have no more than one basic fantastic element. A reader must accept this if the story is to be real. The author is then free to add more fantasy upon it, analogous to an inverted pyramid, balanced on its point. King appears to violate this rule in *The Dark Half*, and it is the Lovecraftian borrowing which is the violator, yet simultaneously is critical to the plot.

The novel's immediate and most obvious fantastic notion is one of King's most daring concepts, without which there could be no novel: that the character of George Stark can actually exist. The reader is well aware that no George Stark was ever born, that he can be at best only a pseudonym, a creation of Thad Beaumont, under which anonymity Beaumont can write books less cerebral than his own as well as far more visceral and immensely more financially successful. To persuade the reader that the fictional Stark could be corporeal, King first postulates embryonic twins of which one is aborted within the womb, leaving bits within the brain of the surviving twin, who will be Thad. This may be unprovable, but is not necessarily fantasy.

When King extends the prenatal experience into an extrasensorily created image of a man, Stark, *that* is fantastic. King works for credi-

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bility on the popular conception that the powers of the brain are still incompletely understood, and possibly even limitless. The reader who accepts his premise will grant the possibility of a mentally created three-dimensional George Stark. The experienced reader of King is hardly averse to this, having already experienced numerous characters with remarkable psychokinetic powers. This is the fantasy element to be accepted, after which it is also possible to give Stark a Toronado car, tools, weapons, clothing, etc. His escape from a graveyard site in which no man was ever buried, his travels, his menacing phone calls and his murders are part of the enlarging pyramid. The other fantastic theme, unrelated to any psychokinetic powers Beaumont may have, yet a crucial memory from his boyhood, refers to the flocks of sparrows which attacked the windows of the hospital in which he was being operated upon. Later, the words "the sparrows are flying" would be an enigmatic symbol of hope to Thad as much as a subconscious, repressed fear in Stark's memory. King refers to the sparrows as "psychopomps." This word is defined in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* as "a person who conducts spirits or souls to the other world, a Hermes or Charon." Associating it with birds is derived from Lovecraft, with some alteration. In several of Lovecraft's stories he mentions whippoorwills, as in "The Dunwich Horror." Here he speaks of local tradition that the birds are "psychopomps lying in wait for the dying." King in turn writes of the millions of sparrows waiting at Beaumont's home at the novel's climax that "the psychopomps...had come to serve as George Stark's escort...back to Ends-ville; back to the land of the dead." Lovecraft's whippoorwills merely accompany death while King's physically lift and bear away the body of the dying Stark, tearing it to pieces as they vanish above. Why the birds, psychopomps, harbingers of death, were so opposed to the evil Stark is part of the same force which created Stark: Thad's extraordinary extrasensory powers drawing the force of good while creating that of evil. This was not King's first utilization of Lovecraft's whippoorwill psychopomps; he had done so in his earlier "Jerusalem's Lot" (see below), a deliberate pastiche of Lovecraft written prior to 1980.

It should be noted that in his 1991 novel *Needful Things*, a follow-up to *The Dark Half* utilizing the same setting and the same sheriff, Alan Pangborn, King eschews Lovecraftianisms, and employs his familiar framework of Evil working destruction upon each of the many individuals of a small town by using their weaknesses.

Several short stories are, as stated above, deliberately in the Lovecraftian tradition with no attempt to hide his intention. When the British fantasiste Ramsey Campbell invited King to submit a story for a collection of tales in the Lovecraftian milieu, *New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*, (published in 1980 by Arkham House: Publishers, Sauk City, Wisc.) King avoided imitating

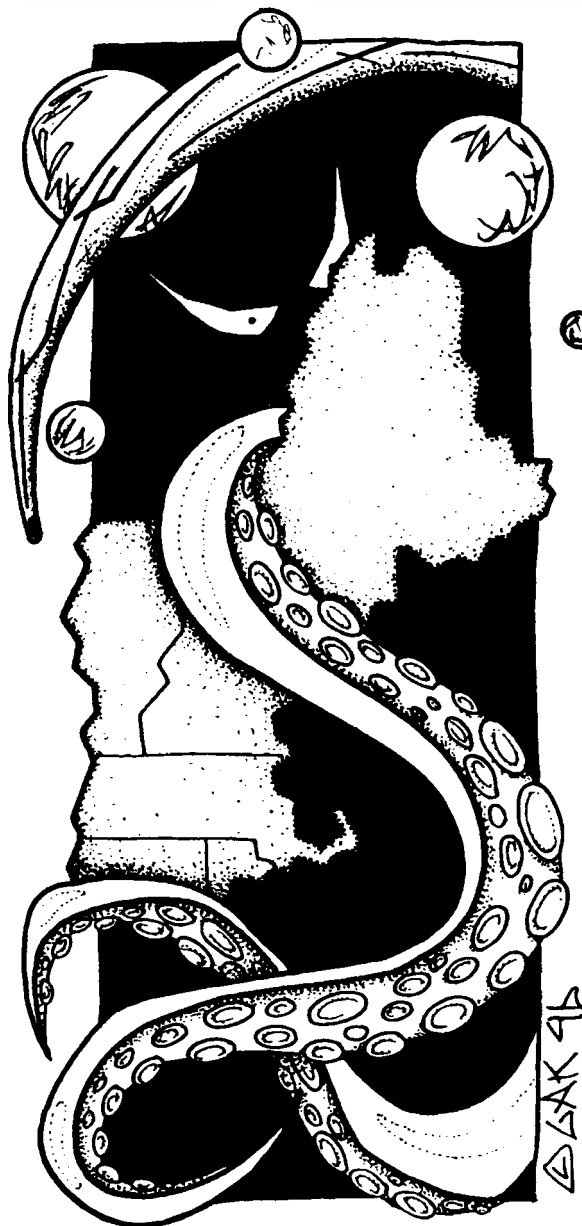
Lovecraft's writing style, choosing instead to produce pastiche British.

The story, "Crouch End," named for a somewhat run-down section of London, opens with two bobbies discussing a case which is uncomfortably out of the ordinary. The older man describes it as being like Lovecraft and science fiction and says, succinctly "this fellow Lovecraft was always writing about Dimensions...Dimensions close to ours. Full of these immortal monsters what would drive a man mad at one look." An American couple experiences such a dimensional shifting as they seem to enter an askew world of Lovecraftian monsters and terminology in an older, menacing version of the district of Crouch End. Having taken pains not to write like Lovecraft, King nevertheless concludes the tale with a deluge of Lovecraftian symbols, but the story remains within his own style and not that of the Old Master.

In more recent years, in the era of King's blockbuster colossi, the influence of Lovecraft has diminished. The incidence of sexually-oriented obscenity and violence has meanwhile increased. Perhaps the more discreet horrors of the Gentleman from Providence no longer suffice to satiate an audience ravenous for sensation. King's most recent pair of novels, *Desperation* and *The Regulators*, released under his two authorial names, and associated in clever and sometimes amusing ways, are underscored by an otherworldly monstrous creation,

"Tak." Eventually this evil god-like entity is revealed to be roughly Lovecraftian in its parameters, although of enormous dimensions and composed of tentacles, much muck, and vapor. Humans under its malevolent influence speak, Lovecraft-style, a gibberish language; it is not, however, Lovecraft's weirdly alien and unpronounceable runes. "Tak ah wan!", says such a once-human, "Tak ah lah! Mi him, en tow! En tow!" and, when, at the climax of *Desperation* the heroes finally finally encounter the huge, mucky, tentacled thing that is Tak, they dispatch it with bullets, mallets, and a rune which manages to be Takian and simultaneously contemporary-King: "COME ON! TAK AH LAH!, PIRAN MOH! COME ON, YOU ROTTEN COCKSUCKER! LETS SEE HOW BRAVE YOU ARE! TAK!" Characteristic of nearly all Cthulhu Mythos creatures by hands of other than Lovecraft's it is at best a weak and misunderstood pastiche of his work. A younger King and more restrained King realized this. Let us return to 1978.

Night Shift was King's fourth book and his first collection of short stories. The introduction is for all purposes a digest version of his *Danse Macabre* yet to come, and of the several writers he mentions, for the difficulty they faced gaining recognition for their fantastic literature, Lovecraft is one. The book's opening story, "Jerusalem's Lot" (not related to the novel, *'Salem's Lot*) is his tribute to the style of Lovecraft. It is set in Massachusetts of 1850 and is told in letters and notes. The letters are very formally written by the protagonist, Charles Boone, who has moved



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into an inherited old house with his servant; the latter, Calvin, has several working notes included as well. The house has a history of bad, even murderous family relationships from the previous century. Boone hears noises, perhaps, he thinks uneasily, rats in the walls, echoing Lovecraft's classic story, and creating resonance in the reader who knows that story and of its hero who went mad in an ancient British priory.

Boone is curious about what he has heard to be a nearby deserted village called Jerusalem's Lot. He finds it, nearby, quite intact, and vacant. It seems "shunned" by people. In the rotting church he finds the cross inverted, and on the pulpit a copy of the despised *De Vermis Mysteris* or *Mysteries of the Worm*, a book akin to *The Necronomicon* in its formulae for calling up the same dread pantheon. (The title is not one by Lovecraft, but an addition to the "Mythos" by Robert Bloch.) He reads old family diaries, sees ghostly images of them, reads too of flocks of whippoorwills which "flock through the Woods, filling all with a deathly, psycho-pompotic chant." He is warned away from the house and the Lot, but is drawn, and the result is death and madness. Returning to the rotting church he discovers what appear to be his ancestors, deformed and insane, in the act of bloody sacrifice. They are reading from the accursed book in a *rune* familiar to readers of HPL, before a "blind, interbred congregation." Realizing they are calling up a monstrous thing, "the Worm from beyond Space" he touches a match to the book, and even as a segment of a huge, pulsating "pustulent jelly" begins to appear, the worm itself, which had lived beneath the church, the book burns. His final letter tells of all this, of the guilt of his own ancestor, and of Calvin, "sprawled in the far corner, staring at me with glazed, horror-struck eyes."

The final letter of the story is written a century later, in 1971 by a new character, James Robert Boone, a descendant of Boone. James describes himself ironically as Charles Boone's "second cousin, three generations removed." He describes the letters of his ancestor as forgeries, the work of a person with "Paranoid delusions." He adds that an "unfortunate recurrence of brain fever" following the death of his wife had unhinged Charles, so that not only did he murder Calvin but he forged the notes found in Calvin's pocket.

Furthermore, he notes, Charles Boone had been wrong in two particulars. First: The church, while decayed and rotted, did not display signs of explosion or huge damage, such as Charles had described. Second: Charles Boone's belief that he was the last of his family line was wrong. His grandfather had "sired two bastards" of whom one died in infancy and the other, taking the name of Boone, moved elsewhere. He himself, James, is the "last offshoot, of the Boone line," from this branch. This fascination with genealogy was, of course, typical of Lovecraft, and is another tribute to him by his latter-day disciple.

King has, however, one more act of homage to his fellow New Englander. It is to Lovecraft's masterpiece of horror, "The Rats in the Walls," with its final image of the madman gibbering over the half-eaten body of his friend, and blaming "the rats, the rats in the walls." James muses that, as far as he can tell, Charles "was correct about only one thing: this place badly needs the services of an exterminator. There are some huge rats in the walls, by the sound."

Lovecraft would have smiled, perhaps, at the work of his admirer. He always encouraged other writers and had no objections to their utilizing his imagery. King is a publishing phenomenon, which in his lifetime HPL never was, but Time and Posterity make their own decisions, and the modest and laconic Down-Easter will have no regrets about sitting in the shadow of The Gentleman From Providence.



"NIEKAS Interviews Darrell Schweitzer" Continued from Page 11
A Checklist of Darrell Schweitzer's Books and Pamphlets

I. Books and Pamphlets of Fiction

- We Are All Legends*. Donning, 1981. Starmont, 1988.
The Shattered Goddess. Donning, 1982. Starmont, 1988, New English Library, 1996.
Tom O'Bedlam's Night Out and Other Strange Excursions. Ganley, 1985.
The Meaning of Life and Other Awesome Cosmic Revelations. Pamphlet of three stories. Chris Drumm Books, 1988
The White Isle. Serialized in *Fantastic Stories*, 1980. Revised, Owlswick Press/Weird Tales Library, 1990.
Transients and Other Disquieting Stories. Ganley, 1993.
Three Science Fiction Stories. Pamphlet. A limited edition contains four stories. Uncertain. Ganley?
The Mask of the Sorcerer. New English Library, 1995

II. Pamphlet of Light Verse

- Non Compost Mentis: An Affrontery of Limericks and Other Eldritch Metrical Terrors*. Zadok Allen: Publisher, 1995.

III. Non-fiction Books and Pamphlets

- Lovecraft in the Cinema*. Pamphlet. T. K. Graphics, 1975.
SF Voices. Interviews. T. K. Graphics, 1976.
The Dream Quest of H.P. Lovecraft. Borgo Press, 1978.
Conan's World and Robert E. Howard. Borgo Press, 1978.
SF Voices 1. Interviews. Borgo Press, 1979.
SF Voices 5. Interviews. Borgo Press, 1981.
On Writing Science Fiction: The Editors Strike Back. With George Scithers and John M. Ford. Owlswick Press, 1981.
Pathways to Elfland: The Writings of Lord Dunsany. Owlswick Press, 1989.
Lord Dunsany: A Bibliography. With S. T. Joshi. Scarecrow Press, 1993.
Speaking of Horror. Interviews. Borgo Press, 1994.
The New Window of the Imagination: Essays on Fantastic Literature. Borgo Press, forthcoming.
Classic SF Voices. Partially reprinting *SF Voices 5*. Borgo Press, forthcoming.
Modern SF Voices. Partially reprinting *SF Voices 1*. Borgo Press, forthcoming.

IV. Books Edited

- Essays Lovecraftian*. T. K. Graphics, 1976. Rev. as *Discovering H.P. Lovecraft*. Starmont House, 1987. Rev., Borgo Press, forthcoming.
The Ghosts of the Heavside Layer. By Lord Dunsany. Owlswick Press, 1980.
Exploring Fantasy Worlds. Borgo Press, 1985.
Discovering Modern Horror Fiction, Vol. I. Starmont House, 1985.
Discovering Stephen King. Starmont House, 1985.
Tales from the Spaceport Bar. With George H. Scithers. Avon Books, 1987.
Discovering Modern Horror, Vol. II. Starmont House, 1988.
Another Round at the Spaceport Bar. With George H. Scithers. Avon Books, 1989.
Discovering Classic Horror, Vol I. Starmont, 1992.
Discovering Classic Fantasy. Borgo Press, 1996
Discovering H. P. Lovecraft, Vol. II. Starmont, forthcoming.
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Analysis of the Fear Factor in Stephen King's "The Man Who Loved Flowers"

by Mary Ann Brandenberger

All authors are motivated by something or other to write. Some write to enlighten themselves, while some write to enlighten their audience. Several seem to write for enjoyment; some for the profit. Whatever the motivation, a good end-product is always the desired goal. Stephen King is no different. He too has a motivation to write. However, his motivation seems to be quite different than the above mentioned ones. His motivation seems to be fear—to instill fear into his audience, and perhaps even into his own heart.

Fear is a very common emotion, though one not often discussed or acknowledged in public. Because of its occurrence in all lives, it is often found in various phases of our society's daily life—our jokes, our movies, our books, our dreams. Despite it being a common emotion, a great amount of skill is required to successfully relay fear into our written words. King has no apparent lack in this skill. He can be called the master of fear. He now has numerous books to his credit that all have something of the fear factor in them. One such book, an early one, is a collection of short stories entitled *Night Shift*.

In this particular book the foreword by the author openly acknowledges fear. The first lines bluntly introduce the emotion: "Let's talk, you and I. Let's talk about fear" (xi). A few lines past this we find

Still . . . let's talk about fear.
We won't raise our voices
and we won't scream; we'll
talk rationally, you and I.
We'll talk about the way the
good fabric of things some
times has a way of unraveling
with shocking suddenness. (xi)

Yes, fear seems to be King's motivation to write and also appears to be the very threads of the plots that move throughout his stories in this particular collection, and most, perhaps all, of his other works as well.

As with any good short story, there are elements that lend themselves to aid in the overall presentation and acceptance of a literary work. The writer and reader both must consider setting, plot, characterization, tone, style, and perhaps irony. King, no doubt, considers these elements when writing his stories—consciously or unconsciously. It is the intent of this paper to analyze these literary elements and to discuss them in relation to the fear factor in "The Man Who Loved Flowers."

In this particular story, King places his characters in the bustling city of New York. He even goes as far as providing his story with a very specific time—early May of 1963. The time of the story is also given—a darkening evening, "calm and lovely" (299). Because King has given his audience both a recognizable city and season for the story to take place in, this setting has lulled the audience into expecting from the story nothing out of the ordinary, nothing bizarre, nothing to fear—as of yet.

"The Man Who Loved Flowers" not only has an ordinary setting, but it could be said to have an even more ordinary plot. The beginning of the story describes the city of New York as evening comes. People are going about their business in a peaceful and happy manner. One young man in particular is focused upon. He seems to be going some place special. This is made known by the textual elaboration of his particular gait and facial glow. Some people even comment that he is in love.

This man comes upon a flower stand, not a particularly special stand, just an ordinary New York flower stand that sells jonquils, cro-

cuses, carnations, and hothouse tea roses.

Familiarity surrounds the stand even more with description of two men with beer bellies pitching nickels. The young man passes the stand and then decides to come back. The flower vender is also quick to notice that the young man is "so much in love" (300) and quickly asks what he would like for his special lady. A debate follows. Should a cheaper bouquet of mixed flowers be purchased or should the more expensive tea roses be the chosen gift? The young man eventually decides on the tea roses and proceeds with his journey.

As the young man walks down the city blocks, he passes many events and many people, all wrapped up in their own activities, but almost all noticing the young man so much in love that passes by. Upon completion of his walk, the young man glances at his watch and becomes eager for his girl to appear. He then sees her and approaches her with flowers in hand.

This all seems to be the typical "Spring evening" story about a young man in love. The setting and the plot combine to present this calm and peaceful story, but this is not what King is all about. And the audience is quick to learn that this is not what the story is about either. The ending of the story is where King's motivation of instilling the fear factor comes forward.

Upon seeing the girl, the young man calls, "Norma"; he attempts to give her the roses. But she quickly tells him that he is mistaken, that she is not Norma. The young man does not hear



her protestations—or not consciously at first—and reaches into his pocket and pulls out a short-handled hammer. He proceeds to beat her with the hammer until she is dead—just as he has done five other times with five other women, it is revealed. He then puts the hammer back into his pocket and walks down the street again—the bounce still in his step and the look of love still on his face.

It is not until this last section of the story that fear really enters the story. The story abruptly shifts from touching narration of a young man in love going to see his girl to the description of this young man brutally killing his supposed girl. Granted, there were hints given by King that this particular young man was somewhat disturbed. This is first found in the story when the young man wants to buy flowers. The young man is described this way:

He hesitated, looked over his shoulder, and thought it over.

He reached into his pocket and touched the something in there again. For a moment his face seemed puzzled, lonely, almost haunted, and then, as his hand left the pocket, it regained its former expression of eager expectation. (300)

This mental disturbance is again seen in the latter part of the story:

His own smile trembled a little, and he felt a moment's disquiet. Her face over the sailor blouse suddenly seemed blurred. It was getting dark now...could he have been mistaken? Surely not. It was Norma. (303)

A different sort of hint—or foreshadowing—is the second of the four news items reported on the flower vender's "bulky transistor radio": "an unidentified woman had been pulled from the East River" (300). Even though hints were given, it can be supposed that these did not make much of an impact on the reader due to the crafty manner they were eased in and disguised by the tranquility of the entire scenario.

Because of the presumably ignored hints of madness and the simplicity and beauty of the story that has been described, the fear factor is only escalated. Again, the audience has been hypnotized with the familiar and the comfortable—a beautiful evening in May, a young man in love. But all is suddenly made evil because of an at-least-semi-planned and certainly cruel murder.

Characterization of this particular story also must be considered because it too lends itself to the development of the fear factor. King has a variety of small characters in this story. All are everyday common people. One may consider, for example, the flower vendor. He is described as being a man of sixty-eight, wearing a knitted sweater and cap. His face is wrinkled, his eyes are set deep in their sockets, and his cigarette is dangling from his fingers. Another example of the smaller familiar characters are the two women standing outside the washateria and the two men standing outside the window of a hardware store watching a baseball game on a display television set. All these characters are traditional and typical people.

Even the main character of the story is described as an average young man.

He was dressed in a light gray suit, the narrow tie pulled down a little, his top collar button undone, his hair was dark and cut short. His complexion was fair, his eyes a light blue. Not an extraordinary face. . . . (299)

Again it is the normality and simplicity of these characters that leave the audience off guard for what occurs later in the story. It is not expected that such a "nice" young man would or could perform such a horrible deed. He is presented as a conventional young man with no particularly interesting physical characteristics or any noticeable mental quirks. Familiarity is what delivers the fear. This man could be any one, a next-door neighbor, a friend.

The description of the victim herself also lends a particular element of fear to the story; for the female audience this could be the most chilling aspect. "Norma" is introduced as a typical young woman dressed in "dark blue slacks and a sailor blouse" (303). She is not given a true name nor is she given an actual face. The vagueness of

this female character is where the fear factor is deeply rooted. This woman could be any woman, any one at all.

The tone and style that King uses in this short story in particular lends to the activation of the fear factor. King writes in a manner that does not arouse his audience or make them apprehensive. His story is written very matter-of-factly, very simply, very aesthetically pleasingly. His sentences are written in an easily followed narrative manner. They are short, concise, and descriptive, such as could be found in a conversation with another person or perhaps a conversation with one's self. The particular vocabulary used by King also evokes a peaceful demeanor. He repeatedly uses the words *love*, *beautiful*, *spring*, *dreams*, *youth*, *nostalgia*, and *gentle*. These all incite a tranquil mood and story. An example of both the clear style and peaceful tone (with one use of *gentle*) can be found in these excerpts:

He turned back to the flower stand, smiling. He would bring her some flowers, that would please her. He loved to see her eyes light up with surprise and joy when he brought her a surprise—little things, because he was far from rich. (300) and

The young man thought of Norma, her happy surprised eyes and her gentle smile, and he ducked his head a little. (301)

Where does the fear factor come into focus here? Perhaps the most fearful aspect of King's tone and style is that what is *most* fearful is described identically to what is most beautiful. The peaceful tone and easily followed text of the young man in love does not shift when the cruel murder is described. In fact, the murder seems to fit easily into the scheme of the story because it too is described somewhat peacefully.

She backed away, her face a round white blur, her mouth an opening black O of terror, and she wasn't Norma, Norma was dead, she had been dead for ten years, and it didn't matter because she was going to scream and he swung the hammer to stop the scream, to kill the scream, and as he swung the hammer the spill of flowers fell out of his hand, the spill spilled and broke open, spilling red, white, and yellow tea roses beside the dented trash cans where cats made alien love in the dark, screaming in love, screaming, screaming. (304)

There are no grotesque descriptions of blood being spattered all over the alley, no words to tell of the horror the girl felt or words to relay the awful sounds of bone being crushed—just a description of tea roses being spilled onto the ground. When the murder has been completed, no remorse is shown by the young man either. In fact, anticipation again enters the scene. He is once more in love and once more in pursuit of finding his special girl.

Irony is also a technique used in this story. The clearest example is near the end, after the murder.

A middle-aged married couple sitting on the steps of their building watched [the young man] go by, head cocked, eyes far away, a half-smile on his lips. When he had passed by the woman said, "How come you never look that way any more?" (304)

The discrepancy between what the reader knows and the love the woman sees (or believes she sees) is the basis of the dramatic irony here. Of course, the story as a whole is based on delayed irony—the contrast between the young man's appearance and the impression he gives in the first part of the story and his murderous action. The woman's question at the end is simply the inverted form of this earlier irony. These discrepancies in perception reinforce the terror that "Norma" feels, the fear that the story generates.

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DOES THE 'W' STAND FOR 'WEIRD?'

by W. Paul Ganley

In 1967 there was very little activity in the field of weird fantasy. *Weird Tales* was long since dead. *The Magazine of Horror* was welcome, but published mostly reprints. An occasional Arkham House book appeared. But there were no fanzines, or semi-prozines, or small press magazines that I knew of [1]. So I decided to start one.

I felt that I was well qualified to edit and publish a small magazine devoted to weird fantasy fiction. I'd just spent five years as assistant editor of a real magazine (*The American Journal of Physics*)—not quite the same ball park, but it gave me some confidence and experience. And I had done some small press publishing before, in the weird/SF genre.

Little did I know, then, what a monster I was creating!

In the twenties, my father wrote song poems under the name of A. Arthur Ganley, and had some excellent success in Western New York. I guess it was a lot like the Small Press. He didn't get national distribution and was not a financial success. But as a child I found lots of blank song-sheets lying around the house, and I tried my hand at writing music and poems myself. Unless there were unknown prenatal influences, that must be how it all really started.

When I was about ten years old, my parents gave me a printing press for Christmas—a child's toy, to be sure, but it had movable rubber type that you had to set by hand and it could actually print stuff. I immediately started my own small press publication (really small: about 3" x 7" in size!). It was called *The Snazzy Skyrocket*—and it lasted several months. My final issue was a real scoop: the end of war in Europe and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan. (Well, maybe the real newspapers did get to the story a little bit ahead of me.)

A couple of years later I discovered SF and fantasy magazines, and became involved in a correspondence club (serving as an editor there, too). Then, at age 15, I started my own fanzine, called *Fan-Fare*. It featured a little good fiction and a lot of bad fiction, including some of my own. I did sixteen issues over a four year period. In addition, together with two partners as "SSR Publications," I helped to produce several other items, including the mimeographed *Lovecraft Collectors Library* (edited by George Wetzel) and a booklet called *Shanadu*, in the Howard tradition, edited by Robert E. Briney. Money problems, and the need to concentrate on graduate school, ended this phase of my publishing career.

Still, the writers published by SSR include Marion Zimmer Bradley, Terry Carr, Eugene DeWeese, Harlan Ellison, and Brian McNaughton, whose names are no doubt familiar to the aficionado of SF and weird fantasy. Not too bad!

Weirdbook was not a financial success. Sending out 500 free copies of the first issue (to people who had written expressing an interest in receiving them) was much like dropping them into the Pacific Ocean tied to a ton of lead. Still, I kept publishing an issue a year, or so, and the subscription list started growing.

And that would have been that, I suppose, if the recession of 1974 had not seen me scrambling to find one job after another. Finally I accepted my present one, as a physics teacher in the local community college. But I had nowhere to do laboratory research, as I used to do,

so I found myself devoting that extra time to publishing, instead. Since then I have not only upgraded the size and quality of *Weirdbook* but have started publishing books as well. I now have twenty-four books of fiction and poetry in print (and one more that is O.P.), with another in the pipeline as I write. My contributors have included Ramsey Campbell, Adrian Cole, Dennis Etchison, Charles Grant, Stephen King, Joe R. Lansdale, Brian Lumley, Ardath Mayhar, Gerald W. Page, Peter Tremaine, Charles Saunders, and Darrell Schweitzer. And if I left you out of this sketchy list, I apologize; there have been many more well known contributors—although I did have to write almost half the first issue myself, concealed behind pennames.

Why did I choose to publish weird fantasy? Science Fiction would have been a possible alternative; however, that was flourishing quite well, while weird fantasy was languishing. I saw a window of opportunity, and was able to acquire some excellent fiction by Joseph Payne Brennan, H. Warner Munn (who was just starting to write again after a long hiatus), and other recognizable names for those early issues.

As time progressed, competition appeared. Magazines like *Haunt of Horror* and later on *Night Cry* appeared on newsstands; small press publications like *Whispers* and *Moonbroth* sprang up; and ultimately the "horror" segment of weird fantasy became extremely popular. Even *Weird Tales* has been reborn (several times!).

Occasionally I have thought of bringing these projects to a close. But the competition has actually had a positive effect on my publishing efforts. First, magazines like Stuart Schiff's *Whispers* stimulated me to set my sights higher, to do better; secondly, I found that the competition actually gave me access to more readers, who heard of my work through the other publications. As the weird/fantasy small press actively expanded, so too did the number of excellent writers available to it. When I mentioned to the publishers of *Weird Tales* that they had made *Weirdbook* more or less superfluous, they urged me to keep on publishing. So far I have. Now for reasons of health, I have decided to conclude publication of *Weirdbook* with issue #30—an issue that also features the return of *Whispers*; it's half *Weirdbook* #30 and half *Whispers*! Nevertheless I still expect to publish some issues of the *Weirdbook Encores* in small xeroxed print-runs—not to make any money as a retirement business, but rather as a way to keep me off the streets and away from bad companions who might lead me along the paths of wine, women, and song. Well, wine and women, anyway.

What do I like about publishing? It gives me a chance to be creative. And it gives me, basically an amateur, a chance to score over the professional editors out there who haven't always chosen what I thought were the best books. No doubt my tastes are quite narrow, and some of my books would not and could not become national best-sellers. For instance, how could a book like *Pulptime* ever sell a million copies? I've sold over 2000 copies of this book and only one person (a reviewer) hated it. Most say they loved it. But why would a large publisher consider producing a book for such a small audience? Someone should be around to publish a good book in any genre, even if it won't ever be a popular success. I love being able to do that.

Why weird fantasy? A lot of horror seems to be exactly what I am reading in my daily newspaper, cast as fiction. Monster eats person (or monster is person). I'm not knocking it, but I'm tired of it. Add some fantasy to the horror and you have another dimension, almost a feeling of mind-expansion, much like that which goes together with good Science Fiction. Pure fantasy? I like it, but a lot of concepts like elves have been done to the point of boredom. Add some horror and you have a broader scope to work with.

From a personal point of view, I do not regret having committed myself so deeply to this sideline publishing business of mine (I just wish there were about 48 hours available in a day). True, it probably broke up my marriage 18 years ago. And there are days when I resent hop-scotching through the house to avoid all the piles of books (my basement is full, my garage and my porch are stuffed, and I was thinking of flooring the attic this summer to take the overflow). But then I look over at my fireplace, where I see two World Fantasy Awards serving as book-ends on the mantel. And I think to myself that at least I'm not the only person in the world who likes the books and magazines that I've been publishing. And that's good. After all, who needs money if you can have egoboo? [2]

1] The small press magazine *Anubis* existed but was essentially out of business when I learned of it.

2] A fannish term meaning publicity or notoriety, perhaps from *ego* + *boost*.

A brief bibliography of publications

(from SSR): *Fan-Fare*, *Blague*, *Lovecraft Collectors Library*, *HPL: Memoirs, Critiques & Bibliographies*, *Shanadu*, *Snowflakes in the Sun*. My partners, Allan C. Leverentz and Robert E. Briney, also published the two small-press magazines *Grotesque* and *Cataclysm*, respectively. (since 1968 as *Weirdbook Press*, *New Establishment Press*, and *W. Paul Ganley: Publisher*): *Weirdbook*, *Weirdbook Encores* (also titled *Eerie Country* and *The Weirdbook Sampler*), *Toadstool Wine*, *Fantasy Mongers*, *Amanita Brandy* (all magazines); and *Hollow Faces*, *Merciless Moons* (William Scott Home), *The Gothic Horror and Other Weird Tales* (George T. Wetzel), *Ebon Roses*, *Jewelled Skulls* (James William Hjort), *Pulptime* (P. H. Cannon), *60 Selected Poems* (Joseph Payne Brennan), *The New Devil's Dictionary: Creepy Cliches and Sinister Synonyms* (J.N. Williamson), *Tom O'Bedlam's Night Out and Other Strange Excursions* (Darrell Schweitzer), *John Collier and Fredric Brown Went Quarrelling Through My Head* (Jessica Amanda Salmonson), *Slab's Tavern and Other Uncanny Places* (John Gregory Betancourt), *Transients and Other Disquieting Stories* (Darrell Schweitzer), and *Stardark Songs* (Nancy Springer) plus these books by Brian Lumley: *House of Cthulhu and Other Tales of the Primal Land* (out of print), *Hero of Dreams*, *Ship of Dreams*, *Mad Moon of Dreams*, *Iced on Aran*, *The Compleat Crow*, *The Burrowers Beneath*, *Transition of Titus Crow*, *Elysia: the Coming of Cthulhu*, *The Compleat Khash II: Never a Backward Glance*, *The Clock of Dreams*, *The Complete Khash II: Sorcery in Shad*, *Spawn of the Winds*, and *In the Moon of Borea*.

THERE'S A MISS RICE
AT THE DOOR... ARE
YOU UP FOR AN
INTERVIEW?



Death by Landscape

by Nancy-Lou Patterson

Of those stories in *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories* (1986) and *The Oxford Book of Canadian Ghost Stories* (1990), the majority create their necessary atmosphere through description sometimes of weather, sometimes of seasons or times of day, but most often of landscapes. In the British ghost stories, these landscapes centre upon an isolated house. In the Canadian ghost stories, the landscapes are inclined to stand alone.

M.R. James says that the "two ingredients most valuable in the concocting of a ghost story are the atmosphere and the nicely managed crescendo" (339). In a related essay he adds that "Setting or environment ... is to me a principal point" (350). The lonely house on the heath, by the sea, in the countryside, near the woods; autumn and winter; the onset of rain, the coming of a snowstorm: these provide the requisite settings, embodiments of states of isolation, transition, separation, distance, alienation, and liminality. In the ghost story, the setting is the story, encapsulated.

Roald Dahl declares that "The best ghost stories don't have ghosts in them. At least you don't see the ghost. Instead you see only the results of his actions" (19). In other words, the less ghost, the better, because the story is not about the fear of ghosts but about existential fear, the loss of self, the loss of identity, disappearance, erasure. As Dorothy L. Sayers puts it, "The story has a trick in it somewhere: you follow it quite firmly and steadily until, somewhere in the green depths of a spiritual mirror, the path gives itself 'a little shake'" (15). Landscape provides the paths into these green depths.

Why do we read stories like this for pleasure? One answer may be found in Marghanita Laski's *Ecstasy, a Study of Some Secular and Religious Experiences*, which includes a chapter on the "Ecstasy of Desolation." She reports that what her informants

learned in the experience of desolation—which, be it remembered, they proffered when given a model of ecstasy—was the discovery of lonely individuality in a world that could be ugly and terrifying, the discovery of their own insignificance, of the insecurity of their props and the eventual certainty of death. (166)

She lists, as "desolation triggers," "appalling" weather (208), "a lowering and sad evening" (209), loneliness, "blinding rain, swirling mist... choppy black water" (209-210), and "cold and darkness" (210).

The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories demonstrates the continuity of lonely landscape settings in the ghost story from its inception in the Romantic era to its late twentieth century survivals. The method is simple and nearly ubiquitous. A perfect example is M. R. James's masterpiece, "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad" (1904). This story, like many of its author's works, begins slowly. It is three and a half pages before we read, to our spine-tingling delight, that "'I might walk home tonight along the beach,' he reflected—'Yes, and take a look—there will be light enough for that—at the ruins of which Disney was talking.'" (Cox and Gilbert [hereafter C & G] 208). The speaker finds these ruins, of course, along with a "metal tube about four inches long, and evidently of some considerable age." At this point, the author, having dallied with his usual antiquarian details, sets out the situation clearly:

Bleak and solemn was the view on which he took a last look before starting homeward. A faint yellow light in the west

showed the links, the squat Martello tower, the lights of Aldsey village, the pale ribbon of sands intersected at intervals by black wooden groynes, the dim and murmuring sea. (C & G 209)

Everything is at a point of transition: the hour of evening, the ancient pile, the distant village, the edge of the sea. In this setting the narrator notes "the shape of a rather indistinct personage, who seemed to be making great efforts to catch up with him, but made little, if any, progress" (C & G 209). I would not for the world spoil, for a virgin reader, the moment when this figure and Professor Parkins meet, but the interrelationship between landscape and approaching threat are obvious.

Taking Laski's characteristic desolation-triggers in the ascending order of their occurrence, we can begin with "storm," found in one English story and one Canadian story. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in "The Roll-Call of the Reef" (1895), writes:

He went to the door, opening it, and stood studying the gale that beat upon his cottage-front, straight from the Manacle Reef. The rain drove him into the kitchen, aslant like threads of gold silk in the wreckwood fire. (C & G 137)

"Manacle Reef" and "wreckwood" hint at the story to come, but the observer is protected, at least momentarily, by "his cottage-front." In the Canadian example, the observer is out-of-doors: W.H. Blake (1861-1924) writes in "A Tale of the Grand Jardin," that "From the towering cumulus that overhung us immense drops plumped into the water like pebbles, and the steady roar of the advancing squall warned us to hasten" (Manguel 39).

"Winter" and "snow" may be added to the list of "appalling" weather triggers: in the English stories, Amelia B. Edwards writes in "The Phantom Coach" (1964) that "It was not a pleasant place in which to lose one's way, with the first feathery flakes of a coming snowstorm just fluttering down upon the heather" (C & G 13), and Richard Middleton relates in "On the Brighton Road" (1912) how "Across the level fields there came a cold, silent wind which blew a fine dust of snow from the trees, but hardly stirred the crested hedges" (C & G 266). These passages make snow explicit, but the very mention of winter brings a sense of advancing chill. Hugh Walpole writes in "The Little Ghost" (1931) that "The December afternoon fell quickly, and during the last part of my journey I was traveling in a ridiculous little train, through dusk" (C & G 391). This theme of winter travel also appears in Walter de la Mare's "Bad Company" (1955): "One winter's evening some little time ago, bound on a visit to a friend in London, I found myself on the platform of one of its many subterranean railway stations" (C & G 465).

This combination of motifs recurs in Canadian ghost stories but without the sense of desolation: John Charles Dent (1841-1888) writes matter-of-factly in "The Gerrard Street Mystery" that "a heavy snowstorm delayed us for several hours, and we reached Hamilton too late for the mid-day express to Toronto" (Manguel 19). The same thing could happen today with no more than a hint of annoyance. In a similar mood of simple realism, Honoré Beaugrand (1848-1906), in "The Miser's Ghost," tells us that "the sky began gradually to cloud over, and there was every sign that a heavy snowstorm was to be expected." Soon, he continues, "I could see neither land nor sky" (Manguel 35), and finally, "I made my way through banks of snow toward this house" (Manguel 36).

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On the other hand, autumn is a recurrent seasonal trigger in Canadian ghost stories. W.H. Blake refers to "the autumn foliage in crimson, orange, and brown" without arousing more than a touch of mood, but Mazo de la Roche (1879-1961) writes evocatively, "It was Autumn, and from a tree outside golden-tinted leaves were whirling on every gust. One of them blew in at the window and fluttered across the floor to his feet ... A dead leaf, but beautiful in its death" (Manguel 76). This passage, with its repeated reference to death, precisely encapsulates the plot.

Again, Virgil Burnett in "Fallowfields" (1985) presents the premonitory vision:

On either side of him grainfields rolled away toward the horizon. Up ahead there was only a patch of gray sky framed by the arching maple branches. At this season the fields were stripped of their fruit. The stubble in them was untidy, tatty-looking....

Even so, he had to admit that there was something awesome about this landscape. (Manguel 142)

Autumn appears in its evocative form in one English story: Thomas Burke writes in "The Hollow Man" (1955): "He came up one of the narrow streets which lead from the docks.... In the Autumn mist that filled the lighted streets as well as the dark he seemed a wraith" (C & G 410). Although the only autumnal feature is a mist, it is enough to reveal the presence of a wraith.

The English stories often use times of day—evening or night, sunset or moonlight—to create a similar mood of uneasy transition. H.G. Wells in "The Red Room" (1896) uses moonlight to create a sense of heightened contrast: "The effect was scarcely what I expected, for the moonlight coming in by the great window on the grand staircase picked out everything in vivid black shadow or silvery illumination" (C & G 176), and W. W. Jacobs in "The Monkey's Paw" (1902) uses night for the same purpose: "Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnum villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly" (C & G 182). In both these passages, the contrast is ironic, for black shadow and cold night will come to dominate as the stories proceed.

A sense of isolation is created by A. E. Coppard in "Ahoy, Sailor Boy!" (1933) as "The moon rose drowsily over the bay, whose silent waters only moved when near the shore" (C & G 401). Again, Mary E. Wilkins writes in "The Lost Ghost" (1903) that "I remember my room faced west, and the sun was getting low, and the sky was a pale yellow and purple, just as you see it sometimes in the winter when there is going to be a cold snap" (C & G 194). L. P. Hartley's "A Visitor From Down Under" (1926) begins, "After a promising start, the March day had ended in a wet evening" (C & G 307). In both these passages, in addition to isolation, there is a transition from one state to another.

Perhaps the greatest of all North American ghost stories uses evening to powerful effect, but the mood is utterly different: W. P. Kinsella, in "Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa" (1980), published in Canada, writes:

Two years ago at dusk on a Spring evening, when the sky was a robin's-egg blue and the wind as soft as a day-old chick, as I was sitting on the verandah of my farm home in eastern Iowa, a voice very clearly said to me, "If you build it, he will come." (Manguel 188)

The hour is dusk, but the season is spring: the whole mood of this marvelous story is contained in this passage, which presages a numinous without menace.

Gaston Bachelard's meditations in *The Poetics of Space* offer a useful perspective on the use of weather and season in ghost stories, and will provide an introduction to the frequently used British motif of the house. In his chapter "House and Universe," he quotes Baudelaire's comment, "Doesn't winter add to the poetry of the house?" (38). As we have seen, it is a very particular and evocative kind of poetry that is added to a house in a ghost story. Bachelard

explains that "Winter is by far the oldest of the seasons. Not only does it confer age upon our memories....but, on snowy days, the house too is old" (41). Age and memory are the fundamental setting for ghost stories; M. R. James prescribed their need for a "slight haze of distance" in his Introduction to *Ghosts and Marvels* (1924) (339). As Bachelard explains, "Something unreal steps into the reality of the recollections that are on the borderline between our own personal history and an indefinite pre-history," so that we are "between awareness of being and loss of being. And the entire reality of memory becomes spectral" (58). The word "spectral" is exactly right; the state of mind evoked by and required for a successful ghost story is created with special power in the depiction of transition and distance, whether heightened to create contrast, or muted to create distance.

In Bachelard's most powerful contribution to my argument, he states that the house "is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (4). This idea also appears in Oliver Marc's study of the *Psychology of the House* (1977): "as he built his house man, like the child, was reborn in his own image.... Form, then, is a reflection of our inner nature. By marking out his house around himself, man brought heaven down to earth" (51). Bachelard adds a notion of hell as well: "the fears that inhabit the home," he says, are found in "the dual image of attic and cellar" (18). The role of the house in ghost stories and other products of Romantic literature accords with Dorothy L. Sayers' explanation that "with the loss of the Dantesque heaven and hell and the discoveries of the human subconscious and the Time-space Continuum, the region of the unknown has become much vaster and vaguer than it used to be" (15).

The house equals the self, and the self equals the universe. So far, so good. But why is the house in the English ghost story nearly always set in the country? Marc says that "the city ... is a place where traditions are ground down" (56). His remark is strikingly echoed and yet reversed—or amplified—in Robert Harbison's study of *Eccentric Spaces* (1977): "Cities have always violated the bounds of individual conceptions" (53). For Harbison, "the idea of England" is "an idea of self-enclosure, of Home, a cozy insular sense of stability," embodied in the "bachelor household of Sherlock Holmes" (25). In the process of solving his mysteries and setting the world in order again, Holmes visits numerous houses, and, Harbison points out, "Though these homes are the safest places in the world we always stumble in at a moment of extreme danger, as if the world of habit is under constant threat" (27).

As if to emphasize the immediacy of this danger, the houses in English ghost stories rise in lonely settings. Sir Walter Scott, whose story "The Tapestry Chamber" (1829) begins the historic sequence in *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories*, already includes this theme: "Upon a gentle eminence ... were seen amongst many venerable oaks and tangled thickets the turrets of a castle" (C & G 1). The theme of the lonely house is so ubiquitous that the most often anthologized Canadian ghost story is probably Stephen Leacock's parody of the genre, "Buggam Grange: a Good Old Ghost Story," which begins: "The evening was already falling as the vehicle in which I was contained entered upon the long and gloomy avenue that leads to Buggam Grange" (Manguel 62). This passage by Leacock (1869-1944) can be compared to J. S. LeFanu's story "Squire Toby's Will" (1868) in which we read:

A wide avenue, now overgrown like a churchyard with grass and weeds, and flanked by double rows of the same dark trees, old and gigantic, with here and there a gap in their solemn files, and sometimes a fallen tree lying across the avenue, leads up to the hall-door. (C & G 25)

These elements recur in M. E. Braddon's "The Shadow in the Corner" (1879). "Wildheath Grange stood a little way back from the road., a barren stretch of heath behind it, and a few tall fir-trees, with straggling wind-tossed heads, for its only shelter" (C & G 51). Again, May Sinclair writes in "The Victim" (1922), "Eastthwaite Lodge

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stands alone, grey, hidden between the shoulder of the moor and the ash-trees of its drive" (C & G 292); and Charles Williams, in "Et in Sempiternum Pereant" (1935), begins, "It was a very deserted part of the country through which he was walking," and within a few pages tells us, "At that moment he saw the house" (C & G 421, 423). A.S.L. Munby's story, "An Encounter in the Mist" (1949), says that "The house lay at the upper extremity of the cultivated zone, and a few hundred yards from the garden began the rocky heather-covered slopes of the hillside" (C & G 439). The reader is not surprised when the main character begins a walk which takes him up that hill.

Alternative to the house described largely through its setting, is the house described in its own detail. Bram Stoker describes "The Judge's House" (1891) like this: "It was an old rambling, heavy-built house in the Jacobean style, with heavy gables and windows, unusually small, and set higher than was customary in such houses, and was surrounded with a high brick wall massively built" (C & G 109). This might almost be a portrait of the judge himself, heavily-built, with small eyes, set up behind his massive dais. A similar sense of menace is created by E. Nesbit in "Man-Size in Marble" (1893): "It was a long, low building, with rooms sticking out in unexpected places. There was a bit of stone-work—ivy-covered and moss-grown, just two old rooms, all that was left of a big house that once stood there....Stripped of its roses and jasmine it would have been hideous" (C & G 126). Similarly W.F. Harvey, in "The Clock" (1928) tells us, "I found Ash Grove without difficulty. It was a medium-sized red brick house, standing by itself in a high walled garden that bounded a narrow lane," and before long his narrator adds that "I knew by now that the house was queer, horribly queer" (C & G 336, 337).

Sometimes the houses do not give away their secrets so readily. Algernon Blackwood says of "The Empty House" (1906): "There was manifestly nothing in the external appearance of this particular house to bear out the tales of the horror that was said to reign within" (C & G 222). A house which is the villain of its own eponymous story, "Fullcircle," (1928) is described by John Buchan as not only benign but attractive: "we were looking into the green cup of the hills, and it was all a garden.... At the heart of it stood the house, like a jewel well set. It was a miniature, but by the hand of a master" (C & G 322). Loveliest of all in this collection is Bells, the house described by Edith Wharton in "Mr. Jones" (1930): "In the dip of the land, the long low house, its ripe brick masonry overhanging a moat deeply sunk about its

roots, resembled an aged cedar spreading immemorial red branches. Lady Jane held her breath and gazed" (C & G 354).

Landscapes like these, surrounding houses like these, derive from the Romantic era. W. K. Wimsatt speaks of "The specific blend of deistic theology, Newtonian physics, and pantheistic naturalism which pervades the Wordsworthian landscape" (25). The use of season and time of day are characteristic of Romantic poetry: Wimsatt notes "that kind of fallacy (or strategy) by which death in poetry occurs so often in winter or at night" (30). In Keats's "Ode to Autumn," "The very seasonal spirit is conjured into reality out of such haunted spots ... the half-heaped furrow, the oozing cider press, the brook where the gleaners have crossed..." (Wimsatt 30). "Death," associated with "Winter" and "Night," and a "seasonal spirit," which is "conjured" from "haunted spots," appear here in the very mood created by landscapes in ghost stories.

Such elements persisted in Victorian sensibility, as W. F. Axton points out in his essay on Victorian landscape painting: "The Romantic creed, which accorded to the imagination the supreme creative or 'poetic' power, also insisted that that power be founded on fact, on accurate and detailed observation and description" (288). The mood of a ghost story is established by the details of the setting, as we have seen. Axton calls attention to "The tensions generated by the contrary pull of imaginative invention and accurate transcription at the core of the Romantic aesthetic" (287). It is precisely this tension which sets the spring for what M. R. James calls the "crescendo." The ghost story begins with a careful and detailed observation of setting, frequently given by a narrator or character innocent of what is in store. The reader, on the other hand, waits in ever more tantalized alertness for the snap of the trap.

While some of these effects are attempted and achieved in works in *The Oxford Book of Canadian Ghost Stories*, as we have already seen, the house makes only an occasional appearance. Mazo de la Roche writes laconically of "the tall imposing house with its air of detached reserve" (Manguel 71). But Virgil Burnett describes Fallowfields with three full paragraphs of detail, providing it with lower portions, "orderly," "harmonious, Palladian," and a roof, "dark and sinister," "oddly set," "not merely Victorian" but "a phantasmagoria, the architecture of bad dreams" (Manguel 143). In striking contrast to such effects, Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947) in "Vengeance is Mine" writes, Behind him were the buildings of the Hudson's Bay trading-post at Winisk—low, rude structures crouching on the shore; before him was the waste of waters, lightened here and there by patches of dirty yellow, where lay the shifting sandbanks, and clouded by vast marsh beds, the haunt of the wild fowl. (Manguel 53)

The mood intended here is one of intolerable loneliness: Scott says of his central character, "Where his heart was there was a feeling of ache and terror."

In such passages we hear a distinctive and authentic Canadian voice, articulated by Northrop Frye in his study *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (1971). He writes in his Introduction that "Canada, with its empty spaces, its largely unknown lakes and islands, ... has had this peculiar problem of an obliterated environment throughout most of its history" (iii). In his essay "Canadian and Colonial Painting," he declares that "a large tract of vacant land may well affect the people living near it." Indeed, "an unknown but quite possibly horrible Something stares at them in the dark" (199). Expanding upon this theme, he speaks of "the sphinx of the unknown land" (200) and "the riddle of the unvisualized land" (201). Needless to say, it is the literature and art of non-aboriginal settlers to which he refers; this attitude to the land does not appear in the art and writing of Canada's Native peoples.

But exactly such a landscape is majestically described in W.H. Blake's story, "A Tale of the Grand Jardin":

We had been fishing the upper reaches of one of the little rivers



that rise in the heart of the hills, quickly gather volume from many streams and lakes, loiter for a few miles in dead-waters where a canoe will float, and then plunge two thousand feet, through amazing gorges, to the St. Lawrence and the sea. (Manguel 39)

In fact, a vista of this scale, while creating a superb sense of atmosphere, overwhelms the story, so that its crescendo has already occurred when the author belatedly springs his trap, and the ghostly sequence seems like an afterthought.

The Romantic creation of mood through detail is superbly managed by Gilbert Parker (1862-1932) in "The Flood." He successfully creates a destructive flood and a shocking conclusion by a series of refined preparatory touches like this one: "Up from the fresh-cut lumber in the yards there came a smell like the juice of apples, and the sawdust, as you thrust your hand into it, was as cool and soft as the leaves of a clove-flower in the dew" (Manguel 49). Enchanted by these voluptuous olfactory and tactile details, we let down our defenses and open ourselves to the unfolding plot.

The story whose title I have borrowed for my essay makes the role of landscape in Canadian ghost stories explicit. Margaret Atwood's "Death by Landscape," published originally in the Canadian magazine *Saturday Night*, tells of a woman whose apartment is filled with a superb collection of landscape paintings. Canadian readers recognize these as works by the Group of Seven, Canadian post-impressionist painters working in the early twentieth century.

They are pictures of convoluted tree-trunks on an island of pink wave-smoothed stone, with more islands behind; of a lake with rough, bright, sparsely wooded cliffs, of a vivid river shore with a tangle of bush ...of a yellow autumn woods with the ice-blue gleam of a pond half-seen through the interlaced branches. (Manguel 221)

This passage, with its characteristic Canadian mention of Autumn, evokes Canadian landscape painting as vividly as the house-centered forests and heaths of the English ghost stories echo English landscape painting.

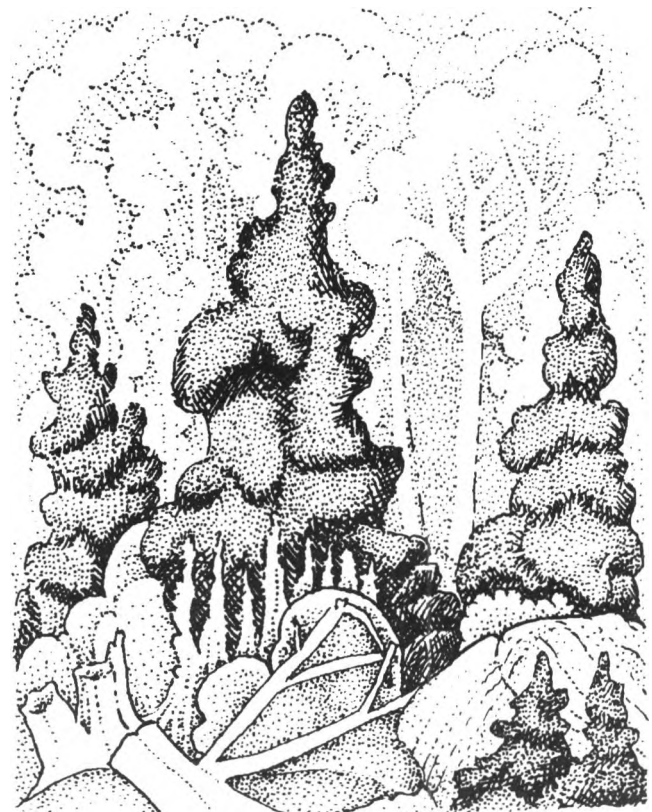
In Margaret Atwood's story, Lois and Lucy, two young girls in attendance at the symbolically named "Camp Manitou" ("Manitou" means "spirit), climb "up the path, which is dry earth and rocks, big rounded pinky-grey boulders or split-open ones with jagged edges. Spindly balsam and spruce trees grow to either side, the lake is blue fragments on the left" (Manguel 231). The two girls separate at the height in order to attend to the call of nature in privacy. There is a shout, "Short, like a dog's bark" (Manguel 232). Lois returns to the spot where she had left her companion but "Lucy was not up there." Indeed, "Lucy had simply vanished" (Manguel 233).

This is the supreme ghost story in which we do not see the ghost. These are Frye's "empty spaces." This is his "vacant land." This is the action of the "horrible Something." The lost girl of this story is indeed "unknown" and "unvisualized." The story concludes as the adult Lois "looks at the paintings" in her apartment and finds that "Every one of them is a picture of Lucy" (Manguel 236). "In the yellow autumn woods she's behind the tree that cannot be seen because of the other trees, over beside the blue sliver of pond" (Manguel 237). In this autumnal environment, the erasure and the absence are absolute.

Perhaps ghosts do not appear in the best ghost stories because these stories are telling us the most terrible news there is about the dead, that they never come back, that however they haunt us, and haunt us they do, they are forever, irretrievably, absent. The most we can do is stand, as long as we are alive to read a ghost story, at the borderline, whether between day and night, or autumn and winter, or land and sea, or house and vista, or human and landscape, of their country, where they are always behind the tree that cannot be seen.

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Light Horror: a survey of the works of John Bellairs

by Tom Whitmore

John Bellairs fills a very peculiar niche in the fantasy field. His first two books aren't novels. His only novel for adults languished for nine years before finding a paperback publisher, despite the fact that everyone who read it loved it. His latest series of books for children is set in a period nobody else seems to use, the early 1950s. All the novels combine a very gentle sense of humor and of horror that is quite unlike what anyone else might write.

He didn't start out writing horror novels. His first book (which was successful enough to have at least three hardback printings, though it never sold to paperback and is now out of print) was *St. Figeta and Other Parodies* (Macmillan 1966), a collection of extended gentle satires on Catholicism. Lives of imaginary saints, answers to such questions as "Does the olive in the martini break the Lenten fast?," odd hymns and litanies and an ad-man's view of the Pope's next visit make a good mix. It also represents the first of his collaborations with Marilyn Fitschen, a wonderful illustrator. Her version of Rubens' "Apotheosis of St. Figeta" is a good example of her silliness. The book's funny even to non-Catholics, though some parts do get a bit obscure; but it's not a novel.

The second Bellairs/Fitschen collaboration was one of his two master works for adults, *The Pedant and the Shuffly* (Macmillan 1968). This slim (80 pages), scarce fable for adults is one of the most enchanting books I know of, and was my introduction to Bellairs. It's about the battle between Snodrog the Pedant, who likes to convince

people they don't exist ("At this point the victim would give a little cry that usually sounded like air escaping from a leaky valve on an automobile tire. And then he would vanish with a pop, leaving behind nothing but the faint odor of foot powder"), and Sir Bertram Crabtree-Gore, a kindly old Sorcerer with friends. This is a book to read aloud, but be sure to share the pictures with your audience. I've never seen anything other than a first printing on this book: it's too short to be put in paperback and too quirky to interest most publishers. But those of us who have found copies love it.

His third book, first novel, and only novel for adults is *The Face in the Frost* (Macmillan 1969; Ace 1978, Collier 1991—the latter "edited," a source says, by J. Frenkel—perhaps that means introduced). What can I say about this book? A summary would only hurt the book. If you haven't read it, go do so. Now. I'll wait.

Done? Good. If you didn't enjoy the story of Prospero and Roger Bacon, I don't want to talk to you. One of the things I like the best about this book is the extremely close (even for Bellairs) juxtaposition of horror and humor; you never know whether Bellairs is setting you up to laugh or to shudder. Another is that the characters are very real: they quarrel, forget things, and laugh at each other.

After *The Face in the Frost*, four years passed before Bellairs' next book, *The House with a Clock in Its Walls* (Dial 1973; Dell Yearling 1974), was published. This was his first book without Fitschen, his first book illustrated by Edward Gorey, and the first book of his first series for children. After his parents die, Lewis Barnavelt moves to New Zebedee to live with his uncle Jonathan, who turns out to be a sorcerer. And the house has an Awful Secret, a clock which could spell the end of the world. The crazy (but loving) characters and strange situations make this book very memorable. Best of all there's Lewis, a pudgy, bookish, unlikely hero.

Lewis, Jonathan, and all return for *The Figure in the Shadows* (Dial 1975; Dell Yearling 1977), illustrated by Mercer Mayer. Lewis has a new friend, Rosa Rita Pottinger, a tomboy who knows all the names for the various types of cannons. An old coin makes Lewis braver, but also calls forth a mysterious figure who threatens him and his friends. Again, the characters raise this above the usual run of books; Lewis wants to be a regular boy, and doesn't really understand what's special about himself.

Rosa Rita gets to be the main character in *The Letter, The Witch, and the Ring* (Dial 1976; Dell Yearling 1977), illustrated by Mercer Mayer. Both this and *The Figure in the Shadows* are concerned with the problems of growing up different: *Figure* with a nerdy boy, *Letter* with a "boyish" girl. Both put forth the message that it's better to be who you are than to try to follow the pack. And both characters (Lewis and Rosa Rita) succeed because of who they are, not because of who they want to be.

Bellairs followed the trilogy with a stand-alone kids' novel, *The Treasure of Alpheus Winterborn* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1978; Bantam Skylark 1985), a totally non-supernatural tale of the search for a treasure left by a crazy old man. Bellairs' same love of non-traditional heroes continued: Anthony Monday has parents like those in D. H. Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner," and they don't like the town



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librarian who befriends him and gives him a job. And the villainous banker in this book is all too believable.

Five years later, Dial published *The Curse of the Blue Figurine* (1983; Bantam Skylark 1984), the first of a series about Johnny Dixon and his friend Professor Childermass. All with covers and plates by Edward Gorey, each with a similar theme and setting, they continue to enchant me. Set in the small-town Massachusetts in the early 1950's, they seem to capture the feeling of simpler time without waxing nostalgic. Bellairs uses brand names in the same way as Stephen King, to establish a feeling of mundanity within which the horror takes place; but the mundanity he establishes is one of another time. The following books, all Dial hardbacks and Bantam Skylark paperbacks, are *The Mummy*, *The Will and the Crypt* (1983, 1985), *The Spell of the Sorcerer's Skull* (1984, 1985), *The Revenge of the Wizard's Ghost* (1985, 1986), and *The Eyes of the Killer Robot* (1986, 1987). Though the details vary, the plot of each involves a supernatural menace (named in the title) threatening Johnny, Professor Childermass, or one of their friends, and the efforts of the others to defeat the menace. As always, the mixture of humor and horror makes these books more interesting than any synopsis can indicate. They don't need to be read in order; try one to see if you like them.

After the first two Dixon-Childermass books came out, Dial brought out another non-series children's book *The Dark Secret of Weatherend* (1984; Bantam Skylark 1986). As my copy has vanished, I haven't had

a chance to look at it again for this article, but I remember it as being another non-supernatural gothic.

The six late titles that I will mentioned only as a group are *The Lamp from the Warlock's Tomb* (Dial 1987; Bantam Skylark 1989), *The Trolley to Yesterday* (Dial 1989; Bantam Skylark 1990), *The Chessmen of Doom* (Dial 1990; Bantam Skylark 1991; Peter Smith 1992), *The Secret of the Underground Room* (Dial 1990; Puffin 1992), *The Mansion in the Mist* (Dial 1992; Puffin 1993), and *The Ghost in the Mirror* (completed by Brad Strickland, Dial 1993). These titles are, like the other later Bellairs, pleasant enough (as far as I got in reading them), but for my adult sensibilities they seem far too much like each other. They evoke the 1950's fairly well, but I saw no indication that any of them break significant new ground.

Horror with a light hand, and humor in odd places: these are Bellairs' trademarks. Add in a love of unorthodox characters, an extensive knowledge of small-town 1950s, and a quirky approach to magic, and you get an author well deserving of honor. And even more deserving of being read!

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L.P. Hartley (1895-1972) occupies a distinctive position in the realm of weird literature. A noted British novelist, author of the "Eustace and Hilda" trilogy (1944-47), *The Go-Between* (1953), and several other acclaimed novels, Hartley also wrote more than sixty short stories scattered through six collections. While by no means a majority of these stories are weird, a representative proportion of them deal with crime, violence, and psychological terror, occasionally crossing over into the genuinely supernatural. And yet, a few of Hartley's best tales are of a form now termed "non-supernatural horror" or "psychological suspense," a form that really came into its own with Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959) and gained wide notice in the 1980s with the novels of Thomas Harris. Hartley, then, can be seen as a precursor of this now prominent subgenre, although it does not appear likely that he has actually influenced today's leading writers of non-supernatural horror.

Our first task is to ascertain the scope of Hartley's weird work. This is not a simple undertaking, for the publication history of Hartley's short stories is very peculiar. Hartley's first published book was a collection, *Night Fears and Other Stories* (1924). So far as I have been

able to ascertain, some of the seventeen tales in this volume appeared in magazines prior to book publication, but a good many seem not to have been previously published. After publishing a non-weird novel-ette, *Simonetta Perkins*, in 1925, Hartley issued another collection, *The Killing Bottle*, in 1932; this volume contained only eight stories. After this point Hartley appeared to turn his attention largely to novels.

When August Derleth and Donald Wandrei founded Arkham House in 1939, Derleth was keen on signing up a number of leading British weird writers to lend prestige to his fledgling company; Hartley was, along with Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, and Cynthia Asquith, among the first of these. Hartley's *The Travelling Grave and Other Stories* appeared in 1948, but its contents consisted of two stories from *Night Fears*, seven from *The Killing Bottle*, and three previously uncollected stories. The selection was judicious, for, in spite of their titles, not nearly all the tales from Hartley's two previous collections were weird, and *The Travelling Grave* does collect nearly all the tales written up to this time that could even remotely be termed weird or horrific. This volume is still a landmark collection, and ought to be in every weird connoisseur's library.

In 1954 *The White Wand and Other Stories* appeared, containing five stories from *Night Fears*, one from *The Killing Bottle*, and eight uncollected stories. No more than three tales in this volume can be considered weird. *Two for the River* (1961) contains fourteen stories, of which five or six are perhaps weird. Hartley's last collection, *Mrs. Carteret Receives and Other Stories* (1971), contains ten stories, of which perhaps four are weird.

When Hartley compiled his *Collected Short Stories* in 1968, he left out a full ten stories from the *Night Fears* collection, although none of these is genuinely weird. The omission is somewhat curious; perhaps Hartley felt that these tales were somehow not worth preserving. The posthumously published *Complete Short Stories* (1973) adds the entire contents of *Mrs. Carteret Receives* but fails to rectify the omission of the ten *Night Fears* stories. What is more, at least three further stories published in magazines or anthologies but not gathered in any of Hartley's collections are also omitted from the *Complete Short Stories*. Only one of these is weird—"The Sound of Voices," published posthumously in *The Seventh Ghost Book* (1973), edited by Rosemary Timperley, and very likely Hartley's last short story.[1]

It can be seen, therefore, that weird themes claimed Hartley's interest throughout his short-story writing career. Nearly half of Hartley's sixty-three (or more) stories are at least on the borderland of the weird, and some—notably "A Visitor from Down Under" and "The Travelling Grave"—are among the most distinguished and frequently reprinted horror tales of their time. And yet, it may have been from external encouragement that Hartley actually entered the realm of supernatural horror. Although a number of tales in *Night Fears* skirt the weird, it was not until Cynthia Asquith asked him to write an original story for *The Ghost Book* (1926) that Hartley produced an authentically supernatural story. This was "A Visitor from Down Under," later collected in *The Killing Bottle* and *The Travelling Grave*. Other Hartley stories appeared in Asquith's second (1952) and third (1955) *Ghost Books* as well ("W. S." and "Someone in the Lift", respectively); he also wrote "The Cotillion" for Asquith's *When Churchyards Yawn* (1931).

As a noted mainstream novelist, Hartley wrote a number of important essays on the art of the novel, the short story, and the future of fiction. These were collected in *The Novelist's Responsibility* (1967), but, as with his *Complete Short Stories*, the volume does not gather all his critical work. Among the omissions is an interesting early essay (1927) on Saki, who could perhaps be considered a model for the sort of tightly knit, carefully crafted, and subtly nasty or even misanthropic tale that became Hartley's trademark. Another important omission, from a weird perspective, is the brief but very thoughtful introduction to Asquith's *Third Ghost Book* (1955), which contains one especially memorable remark on the weird tale: "If not the highest, it is certainly the most exacting form of literary art, and perhaps the only one in which there is almost no intermediate step between success and failure. Either it comes off or it is a flop." [2]

This is not of any especial help in elucidating Hartley's own methodology of the weird, but some other comments are more illuminating. Hartley makes the questionable, but all too familiar, assertion that "the taste for it [the ghost story] is slightly abnormal, a survival, perhaps, from adolescence, a disease of deficiency suffered by those whose lives and imaginations do not react satisfactorily to normal experience and require an extra thrill". Hartley then contrasts the methods of the detective story and the weird tale:

Detective-story writers give this thrill by exploring the resources of the possible; however improbable the happenings in a detective story, they can and must be explained in terms that satisfy the reason. But in a ghost story, where natural laws are dispensed with, the whole point is that the happenings cannot be so explained. A ghost story that is capable of a rational explanation is as much an anomaly as a detective story that isn't. But Hartley is careful to add the following caveat: "The ghost-story

writer's task is the more difficult, for not only must he create a world in which reason doesn't hold sway, but he must invent laws for it.

Chaos is not enough. Even ghosts must have rules and obey them." Some years later, in the introduction to *The Second Fontana Book of Great Ghost Stories* (1965), Robert Aickman presented an opposing view: "... the ghost story draws upon the unconscious mind, in the manner of poetry; ... it need offer neither logic nor moral; ... it is an art-form of altogether exceptional delicacy and subtlety ... "[3] Hartley would have agreed with everything here except the notion that the ghost story "need offer neither logic nor moral": this is exactly what he was warning against when he wrote that "Chaos is not enough." I think Hartley's is the sounder position, for what is required in the weird tale—and what we get from most of Hartley's, as distinguished from many of Aickman's admittedly fine stories—is a sort of pseudologic that satisfies the reader on a moral or aesthetic level, if not on an intellectual or scientific one. The supernatural "out" must be maintained—a ghost should not be explained away entirely as a phenomenon wholly within the bounds of the known—but there must be some rationale for the ghost's very existence; otherwise a tale will seem random and unmotivated, full of weird incidents that lack even an internal logic.

Hartley's final point in his introduction to *The Third Ghost Book* is that the modern ghost appears in many more forms than his chain-clanking predecessor. He does not appear to have been entirely sympathetic to this extension of the ghost's functions or manifestations, and remarks a little wryly that "Now they can go anywhere, they can manifest themselves in scores of ways. Like women and other depressed classes, they have emancipated themselves from their disabilities" What this really means is that we scarcely realize it is a ghost until the last moment; indeed, oftentimes the fact that a character is a ghost, and not an ordinary human being as we have up to that point assumed him to be, forms the climax of a Hartley tale. As he says in his introduction: "There must come a point, and it must strike the reader with a shock of surprise and horror, a tingling of the spine, at which we realize that he is not one of us."

These basic principles—the manifestation of the weird as governed by some internally consistent set of "laws", and extreme subtlety in the presentation of the supernatural—are all we need to understand the bulk of Hartley's weird tales. Both his supernatural and his non-supernatural tales are much concerned with the analysis of aberrant mental states, and in many instances we are not certain until the very end whether the supernatural actually comes into play; in some tales this uncertainty is not, and is not intended to be, resolved.

Some of Hartley's tales of crime can be dispensed with quickly, for there is nothing either weird or horrific about them, even though some are among his most accomplished stories. "The Island" involves a man who has been invited to an island resort owned by Mrs. Santander. Rather than meeting his hostess, the narrator meets an odd man whom he first takes to be a mechanic but who eventually turns out to be Mrs. Santander's husband. It becomes clear that the narrator is Mrs. Santander's lover; after an initial discussion at cross-purposes (one of Hartley's favorite devices, and one which he uses to spectacular effect in several of his horror tales), the two men have a tense dispute in which it is finally revealed that Mr. Santander has just killed his wife, who is lying strangled in the library. Hartley somewhat telegraphs the punch in this story, but it remains a gripping tale of crime and suspense.

Somewhat closer to the horrific is "The Killing Bottle," a somewhat long-winded crime story which contains a hideous description of the death of a butterfly in a killing bottle:

The butterfly must have been stronger than it looked; the power of the killing bottle had no doubt declined with frequent usage. Up and down, round and round flew the butterfly; its frantic flutterings could be heard through the thick walls of its glass prison. It clung to the cotton-wool, pressed itself into corners,

its straining, delicate tongue coiling and uncoiling in the effort to suck in a breath of living air. Now it was weakening. It fell from the cotton-wool and lay with its back on the plaster slab. It jolted itself up and down and, when strength for this movement failed, it clawed the air with its thin legs as though pedalling an imaginary bicycle. Suddenly, with a violent spasm, it gave birth to a thick cluster of yellowish eggs. Its body twitched once or twice and at last lay still. (C 251)

The effectiveness of this passage rests in Hartley's exquisitely polished diction and his drawing out the death-throes of the wretched creature to agonising proportions.

The graveyard humor that Hartley can create when his characters talk at cross-purposes in some particularly hideous context is no better displayed than in his celebrated tale, "The Travelling Grave." This is an entirely non-supernatural tale, but pungent satire raises it to the level of horror. Richard Munt has developed a peculiar penchant for collecting coffins, but his friend Valentine Ostrop, one of the guests invited to spend a weekend with him, is unaware of this predilection, and by misunderstanding the dialogue of the other guests assumes that Munt collects baby perambulators. One can imagine the consequences:

"Oh, we've been together for hours," said Valentine airily, "and had the most enchanting conversation. Guess what we talked about?"

"Not about me, I hope?"

"Well, about something very dear to you."

"About you, then?"

"Don't make fun of me. The objects I speak of are both solid and useful."

"That does rather rule you out," said Munt meditatively.

"What are they useful for?"

"Carrying bodies."

Munt glanced across at Bettisher, who was staring into the grate.

"And what are they made of?"

Valentine tittered, pulled a face, answered, "I've had little experience of them, but I should think chiefly of wood."

Munt got up and looked hard at Bettisher, who raised his eyebrows and said nothing.

"They perform at one time or another," said Valentine, enjoying himself enormously, "an essential service for us all." (C 102)

Some of this is a little staged: it is unlikely that anyone, talking of the function of perambulators, would say that they are used for "carrying bodies". Nevertheless, this dialogue continues for a full page, becoming more and more unnerving until we read this:

[Valentine:] "You keep them empty?"

Bettisher started up in his chair, but Munt held out a pallid hand and murmured in a stifled voice:

"Yes, that is, most of them are." (C 103)

I wish to detour here to study "The Cotillion," for although this is a supernatural tale, it contains more of this talking at cross-purposes whose loathsomeness we perceive only when we reach the end of the tale and fully understand the scenario. Marion Lane, who has just jilted Henry Chichester, attends a party given by her friend Jane Manning. Throughout the evening there is talk of gate-crashers, and one particularly odd fellow is seen skulking about in a sort of deathmask. Finally Marion meets the man: it is Henry. They have a tense conversation; then Henry pulls a revolver:

"What am I to do with this?" she asked.

"You are the best judge of that," he replied. "Only one cartridge has been used." . . .

"I was always an empty-headed fellow," he went on, tapping the waxed covering [of his mask] with his gloved forefinger, so that it gave out a wooden hollow sound—"there's nothing much behind this. No brains to speak of, I mean. Less than I used to have, in fact." (C 158)

In fact, Henry is a ghost; he had blown his brains out earlier that evening.

A great many of Hartley's weird tales are tales of supernatural revenge. This, I think, is what Hartley meant when he said that the weird writer must "invent laws" for his supernatural phenomena. It is not enough to have a ghostly manifestation that serves no purpose; but if the ghost is on a mission to avenge some wrong, either against himself or against others, then the scenario gains that internal or aesthetic logic that satisfies the reader. It is remarkable how many of Hartley's tales are of this one type; but he has rung enough changes on the theme in scene and atmosphere to produce a handful of weird masterpieces.

"A Visitor from Down Under" once again displays a macabre wit, this time in its punning title: the disheveled man who hunts down Mr Rumbold in his elegant London hotel is indeed from Australia, but is also from some other place "down under." The plot of this story is extremely simple—Rumbold has killed his colleague in Australia, presumably for gain, and the colleague comes back to avenge his murder—but the greatness of the tale rests in the extraordinarily subtle manipulation of details and symbolism. Mr Rumbold is seen lounging contentedly in his hotel, revelling in "his untroubled acceptance of the present and the future" (C 63). As he lapses into a doze, he seems to hear a radio programme in which a children's game is being broadcast. This programme is narrated at anomalous length, and a number of peculiarities in the account finally make us realize that it is in fact a sort of dream or hallucination on Rumbold's part; it is, also, very prophetic, as it tells ingenuously of some horrible revenge about to take place:

And who will you send to fetch him away,

Fetch him away, fetch him away;

Who will you send to fetch him away

On a cold and frosty morning? (C 66)

When the corpse arrives at the hotel, dripping icicles, he demands to see Rumbold; the latter tries to evade him, but finally throws caution to the winds and has the porter tell him: "Mr. Rumbold wishes you to Hell, sir, where you belong, and says, 'Come up if you dare!'" (C 73). The outcome is inevitable, and the tale ends on one final hideous detail as seen by the porter in Rumbold's room: "But what sickened him and kept him so long from going down to rouse the others was the sight of an icicle on the window-still, a thin claw of ice curved like a Chinaman's nail, with a bit of flesh sticking to it" (C 73).

One of Hartley's most powerful tales of supernatural revenge is "Podolo" (TG). Actually, doubt is retained to the end as to whether the supernatural comes into play: all we know is that something hideous has occurred. This exquisitely modulated story tells of an English couple, Angela and Walter, who wish to visit an uninhabited island, Podolo, off the coast of Venice. When they arrive, Angela comes upon a scrawny cat who has evidently been abandoned on the island. She immediately takes pity on the cat ("It's hungry. Probably it's starving" [C 75]), feeds it some scraps of chicken, and tries to capture it to take it back with them. But the cat proves surprisingly feisty, refusing all Angela's attempts to catch it. Frustrated, Angela makes a hideous resolve: "'If I can't catch it I'll kill it'" (C 77). Mario, the Italian boatman who took them to the island, remarks wistfully, "'She loves it so much . . . that she wants to kill it'" (C 78). No one can dissuade Angela from her twisted mission, but night falls as she scours the island alone hunting down the cat. Walter and Mario begin to worry about Angela, and then see some dark figure in the distance. Mario remarks: "'There is someone on the island . . . but it's not the signora'" (C 80). At this point Hartley reveals an astonishing ability to create terror by means of a simple dialogue:

"It was a man, then?" said I [Walter].

"It looked like a man's head."

"But you're not sure?"

"No, because it did not walk like a man."

"How then?"

Mario bent forward and touched the ground with his free hand. I couldn't imagine why a man should go on all fours, unless he didn't want to be seen. (C 80)

Mario and Walter get out of the boat and explore the island; they find the crushed head of the cat, then one of Angela's slippers. Mario, wandering off alone, finds Angela; more tense conversation ensues:

"When I found her," he whispered, "she wasn't quite dead."

I began to speak but he held up his hand.

"She asked me to kill her."

"But, Mario!"

"'Before it comes back,' she said. And then she said, 'It's starving, too, and it won't wait . . .'" (C 82)

The tale ends in tantalizing inconclusiveness: it is clear that the entity on all fours has avenged the death of the cat by killing Angela, but what is the nature of that entity itself? Is it human (but if so, how did it get to the island?—there is no other boat aside from Mario's)? Is it some hideous Darwinian ape-thing? Hartley wisely refrains from resolving the issue.

An extremely effective and compact revenge tale is "The Waits" (TR). A strange man and a young boy come to the home of the Marriner family at Christmas time. They appear to be choristers, but they refuse to be satisfied when Jeremy, Mr. Marriner's young son, offers them a guinea: "'He wouldn't take it,' he said. He said it wasn't enough. He said you would know why'" (C 521). Marriner's daughter Anne offers them a Christmas box, but they won't take that either. The encounter becomes more and more tense until Mr Marriner begins to run out the door with a pistol. Once again Hartley achieves tremendously powerful effects through dialogue:

"But it isn't any good, it isn't any good!" Anne kept repeating.

"What isn't any good, darling?"

"The pistol. You see, I've seen through him!"

"How do you mean, seen through him? Do you mean he's an imposter?"

"No, no, I've really seen through him." Anne's voice sank to a whisper. "I saw the street lamp shining through a hole in his head." (C 522-23)

It is only then that we understand that the man and boy had been blackmailing Marriner, that Marriner had killed them, and that now they are coming back to exact vengeance upon him. We also come to understand the true significance of several enigmatic statements in the opening paragraph:

Mr. Marriner knew that financially quite a heavy drain was being made on his resources [from the blackmailers]. And later in the evening when he got out his cheque-book to give his customary presents to his family, his relations and the staff, the drain would be heavier. But he could afford it, he could afford it better this Christmas than at any other Christmas in the history of his steadily increasing fortune [because his blackmailers are dead]. And he didn't have to think, he didn't have to choose; he only had to consult a list and add one or two names, and cross off one or two [the man and the boy]. There was quite a big item to cross off, quite a big item [the sum he was paying to the blackmailers], though it didn't figure on the list or on the counterfoil of his cheque-book. (C 518)

The seemingly irrelevant repetition of certain phrases—"he could afford it, he could afford it"; "quite a big item, quite a big item"—tips us off to something peculiar and significant, although we do not grasp the significance until the end.

"W.S." (WW), which appeared in Asquith's *Second Ghost Book* (1952), is a *Doppelgänger* story involving Walter Streeter, a successful author who begins receiving postcards from someone who signs himself only "W.S." This person initially appears to be an enthu-

siastic but somewhat critical fan of Streeter's: "'I have enjoyed all your books, but do you really get to grips with people?'" (C 382). That latter remark becomes a refrain repeated in nearly every postcard ("Perhaps we shall come to grips after all" [C 384]), and then Streeter notices that the postmarks on the cards show that the writer is drawing successively closer to him. All this is handled with Hartley's usual subtlety and sense of dramatic tension, but the solution of the mystery is rather obvious, especially when Streeter recalls that he had once created a character named William Stainsforth:

He had written about him with extreme vindictiveness, just as if he was a real person whom he was trying to show up. He had experienced a curious pleasure in attributing every kind of wickedness to this man. He never gave him the benefit of the doubt. He had never felt a twinge of pity for him, even when he paid the penalty for his misdeeds on the gallows. He had so worked himself up that the idea of this dark creature, creeping about brimful of malevolence, had almost frightened him. (C 385-86)

It is rather remarkable that Streeter could have forgotten about the existence of this character, and the fact that the character bore his own initials, up to this point. W.S. is, of course, Stainsforth, and it is also clear that Streeter, in depicting this evil figure, had transferred all his own evil traits to him, as Stainsforth remarks when he finally encounters Streeter in the flesh: "'You unloaded all your self-dislike on me'" (C 390). Stainsforth kills Streeter in a melodramatic conclusion hardly worthy of Hartley's artistry.

A much better tale of this type is "Fall In at the Double" (MC). Philip Osgood has inhabited a house in the West Country since the end of World War II. He hires a new butler, Alfred, but on his second day of work Alfred confesses that he didn't sleep a wink because he kept hearing a man gruffly shouting, "Fall in at the double!" Could the house be haunted? This seems very likely, especially when Alfred tells him the history of the house as he heard it from the locals: the place had been an Army barracks during the war, and the commander, a very harsh Lieutenant-Colonel named Alexander McCreeth, was eventually found drowned in the river near the house, probably at the hands of the soldiers whom he brutalized. Eerie phenomena continue, until at one point Osgood, wandering in his garden late at night, seems to see a group of soldiers converging upon the colonel:

They were beginning to close in on him, their hands were already round his legs, when he called, "You've done this before. Take him, he's my double!" And he pointed to Phillip, shivering behind him on the lawn. (C 666)

It is at this point that we realize that the title of the story is a nasty pun. The fact that Alfred saves Phillip at the end does not diminish the power and subtlety of this grim ghost story.

"The Two Vaynes" (WW) is interesting in being a sort of pseudo-*Doppelgänger* tale. Vayne is a sculptor of life-size statues, which he displays in his spacious garden; he has just finished creating a statue of himself in plaster. He invites a number of his friends for the weekend, and they decide to play hide and seek on the grounds (recall the game motif in "The Travelling Grave" and "The Visitor from Down Under"). The tale develops an eerie atmosphere as the guests scatter through the capacious grounds as night falls; then one of the guests sees an odd encounter between Vayne and the statue:

For a moment the two figures stood one behind the other, motionless as cats. Then a scream rang out; there was a whirl of limbs, like the Manxman's wheel revolving; a savage snarl, a headlong fall, a crash. Both fell, both Vaynes. When the thuds of their descent were over, silence reigned. (C 400)

Has the statue taken vengeance upon its creator? It has, but the significance is not what we imagine it to be: the statue was not some double of Vayne but a man, Postgate, whom Vayne had killed three years ago for ruining him in business. The skill of the story's narration makes us

overlook the implausibility of Postgate coming back to life just at this moment to exact his revenge.

A number of Hartley's best tales are so unclassifiable that they must be placed in the weird only by default. Here the supernatural may or may not come into play, and yet the stories develop such an atmosphere of the odd that they present an excellent case for the extension of the weird to encompass tales of psychological terror. "Night Fears" (NF, TG) is among the best of these. Here a night watchman encounters a strange derelict who repeatedly torments him about the disadvantages of this type of work: the pay is bad, it is difficult to sleep in the daytime ("Makes a man ill, mad sometimes. People have done themselves in sooner than stand the torture" [C 227]), you don't get to see much of your children, you don't know what your wife is doing ("You leave her pretty much to herself, don't you? Now with these women, you know, that's a risk" [C 228]). The pacing of the story is masterful, and it may be a textbook instance of the *conte cruel*, in which, as Lovecraft noted, "the wrenching of the emotions is accomplished through dramatic tantalizations, frustrations, and gruesome physical horrors" (4). While there is gruesome physical horror here—the derelict ultimately kills the night watchman and leaves him dead at his post—Hartley also manages to leave the subtlest hint that the derelict himself is some otherworldly creature.

Still more curious is the very brief tale "A Summons" (NF, WW), in which a young girl tells her brother as they go to sleep in separate bedrooms: "Now, if I dream I'm being murdered I shall knock on the wall, and I shall expect you to come" (C 315). The brother passes this off as merely a morbid jest, but sure enough there is a tapping on the wall—first four times, then three times, then twice ("It was much feebler that time" [C 317]). The brother does nothing as he frantically tries to rationalize that it is all a joke. This is the end of the story:

Minutes passed, and the knocking renewed. I turned over. The bed was comfortable enough, but I felt I should sleep sounder if my sister changed her room. This, after all, could easily be arranged. (C 317)

That is all. Is the sister actually being murdered? Is she simply dreaming of being murdered? We never know, and never will know.

Other Hartley stories are perhaps too nebulous for detailed analysis: "Home, Sweet Home" (MC), a strange, dreamlike tale that tells of a couple who return to their long-deserted home and find the ghosts of disturbed children who had been interred there; "The Shadow on the Wall" (MC), perhaps a conscious nod to the story of a similar title by Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman, in which a woman has a peculiar encounter in her bath with a man who may be a ghost; "Conrad and the Dragon" (KB, TG), a twisted fairy tale; "Feet Foremost" (KB, TG) and "Monkshood Manor" (WW), stories of supernatural curses; "Three, or Four, for Dinner" (TG), a somewhat obvious tale of a man who returns from the dead; and several others. All of these tales, some more effective than others, testify to Hartley's pervasive interest in the weird, an interest that must be regarded as central to his entire literary work.

The virtues of Hartley's weird writing, as of his writing as a whole, speak for themselves: a polished, fluid, exquisitely restrained style; an attention to fine nuances of character portrayal; a penetrating awareness of the psychological impact of the weird upon human consciousness; and an elegant nastiness that only the British seem capable of getting away with. Hartley's actual weird scenarios are on the whole very simple, but are narrated with such oblique subtlety, and with such attention to atmospheric tensivity, that many can stand as models of weird writing.

Hartley's place in weird fiction is a little harder to specify. The bulk of his "ghost stories" were written after those of M. R. James, whose final collection, *A Warning to the Curious*, appeared in 1925; along with Walter de la Mare and Oliver Onions, Hartley led the way in transforming the pure ghost story into the psychological ghost story, where the weird is manifested as much in the analysis of a disturbed

mentality as in the actual supernatural phenomenon. As such, Hartley led the way for such later writers as Shirley Jackson and Robert Aickman, although it would be difficult to establish whether either writer was directly influenced by Hartley's work. Hartley wisely eschewed the attempt to extend the supernatural to novel length—his one futuristic novel, *Facial Justice* (1960), is painfully clumsy and superficial—and his work forms one more testimonial to the superiority of the short story over the novel as a vehicle for the weird. A volume gathering all Hartley's weird tales would be very welcome, for modern practitioners could learn much from him on both the mechanics and the aesthetics of the weird. Whether they could ever match his deftness and understated power is another question.

Notes

All citations from Hartley's tales are derived from *The Complete Short Stories* (1973), and are abbreviated in the text as C. The collections in which Hartley's tales appear are noted by abbreviations as indicated in the bibliography.

1] As of this writing, I am in negotiation with Hartley's publishers, Hamish Hamilton Ltd, concerning the reprinting of these uncollected stories in a separate volume.

2] "Introduction" to *The Third Ghost Book*, ed. Cynthia Asquith (1955; rpt. New York: Beagle Books, 1970), pp. vii-ix. Further citations are from this edition.

3] Robert Aickman, "Introduction" to *The Second Fontana Book of Great Ghost Stories* (London: Fontana, 1965), p. 7.

4] H. P. Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1927), in *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, rev. ed. (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1986), p. 393.

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"Analysis of the Fear Factor..."

Continued from P. 16

Fear is no doubt a major part of this particular short story by King. However, it is a very different type of fear than what would be expected by most. There are no gory details of bloody murders, no Gothic descriptions of mentally deranged and hardened killers. There is only a calm familiarity that encompasses this short story. And perhaps this is where the real fear comes in. It is often easy for many to pass off the pulp horror stories of other writers as being too far-fetched, too bizarre. King uses none of these exotic means here. He is quite content in using a recognizable setting, a familiar plot, a seemingly average character, and a deceptively simple and effortless style to chill his audience.

No doubt we have all been in love. We know what it feels like to have a bounce in our step and a particular glow on our faces. Perhaps we even know a certain young man very much like the young man who liked flowers. After all,

"[h]is name was love, and he walked these dark streets because Norma was waiting for him. And he would find her. Someday soon." (304).

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A CLUTCH OF VAMPIRES



Believability in *Dracula*

by Marion Zimmer Bradley

Fantasy can often be given its strongest believability by an underpinning of reality.

The seventeenth chapter in John Dickson Carr's *The Three Coffins* has the characters sit around in a hotel dining-room and discuss the believability of various ploys for escaping from locked rooms. More specifically, Dr. Gideon Fell lectures on the ways to gimmick a locked room, but he begins with an answer to complaints about such puzzles being improbable or incredible. He says that the readers who make these complaints are either realists who dislike all illusions in life or they are romantics who are disappointed that the explanation of a locked room is never as marvelous as the original situation seems to be. Implied in his statement is a restoration of a degree of believability in the locked-room's solution, however much the realists complain. The illusion of reality is restored in the explanation of the "impossibility," and it also may be suggested in the analytic way Dr. Fell discusses the types of locked-room solutions in this chapter.

Bram Stoker, in *Dracula*, carries this illusion of reality about as far as John Dickson Carr himself did. It should be made clear here that I am speaking only of the original book, and cannot answer for any of the various Hollywood versions of *Dracula*, for while the versions of *Dracula* portrayed by Hollywood, Christopher Lee, Hammer Films, or Bela Lugosi (who seemed to make a career of playing *Dracula*) may have had many virtues, realism is not the first word which springs to mind. Even less am I discussing any of the various comic book versions. I speak only of the original book; *Dracula* as Stoker first conceived him.

I am convinced of this—the illusion of reality caused by spelling out the pros and cons, science-fiction like—is the reason why *Dracula* first achieved its fame (and continues famous when a hundred lesser

vampires have come and gone). All fiction writers know it doesn't do to make your hero too invincible. The original creators of SUPER-MAN—Jerry Siegel, Joe Schuster, or their early successors—found that out the hard way; Superman was too all-powerful; it was a foregone conclusion that he would defeat every adversary, so there was no suspense. Every battle he fought was won already. So they had to invent kryptonite to give his adversaries a fair shake and restore some suspense.

In Chapter Seventeen of *Dracula*, Dr. Van Helsing sits down with his team—the characters who have already met and been intimidated by Count *Dracula*—who include Jonathan Harker; Mina Harker; Lucy's ex-boyfriend, Lord Arthur Godalming; and the others who loved Lucy—the young Doctor, John Seward, and the Texan, Mr. Quincey Morris. (My copy of *Dracula* has gone into the chaos around here; but it speaks well for the clarity of Stoker's writing that some forty years after first reading it, it remains very clear in my mind as a textbook case of how to write a detective novel.)

For, in essence, that is what *Dracula* is—a play-fair detective-mystery of the old school. And this—this element of believability—is what makes *Dracula* linger in my mind when dozens of generic vampires are forgotten. I can believe in *Dracula*, and here's why.

First, Van Helsing lays out just what they're up against; the vampire cannot easily be killed because in essence he is dead already, and because nobody believes in him. Beyond this, he "make in the mirror no reflect" and has in his hand the strength of twenty men; he has a home in every place of evil; not only his own coffin, but everything unholy, as in the suicide's grave at Whitby. He can get around in the dark—no small advantage this in a world which is diurnal; and remember this was written before the electric light was invented. Though he cannot enter at first any place unless he is invited in, thereafter he can come as he pleases, and has at his command such things as wolves—a libel this, implying that wolves are evil—and moths. And so on and on, until the listeners are very discouraged and think it is really pretty hopeless. *Continued on Page 43.*

Bloodthirsty for Power; Vampirism in Hambly's *Those Who Hunt the Night*

by Sheryl A. Mylan

* Vampire legends have abounded in all societies since ancient times, perhaps because even the most primitive peoples recognize that blood is a life force and because people are fascinated by the idea of life after death. Devendra Varma charts the vampire's incarnations from Kali, the blood-drinking goddess, Yama, Tibetan lord of Death, and the Mongolian God of Time who rides on a sea of blood, down to Eastern Europe via the Huns and Magyars, then to Greece, and Arabia, Africa, and finally to western Europe in the 8th century (Varma, Introduction to *Varney the Vampyre* xvii-xix). These folkloric conceptions of the vampire were hardly a pretty sight. Emaciated, hollow-eyed, scabby, and unkempt, these night stalkers are grisly progenitors of the 19th century mesmerizingly powerful aristocratic vampires (Leatherdale 31). During the Romantic period, as James Twitchell argues persuasively, the vampire as mythic figure came into glory in the hands of writers such as Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, the Brontës, and Poe (*The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature* ix). Stoker's *Dracula*, the masterpiece of terror published in 1897, can be read as both a metaphor for the Victorian libido breaking the bounds of its repression and as a metaphor for the burgeoning capitalism of the 19th century.

Franco Moretti points out in his excellent study, "Dialectic of Fear" that during the 20th century, however, the vampire for the most part has lost its potency as a mythic symbol or as a figure of terror. Anne Rice, in *Interview with the Vampire*, uses the vampire to explore love and relationships. But, in general, the vampire has been parodied into harmlessness and vapidness through its use in TV sitcoms and movies such as *Love at First Bite*. Barbara Hambly, however, in her novel *Those Who Hunt the Night*, restores the vampire as a mythopoeic symbol of power and the allure of immortality.

Those Who Hunt the Night is the story of vampire murders in London during the early 20th century. Don Simon Ysidro, silken-haired, haughty Hidalgo who, in life, had danced in Queen Elizabeth's court, demands that John Asher, an Oxford philologist, find the murderer of the London vampires. In Asher's studies of various cultures, he gathered many vampire legends. Also, in addition to being a scholar, Asher used to be a spy. Asher cannot refuse because his wife Lydia's life hangs in the balance. With the help of Lydia, who is a doctor, Asher eventually deduces that there must be two killers—one a renegade vampire who drinks vampire blood and the other a human who, obviously unaffected by daylight, rips open vampire coffins and kills the now-drained vampires by exposing them

to sunlight. Asher finally discovers the pair to be Harold Blaydon, a medical researcher seeking to duplicate the power of the vampires, and his son Dennis, now a vampire with a bloodthirsty desire for power over his own kind and over Lydia, whom he lost to Asher.

The first way Hambly restores the power of the vampire myth is in the characterization of Ysidro. At no time does Hambly seek to humanize him. Even before we see him, we see the effects of Ysidro's mesmerizing power. He has put to sleep Lydia and all of the household servants, while he awaits Asher. Asher sees his wife in a trance, her slender white neck thrown back. When we do see Ysidro, his complexion is "bleached," "his colorless hair hung like spider silk," "the eyes were scarcely darker, a pale amber" (9). Though Ysidro does not plan to mesmerize, he almost unconsciously has that effect:

The pale eyes held his. There was no shift in them, no expression, only a remote calm centuries deep. Ysidro was silent for a few moments as if considering how much or what he should explain. Then he moved, a kind of weightless, leisurely drifting that, like Asher's habitual stride, was as noiseless as the passage of shadow . . . There was something almost hypnotic in that stillness, with out nervous gesture, almost completely without movement, as if that had all been rinsed from him by the passing moons of time. (11)

Sometimes Ysidro makes what we might consider a human gesture or expression. But Hambly is quick to reverse its implications. For example, at a train station, Asher sees Ysidro smile at a young woman with two sleepy little girls. But what Asher is witnessing is Ysidro's sighting and mesmeric influence on his first victim of the night. Ysidro's smile, which never reaches his eyes, has an "odd, minimal air, almost like a caricaturist's line" (20). Describing his smile as a minimalist stroke or a caricature points up Ysidro's non-human quality.

Even learning more about the character, which almost invariably elicits some sympathy or understanding in most novels, fails, quite appropriately, to humanize Ysidro. We learn very little about his past life in Renaissance Spain; we learn only about the over-



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whelming desire for life—the power over death—that made Ysidro and others choose vampirism. After a discussion with Lydia in which she rightly notes the Malthusian impossibility of a bite turning all victims into vampires, Asher asks Ysidro how a person becomes one of the undead. Ysidro tells him that not one person in a thousand has the all-consuming desire for life and power at any cost.

To illustrate this dramatically in the novel, Hambly contrasts Ysidro with a fledgling vampire, Bully Joe Davies, whose Cockney accents and rough speech mark him as lower class. Davies became a vampire but without full understanding of what he was giving up. Now he feels betrayed by his creator.

He made me, said I'd live forever, have all the gelt I wanted, never die! He never said it'd be like this! . . . For a month now I been livin' from pillar to post, never sleepin' the same place twice!... I dunno how the others do it, kill and not get the flatties down on em. (96-97)

Davies is soon destroyed by the vampire killer. This is appropriate in a narrative sense because Davies doesn't have the requisite skills of survival. But it is also fitting on a metaphoric level because Davies never fully realized the cost of immortality. His desire for an endless high life, his misunderstanding, and sense of betrayal seem more human than vampire qualities. This contrast between Ysidro and Davies, then, points up the non-human power, desires, and attributes of vampires.

At Asher's questioning, Ysidro also discusses vampires' relationships and feelings. Because the vampire myth seems so inherently sexual—the adolescent male myth of domination and the female myth of surrender—Asher asks about sexual love. Ysidro says that vampires understand the concept of love but do not have sex. Further, he says that no vampire has ever “considered the happiness of the other, which is what I understand to be one of the tenets of mortal love” (87). The words “I understand” in the last clause are significant because they show that to the extent that Ysidro comprehends love and happiness, it is a purely intellectual understanding. He has no memory of it from his mortal life.

Ysidro does say though that what binds vampires is “a shared ecstasy in the kill” (88), a delight which he knows is non-human.

We perceive things differently from human perception. We can taste—feel—the texture of the minds of others, and at no time more intensely than when the human mind is crying out in death. That is what we drink, as well as the blood—the psychic force, which answers to and feeds our own psychic abilities to control the minds of others (87).

He describes this pleasure in sexual terms as “unbearably exciting,” a “lust for the draining of the soul” that is “far beyond the knife-edge instant before the cresting of sexual orgasm” (88). After these explanations, Asher says “I see.” Ysidro quickly corrects him, however, and says that not only doesn't he see, but that as a mortal he will never understand.

Even at the end of the novel, after Ysidro has saved Asher's life and Asher has found the vampire killer, there can still be no more than wary gratitude. Although Asher believed that he would be killed after he found the murderer, Ysidro spares him for two reasons. First, as a nobleman, he has given his word. Second, he realizes that Asher's life is brief compared to a vampire's. So, he gives him the few precious moments of happiness, knowing that vampires “have all the time there is” or at least “all of it that we want” (340).

Having made vampires alien and unfathomable creatures, Hambly, however, does make a connection between Ysidro and Asher to reinforce the metaphor of vampirism as a bloodthirst for power. She does this through Asher. The first and most obvious suggestion of Asher as “vampire” is his name. Asher suggests the ghostly pallor of the vampire until it has fed. But more important is the characterization of Asher as a spy. As he comes to examine his motives for espionage, he realizes that he isn't so different from vampires, in his enjoyment of

power. As a spy, he too had been a hunter in secret places for seventeen years. Like a vampire, he had concealed his true identity, was ever vigilant, feared betrayal, and killed for the survival of state secrets and himself. At first, Asher sees no connection between himself and vampires and refuses to help find the killer of these killers. Ysidro, however, points out the nexus:

And don't pretend you did not know that you were hired to kill by other killers in the days when you took the *Queen's Coin*. Wherein lies the difference between the Empire, which holds its immortality in many men's consciousness, and the vampire who holds it in one? (25)

At this point, Asher has no neat answer to this question. He is simply unable to equate killing to perpetuate oneself and killing to perpetuate the state.

Later, however, after Ysidro saves Asher from an attack by other vampires eager to drain him dry, he dreams about his spying. Once in Pretoria, he was almost discovered by some friends, the van der Platzen. Although they were Boers, they were also members of the German intelligence network in Pretoria and would turn him in if they knew of his espionage. To protect himself, he had shot off the head of the 16-year old son of the family, a boy he had befriended. When Asher next lapses into sleep, he finds himself walking on the stone banks of a crimson lake, hidden in a black cavern. The smell of blood is overpowering. He is trapped in black lava rock as the “bubbling red lake [is] beginning to rise, the blood trickling toward him to engulf him, like the vampires for his sins” (237). The incident in Pretoria made Asher forswear the life of a spy. It isn't, however, until his involvement with vampires that he realizes the enormity of his crime—betrayal and murder for the immortality of England.

When Asher confronts Harold Blaydon, the doctor who has transformed his son into a vampire in a quest for power, Asher accuses him of creating artificial vampirism. Blaydon, however, points out that his actions are little different from Asher's:

You know, James—of course you know—that it's only a matter of time before war comes with Germany and her allies. The Kaiser's spoiling for it. Oh, yes, I've heard the rumor about you and about where and how you spend your Long Vacations. You know the urgency of the matter. So don't come all righteous with me over what you've done yourself in a different way. I dare say you've caused the deaths of well over twenty-four men, and in just as good a cause. (294)

Blaydon acknowledges his desire for power, although he tries to put a good face on it by saying that it is to prevent war and to restrain Germany's imperialistic moves. Asher, however, has only gradually recognized how tainted his motives and actions were—and that recognition has come only through others prompting him to see what he has tried to forget.

Blaydon never realizes that he too has become a vampire in an almost literal as well as figurative sense. To study the changes in blood chemistry that give vampires their heightened senses and grasp on other's minds, Blaydon needs a steady supply of vampire blood. So, whenever Dennis kills a vampire, his father is with him to extract a blood sample for his experiments. His life as a researcher, his desire for immortality as a scientist depends on vampire blood just as surely as other vampires require blood for their survival.

Finally, Dennis, the actual vampire murderer, chooses vampirism purely for power. When Dennis learns about his father's experiments, he demands to be the first of this super race of “psychic heroes” (296). Though his father's reasons for experimenting with vampirism were political, ideology is merely a facade for Dennis's real reason—to gain power over Lydia. “A golden Hercules in cricket whites” (325), Dennis could hardly believe that Lydia chose a middle-aged English professor over him. His heroics on the athletic field and god-like looks were hardly fit recompense for his patronizing air, according to Lydia. He

thought her desire to be a doctor was a girlish whim that would pass when she was the wife of a handsome, wealthy aristocrat. His desire for Lydia is based less on love than on a desire for domination, for which he is willing to damn not only his own soul, but Lydia's as well.

Dennis is killed by Father Anthony, a monk, centuries-old, who feels God can never forgive him for craving immortality of the body more than Christian immortality of the spirit. To atone for his sins, Anthony dwells in the catacombs and sorts the bones of the dead to make it easier for them to reincorporate on Judgment Day. While this eerie depiction reinforces the non-human qualities of the vampire, Anthony's desire for nothing so much as divine forgiveness and real death to escape from his Dantesque world humanizes him slightly. He also has become somewhat more human because his body chemistry has altered over the centuries, allowing him to tolerate sunlight and small amounts of silver. For his own salvation, Anthony helps Asher and Ysidro by ingesting some silver. When Dennis drains Anthony, he dies of silver poisoning. Anthony dies too, but with the hope of redemption.

While Anthony conjoins both human and vampire qualities, his character still restores strength to the vampire myth, the full power of which we see in Ysidro. Asher's justification of his spying for the immortality of England, Blaydon's rationale of vampirism to defeat Germanic aggression, and Dennis's vampirism to dominate in love also revive the use of vampirism as metaphor. While the vampire will probably never recover from modern-day parodies and regain the strength it possessed in Romantic poetry and the Gothic novel, Hambly has given it a powerful transfusion.

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Bumbejimas

PART I

The Ecology of Vampires

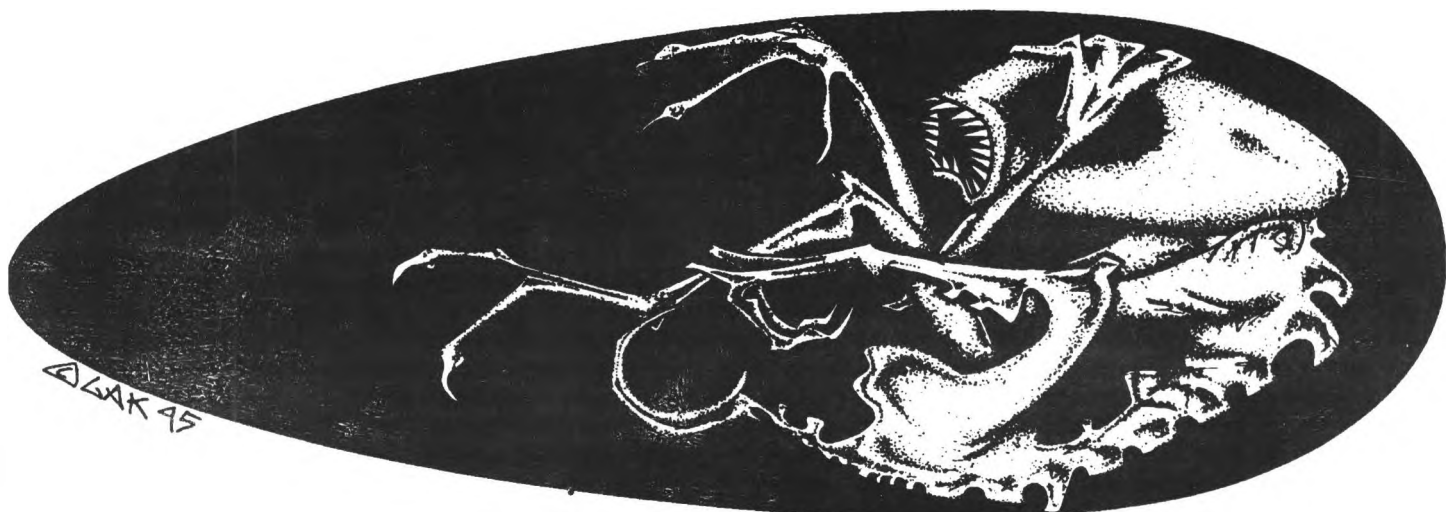
by Ed Meskys

Vampires have become a cliché of modern fiction. Still, I find the various approaches taken by different authors interesting. The archetypal version has them virtually unkillable, except by stake or sunlight, able to take no food other than blood, capable of metamorphosing into bats, turning into a mist and passing through the tiniest crack, and turning their victims into new vampires. The creature in Campbell's "Who Goes There?" had the last attribute of a vampire, and JWC himself pointed out that after a while everyone would be a monster and there would be nothing left to feed upon. (In the mid-'50s JWC was host on a short-lived SF radio program which dramatized "Who Goes There?" and pointed out the flaw in his remarks before or after the story.)

Two trade paperbacks from Space And Time Books (138 W. 70 St., apt 4-B, NY NY 10023) had conventional vampires. In *The Spy Who Drank Blood* by Gordon Linzner the hero works for a government agency and acts as a counter-spy. In *The Gift* by Scott Edelman (viii + 178 pp., \$7.95) the hero is a gay art critic whose lover is attracted to a vampire and becomes one himself. The gift in question is an almost telepathic link with vampires which he cannot resist. He is drawn to the buried skeleton of a long-ago executed vampire and removes the stake to revive it, fully fleshed and clothed. In the end the hero becomes a vampire himself.

I have only vague memories of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, but the hero is the only person left on earth who is not a vampire, and he is hated and feared by all the rest. Matheson never explained the ecology of the situation. Was it like the old story about the Scilly Islanders who eked out a precarious living by taking in one another's washing, in this case drinking each other's blood? Or were these vampires capable of living on sustenance other than blood?

The one book I read which did not have that problem was *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice. Here the victim was turned into another vampire only by conscious effort and willingly. The old vampire had to drink his or her blood almost to the point of death, but then have the victim drink his or her blood in turn. This solved the ecology problem.



VAMPIRES AND ANIMATED CORPSES

By David Fay



Although Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula* in the late nineteenth century and the Pearl Poet wrote *St. Erkenwald* in the fourteenth century, there is a spiritual similarity between the second death of Lucy Westenra and the living corpse St. Erkenwald saves. Unless Stoker read a Middle English manuscript, he never saw the Pearl Poet's work, since it was first published in England in 1922 and Stoker died in 1912. But the fact that these works in different centuries depict similar spiritual states suggests that the works are reflecting strong religious beliefs that the damned can still be saved, which is what makes them so powerful.

This paper attempts to isolate the common characteristics in the scenes of these two works. As a literary analysis, it is content with this limited topic, and does not attempt to evaluate the religious implications of these works. That is a job better suited to the theologians. This literary analysis is satisfied with displaying the similarities between the works being discussed.

The first similarity between these two works is the appearance of corpses that do not decompose. The corpse in *St. Erkenwald* is said to have lain in his tomb for almost eight hundred years, yet he still has a "blissful appearance" (31). The poet describes the flesh of the corpse as having a fresh, almost rose-like appearance and red lips (32). The corpse later states that he was never embalmed, but has remained in this undecomposed form (38).

This is almost a perfect description of the vampires in Stoker's novel. While Lucy Westenra takes on a more cruel appearance once she is transformed into a vampire, her body remains uncorrupted. This is not a view that is exclusive to Lucy in Stoker's novel. Dracula and his three brides also exhibit this appearance. Their bodies seem to simply stop aging at the time of their original death and then fail to decompose like ordinary human beings. Like the corpse in *St. Erkenwald*, the vampire's lips have a crimson color, and after they drink blood their flesh exhibits a rosy appearance (25, 67).

The next similarity is that both characters are perceived as innocents. The corpse from *St. Erkenwald* is shown to have been a righteous judge from the time before Christ. As a man who lived before the birth of Christ, he has not been able to receive eternal salvation; thus his soul has been in Limbo while his body has remained in this form. Yet, while he lived before the salvation of Christ could be offered to him, he lived a just and honest life. The poet goes to great lengths to establish the honesty of the corpse. The corpse states, "I would offer no evil judgement to him who had killed my father, / Nor false favour to my father, though it befell him to be hanged," and that he lived his life "as perfectly as a pagan can" (38).

In *Dracula* Lucy is shown as an innocent victim of a vampire. In fact, while Dracula continually attacks her, she is completely unaware of anything happening, other than her being ill. When Dracula first assaults Lucy, she is believed to have been sleepwalking (121-124). It is later discovered that Lucy was under the control of Dracula, thus she was not responsible for any of her actions. She is simply the helpless victim of an evil vampire.

Another similar attribute of these two works is the use of objects to give these innocent corpses eternal salvation. The objects used by St. Erkenwald are his words of baptism and his tears, which are said to be the equivalent of holy water. The corpse asks for the forgiveness of God, so that he may be saved and his soul lifted out of Limbo where it has remained since the original time of his death. St. Erkenwald begins to weep for the corpse and asks God to give him back his life so he may baptize him once he gets holy water. As the bishop begins to speak the words of baptism, one of his tears touches the face of the corpse. The corpse then claims that the saint's tears are holy water and have brought about his baptism. Now that his soul has been saved, the corpse's body begins to deteriorate into powder and blows away. With his soul in heaven, his body is of no further use (41-43).

For Lucy Westenra the instrument of salvation is slightly more savage, a wooden stake. Centuries of folklore have proclaimed that the proper way to kill a vampire is to drive an oak, ash, or hawthorn stake through the heart or beheading with an iron blade, but Stoker has taken the legend one step further. Stoker suggests that destroying the vampire's body will allow its soul to find peace. The first declaration of this is shown with the body of Lucy. After Arthur Holmwood drives the stake into her heart, the men look into her coffin and Dr. Jack Seward states, "There, in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had so dreaded and grown to hate . . . but Lucy as we had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity" (264). Stoker suggests Lucy's soul ascending to heaven with the return of beauty to her body. Van Helsing later tells Arthur, "No longer she is the devil's Un-Dead. She is God's true dead, whose soul is with Him!" (264). Since Lucy has only been dead for a short time, her body does not decompose in the same manner as the corpse in *St. Erkenwald*; however, the vampire bodies of Dracula and his three brides, who have been dead much longer, all turn to dust once they have been killed (438, 443).

While it is not possible to claim that the characters of Van Helsing and St. Erkenwald are completely alike, they do share some interesting characteristics. They are both examples of high-standing men of their time, and learned, Godly men. Van Helsing is said to be a philosopher, a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientist of his day. Stoker also explains that he holds at least three degrees, M.D., D.Ph., and D.Lit. (148). It is reasonable to assume him a Godly man by his actions and statements. When the men destroy the vampire body of Lucy, he tells Arthur to wait until they begin to pray and then "strike in God's name" (262).

The late nineteenth century was a time of great scientific learning. As the level of education increased, men were judged by what they knew as well as who they were. This explains Stoker's emphasis on the degrees and title that Van Helsing held. The use of new scientific procedures, like the transfusions he gave Lucy, and his knowledge of folklore show him to be the well-rounded man of his time (159, 261).

St. Erkenwald is obviously a Godly man, as he is a Bishop, but would also be a learned man for the same reason. In *St. Erkenwald*'s time, the only educated men were either wealthy or priests. The church had to educate its priests so they could read and copy the Bible, but due to the rank St. Erkenwald has achieved, he is obviously well-educated as well as well-respected. Erkenwald also prays before entering the tomb of the corpse and during the baptism.

The fourteenth century was a time when the church had great influence. The church was seen as the greatest law in the land and the primary source of education and knowledge. As a saint as well as a bishop, Erkenwald of the seventh century would have been a man respected by the English society of the fourteenth century, partly because he was the first saint of London; and by using him the Pearl Poet had a character that was well respected in the realm of God as well as man.

This paper is not an attempt to show these two works as mirror images of each other, but to express a spiritual similarity between the scenes created by Stoker and the Pearl Poet. While Stoker's vision is much darker than that of the Pearl Poet, the characters and their actions do appear to be attempting to reach the same goal, that of saving the soul of someone who is already dead. The feasibility of these acts and their religious implications should be left to the theologians, and possibly the psychologists, but the literary similarities are clearly apparent.

Continued on Page 43



A GRAVEDIGGER'S DOZEN OF OUTSTANDING VAMPIRE TALES

BY MARGARET L. CARTER

"He is known everywhere man has been," Dr. Abraham Van Helsing insists, alluding to the vampire. And according to psychoanalyst Ernest Jones in *On the Nightmare* (1931), the vampire myth is the most "overdetermined" of all superstitions. Not surprisingly, the vampire is as prolific and various in literature as in legend. The task of identifying and discussing the best vampire tales of all time, therefore, proves to be more difficult than persuading Count Dracula to lie quietly in his coffin. Just as vampires on film always rise from the grave for yet another sequel, so the Undead in fiction, however often staked by critical remarks about trite motifs and glutted markets, never fail to reappear in yet more remarkable guises. I have therefore narrowed the scope of this essay to the most noteworthy vampire novels of the past twenty years. For first-rank billing, I restrict myself to the appropriate total of thirteen (though several honorable mentions will also be proposed).

By dealing with recent works only, we avoid the difficulty that including the entire period since about 1800 (the apogee of the Gothic novel) would entail. In that case four of the thirteen slots would automatically be preempted by the great classics of the nineteenth century—*The Vampyre*, by John Polidori (1819), *Varney the Vampyre*, or, *The Feast of Blood*, by either Thomas P. Prest or James Malcolm Rymer (1847), *Carmilla*, by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1872), and of course Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). By confining the survey to novels, we keep the list within manageable bounds, since dozens of short stories and novellas might legitimately claim a place among the "most noteworthy." Curiously, a chronological survey of the field reveals that, although excellent short fiction on vampirism has flourished (more or less evenly distributed) throughout the past century, only a handful of memorable vampire novels appeared before the early 1970's. Aside from the four nocturnal luminaries mentioned above, I consider the outstanding pre-1970 vampire novels to be: *I Am Legend*, by Richard Matheson (Fawcett, 1954), the best-known and most meticulously detailed treatment of vampirism as infectious disease, twice translated into film; *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, by Simon Raven (Simon and Schuster, 1960), a suspenseful, horrifying adventure of both psychic and physical vampirism, with—perhaps—a hint of the supernatural; *Some of Your Blood*, by Theodore Sturgeon (Ballantine, 1961), a psychological study of blood fetishism, presented in a low-key epistolary format that emphasizes by contrast the shocking "facts" of the story; and *Progeny of the Adder*, by Leslie H. Whitten (Doubleday, 1965), an absorbingly realistic murder mystery, centering upon the hunt for a vampire of the classic supernatural type.

Any such choices, of course, must be somewhat subjective. In singling out the thirteen most noteworthy vampire novels of the past twenty years, I look for works that are "noteworthy" in the sense of receiving considerable attention and exerting influence on the development of vampire fiction, as well as works that introduce original and striking variations on the standard vampire myth. And the list is, inevitably, skewed toward novels that I personally enjoy and consider above average in concept and execution. They follow in chronological order:

'*Salem's Lot*, by Stephen King (Doubleday, 1975): King's first major work. In the figure of Barlow, he transplants Count Dracula into

a contemporary setting. King plays upon the isolation of a small town in Maine, exploring the possibility of its takeover by nonhuman forces, unknown to the rest of the world (a motif he returns to in *The Tommyknockers*). Like Dracula in Stoker's novel, Barlow remains for the most part a numinously menacing offstage presence. His mortal partner, Straker, keeps the vampire's influence in the foreground of the reader's mind, somewhat as Renfield does in *Dracula*, though the suave, self-possessed Straker is a far cry from the confused, tormented Renfield. While employing the standard components of vampire fiction made familiar by Stoker—the vampire's hypnotic seduction and other supernatural powers, defense by means of such objects as garlic and holy symbols, ritual staking of the heroine transformed by the vampire lord, a band of heroes complete with an aging scholar as a Van Helsing figure—King downplays the erotic dimension of vampirism, so prominent (for twentieth-century readers) in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, in favor of metaphors of power and corruption.

The Dracula Tapes, by Fred Saberhagen (Warner, 1975): An "interview" predating by a year the self-revelation of Rice's Louis. In the first serious novel to present a vampire's story from his or her own point of view, Count Dracula retells the events of Stoker's book on the tape recorder of a car belonging to a descendant of Jonathan and Mina Harker. Intent upon vindicating himself to the family of the woman he loves, as well as to the human world in general, the Count exposes the distortions in the published account of his 1890 move from Transylvania to England. While adhering to the "facts" as recorded by Stoker (with the single exception of the date of Mina's pregnancy and the broadminded reader might accept a vampirically-influenced thirteen-month gestation to reconcile this inconsistency), Saberhagen reinterprets them to show Count Dracula as the hero of the tale. Ignorant human foes, led by the fanatical vampire-hunter Van Helsing, cause Lucy's death by incompatible blood transfusions (Dracula makes her a vampire only to give her a chance at life) and foil the Count's attempt at a peaceful life in England. According to Dracula's testimony, he never forces himself upon anyone and relies on animal blood as his primary nourishment. He enjoys the blood of Lucy and Mina for erotic, not nutritive, purposes, and both are more than willing. Taking this novel in isolation, the reader might suspect Dracula of being an unreliable narrator, since his account is as clearly self-serving as those of Harker and Seward. Saberhagen's sequels, however, make it obvious that the author does intend the reader to accept Dracula's testimony as accurate. The series, so far, comprises six books, of which I consider the most successful (after the first) to be *The Holmes-Dracula File* (Ace, 1978), told in alternate chapters by Count Dracula and Dr. Watson—a respectful Sherlock Holmes pastiche as well as a suspenseful vampire novel, displaying, like *The Dracula Tapes*, conscientious research into the late Victorian period. Other books in the series contain flashbacks in which Dracula reminisces about his prevampire life and the circumstances of his transformation. The most recently published so far is *A Matter of Taste* (TOR, 1990).

Interview with the Vampire, by Anne Rice (Alfred A. Knopf, 1976): The book that brought vampires to the notice of the general public. Lengthy praise of Rice's "Vampire Chronicles" would display a naivete somewhat like that of an earnest dissertation on Shakespeare's

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merits as a dramatist. Her richly textured portrait of antebellum New Orleans lends credibility to this first novelistic account of a transformation from human to inhuman as seen from the inside. Unlike King, who in *Salem's Lot* follows Stoker in presenting the vampire as the essence of evil, to be overcome by a dynamic faith in God (the trappings of Christianity work against King's Undead, but only if the wielder of the cross *believes*), Rice places her vampires in a secularized universe. To the boy interviewer's questions about crucifixes, magical transformations, and the efficacy of a stake through the heart, the vampire Louis replies, "That is, how you would say today—bullshit?" (p. 25). Rice's vampires display abnormal strength, speed, and sensory acuity, along with a drastically altered appearance that makes it difficult for them to pass for human, but they have none of the traditional fictional vampire's powers of transformation. Aside from sunlight (a detail adopted, of course, from movies such as *Nosferatu*, not from the nineteenth-century classic novels), they seem to have no vulnerabilities. In fact, they seem almost impossible to kill; in Rice's novels, supposedly destroyed vampires tend to reappear when least expected. At this writing two sequels to *Interview* have been published. In *The Vampire Lestat* (Knopf, 1985), the reader who accepted Louis as a reliable narrator must undergo a wrenching reversal of perspective, for Lestat, portrayed as a villain in the earlier book, contradicts Louis' interpretation of events and presents himself as an admirable character—at least, within the limits of the inhuman, amoral nature of Rice's vampires. *Queen of the Damned* (Knopf, 1988) abandons first-person narration for multiple points of view, both human and vampire. Rice is the first novelist successfully to attempt an explanation of the origin of vampires. Lestat's quest for the source of his own existence (begun in the second volume) leads him to the mythic Adam and Eve of the Undead, culminating in a battle between ancient vampires of unimaginable power in *Queen of the Damned*. It would not be accurate to characterize this epic as a conflict between "good" and "evil" vampires; these creatures have their own values and goals, to which human standards of morality remain peripheral.

Hotel Transylvania, by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (St. Martin's, 1978): Though not so well known to non-specialists as Rice's characters, Yarbro's Saint-Germain is probably the best-loved of contemporary vampires. If Rice's fiction may be characterized as epic, Yarbro's is romance. Against her meticulously researched historical backgrounds,

intimate exploration of human (whether living or Undead) emotions and relationships claims central importance. Saint-Germain may be described as Dracula with a difference. Another Transylvanian Count who lives on blood, sometimes transforms his victims into his own kind, casts no reflection, and rests on a bed of his native earth, Saint-Germain embodies the opposite of the unholy evil Stoker ascribes to Dracula. Rather than recoiling from Christian symbols, in *Hotel Transylvania* Saint-Germain wields a consecrated Host to repel a coven of Satanists. He cannot transform into animal shape, as Dracula can (one scene in *Hotel Transylvania* contains a hint of such ability, but Yarbro apparently decided to abandon that motif), but in most ways conforms to the powers and limitations of the traditional vampire. Like Stoker's Dracula (and Saberhagen's), Saint-Germain can function by daylight. Yarbro postulates that he suffers little or no discomfort from the sun as long as he wears shoes with his native earth in the soles. This author's answer to the question of why a vampire who can feed on animals needs human blood resembles Saberhagen's theory. To Saint-Germain, the taking of blood is an erotic experience, making this character the quintessential demon lover. Drinking blood offers him no satisfaction unless his partner attains sexual fulfillment. After several novels and a collection of short pieces, Yarbro retired Saint-Germain and devoted a trilogy to one of his "converts," Olivia, who exemplifies a self-reliant woman attempting to maintain her independence in the patriarchal world of ancient and medieval Christendom. Yarbro's latest vampire novel, *Out of the House of Life* (TOR, 1990), returns to Saint-Germain and his great love, Madelaine. This book's view of Saint-Germain's early years as the vampiric "mas-cot" of a healing temple in Egypt is especially welcome to many readers who have found that the historical aspect of Yarbro's fiction often overshadows the supernatural dimension.

The Vampire Tapestry, by Suzy McKee Charnas (Simon and Schuster, 1980): In my opinion, the most coherent and believable presentation of vampire-as-alien ever published. The first section of this five-part novel, "The Ancient Mind at Work," published in the February, 1979, issue of *Omni*, presents the vampire, Dr. Edward Weyland, as a single-minded beast of prey with superior intelligence. A South African housekeeper at the small college where Weyland works as a professor of anthropology shoots down the vampire as she would any dangerous animal. At the end of this novella he escapes, apparently mortally wounded. The rest of the novel moves from an external view of the vampire as simply a ruthless predator to a more intimate and sympathetic view through the eyes of a teenage boy who befriends him, when imprisoned by his "rescuers," and a middle-aged female psychologist who, faced with the task of "curing" Weyland of his vampiric "delusion" makes the imaginative leap of realizing that he actually is the nonhuman creature he claims to be. In the novel's final section, Charnas places the reader entirely within Weyland's point of view, demonstrating how the chain of events begun by the nearly fatal attack has compelled Weyland to grow and change, unwillingly forced into relationships with the human beings he prefers to consider his "livestock." The lengthy period of death-like sleep he uses to escape



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from intolerable conditions, withdrawing into suspended animation until it becomes safe to start a new lifetime amid an unsuspecting prey population, serves as his escape from the temptation of becoming too human. He knows the long sleep will wipe out the traumatic details of his Weyland life and let him "rise restored, eyes once more as bright and unreflective as a hawk's and heart as ruthless as a leopard's" (1981 Pocket Book edition, p. 294). Animal metaphors dominate this story; Weyland is a lynx, a tiger, a raptor in deceptively human shape. The author draws analogies from the animal kingdom to lend credibility to Weyland's extraordinary speed, strength, endurance, sensory perception, longevity, and restricted diet. His human appearance is merely an evolutionary adaptation to enable him to mingle unnoticed with his prey. Even his sexuality is camouflage; he is unique and claims he has no need to reproduce, since with care he may live virtually forever. Unlike the erotically alluring vampires of much contemporary fiction, he has no sexual interest in human beings and engages in intercourse for appearances' sake only. The one exception is his relationship with Floria Landauer, the psychologist who shares his secret; he treats her as an equal rather than a victim, and their interaction forms the turning point in Weyland's reluctant growth toward humanity.

The Hunger, by Whitley Strieber (William Morrow, 1981) Another alien vampire, quite different from Weyland in her orientation toward the human race. Unlike Charnas' vampire, who values his isolation and would not want to create his own rivals, Strieber's Miriam Blaylock craves human company. She considers human beings "pets" rather than livestock and futilely attempts to use her own blood to transform her victims into immortal companions. All her experimental subjects eventually degenerate into a grotesque living death. She turns for help to Dr. Sarah Roberts, a sleep researcher who may have discovered the secret behind the aging process. Though a member of a separate species rather than a supernatural revenant, Miriam, like Saint Germain, has the ability to manipulate a victim's mind and induce a powerful erotic response. Her telepathic talent doubtless accounts for her longing for a bond with her human donors. Despite her numerous acts of violence, the reader empathizes with the loneliness she feels as the last of her kind and understands Sarah's fascination with her. Miriam's attempt to transform Sarah ends, naturally, in disaster, and the experience of loss makes her resolve never to try again. Thus Strieber uses the vampire-as-alien to achieve a fresh perspective on the traditional motif of the vampire's tragic isolation.

Fevre Dream, by George R.R. Martin (Simon and Schuster, 1982): Vampire-as-alien tale featuring a vampire subculture rather than a solitary predator. Set in the heyday of the Mississippi steamboats, this novel centers on Joshua, a vampire who, orphaned in childhood, grows up believing himself an aberrant human being. Eventually he realizes that he is neither human nor supernatural (religious symbols have no effect on him), but a representative of a species that combines features of the legendary werewolf and vampire. Aside from vulnerability to sunlight, Joshua leads a more or less "normal" life except for a few nights each month. At those times his uncontrollable bloodlust drives him to kill human victims, despite his best intentions. By the time he eventually finds members of his own race, his remorse compels him to seek an alternative to killing. He invents a potion that substitutes for blood, freeing himself and his followers from the "red thirst" or "fever" (hence the name he bestows on the steamboat he buys).

Fevre Dream is the first distinguished "good vampire / bad vampire" novel, a subgenre that has since produced a number of specimens. Joshua's rivals want to continue ruthless exploitation of their prey rather than living in harmony with the human race. Joshua's partner, steamboat captain Abner Marsh, provides the viewpoint through which we learn about the vampire race. Abner, as he grows from horror at Joshua's nature to understanding that vampires, like human beings, are individuals with both good and evil traits, serves as surrogate for the reader who longs for contact with an alien mind. When Joshua remarks

that his kind have never before revealed the truth about themselves to one of the human "cattle" they feed on, Abner counters, "Well, I never lissened to no vampire before neither, so we're even. Go on. This here bull is lissenin'" (p. 144). Martin's nineteenth-century setting enriches the story without eclipsing the fantastic components, as Yarbrow's historical backgrounds sometimes do.

Blood Hunt, by Lee Killough (TOR, 1987): A rare example of a fictional vampire who is a truly nice person, without possessing the superhuman charisma of Saint-Germain. Like Matheson, Killough postulates that vampirism is an infectious disease, though in *Blood Hunt* the hypothesis is merely assumed by the vampires without being elaborated in any way. As in Rice's trilogy, a victim must taste the vampire's blood in order to be transformed. Killough, like Rice, presents the gradual process of transformation from the vampire's point of view. Garreth Mikaelian, a San Francisco police officer, investigates murders committed by Lane Barber, a vampire, who drains him to death. When he accidentally drinks some of her blood, Lane refrains from destroying him, because she longs for a companion. The core of the novel concerns Garreth's gradual realization of and adjustment to the fact of his vampirism. He requires soil (not necessarily "native earth") to sleep on and cannot enter a dwelling uninvited, two factors that do not seem to harmonize with Killough's viral theory. He casts a reflection, in keeping with his supposedly non-supernatural nature. Sunlight causes him discomfort but does not kill him. He lives on animal blood, though it proves less than satisfying; as a highly moral vampire, he refuses to prey on people. Determined to bring Lane to justice, he traces her to her home town, where he makes a place for himself in the community—working the night shift on the local police force—while waiting for her to return. Vampire or not, Garreth remains a good cop, who adamantly resists the temptation to play vigilante. Even someone like Lane deserves due process of law. Circumstances finally free Garreth from the dilemma this philosophy imposes on him, and at the novel's end we see him as a small-town policeman who has come to terms with his new existence. The strongest appeal of this novel, for me, is that Garreth's personality remains intact through his transformation. Instead of becoming a bloodthirsty demon, he stands in the far more interesting position of an ordinary man required to adjust to a new set of limits and temptations. In the sequel, *Bloodlinks* (TOR, 1988), Garreth is accustomed to his vampiric life but far from happy with it. Drawn back to San Francisco by a new set of mysterious murders, he meets the female vampire responsible for Lane's transformation and learns that his friends and family can accept him even after they discover what he is. Though the character of Garreth has great potential for further growth, readers have so far waited in vain for more books in the series.

Those Who Hunt the Night, by Barbara Hambly (Ballantine, 1988): Another "good vampire / bad vampire" novel with a strong period atmosphere. In Victorian England a husband-wife investigative team, Prof. James Asher and his wife Lydia, are commissioned by Simon Ysidro to find out who has been murdering London's vampires. To call Simon "good" is less than accurate; Hambly's Undead seem to be modeled on Rice's in their amorality, violence, and detachment from humanity. Simon does, however, refrain from the worst excesses and contracts a good-faith alliance with James Asher, and the two of them attain, if not friendship, mutual respect. Hambly emphasizes the psychic aspect of vampire predation; Simon and his kind (like Strieber's Miriam) perceive human emotions, and they crave the "high" of fear and torment as much as the blood itself. Their vulnerabilities, aside from a stake through the heart, include the traditional sunlight (a persistent assumption in most contemporary vampire fiction, despite its absence from the nineteenth-century prototypes) and silver. Besides Simon, James, and Lydia, striking characters include a guilt-driven vampire monk and Blaydon, a "mad scientist" character whose son has become a mutant vampire. The novel's title has an iron-

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ic triple application—to the vampires, to the fanatical Blaydon, and to James in his role as detective.

Those of My Blood, by Jacqueline Lichtenberg (St. Martin's, 1988) Alien vampires that originate on another planet rather than on Earth as a human mutation. A group of the *luren*, stranded on our world for generations, have developed into two factions, the Residents, who believe in responsible coexistence with humanity, and the Tourists, who exploit human beings as prey and devote their energies to the goal of returning to their home world. Residents live on cloned blood and eschew the temptation of feeding directly on human beings; they do, however, crave "ectoplasm," human life-force. A *luren* ship enters the solar system and is being studied at a lunar base, where scientists are preparing to send a message to the *luren* home world. Titus, a Resident and vampire-human hybrid, is sent to the moon to prevent the message from being transmitted, on the grounds that the *luren* would prove hostile to humanity. Abbot, Titus' vampiric "father," a Tourist, is on the scene to thwart Titus' mission. Years previously, Titus "died," and Abbot's blood brought him to life, transmuted into the vampire mode of existence—hence their "father-son" bond. On the captured *luren* ship a single crewman sleeps in suspended animation. When he awakens, Titus must "father" him, leading to further complications, as Titus attempts to block Abbot while maintaining secrecy about the vampire species. Lichtenberg assigns her vampires the power of irresistible psychic compulsion, called Influence; *luren* Influence can even cause human observers to believe they have seen events and objects that bear no relation to what really happened. A side effect of these vampires' psychic power is that, like Yarbro's supernatural vampires, they possess consummate erotic skills. Lichtenberg also offers ingenious scientific rationalizations for the "native earth" superstition and the belief that vampires cannot cross a threshold uninvited. Though this story superficially fits the "good vampire / bad vampire" model, we gradually discover that Abbot is not "evil", only an antagonist pursuing goals that seem worthwhile to him by means that conform to his own code of ethics. In a companion novel, *Dreamspy* (St. Martin's, 1989), set outside our solar system, we meet the *luren* on their own terms as respected members of the interstellar community.

Shattered Glass, by Elaine Bergstrom (Berkley, 1989): This story of a single clan of alien vampires is the first book in a series that rivals Yarbro's Saint-Germain chronicles in its potential scope. The Austra family, though their origins are non-terrestrial, have been a part of human history for millennia. The title refers to their artistry in stained glass; unlike most fictional vampires, who lack any creative spark, the Austras are superb craftsmen, whose genius has contributed to many of the great cathedrals of Europe. One of the oldest of their number, Stephen (pronounced "Stefan"), while restoring the windows of a church in Cleveland, meets a young woman, Helen Wells, who carries a share of his family's genes. They fall in love, and he helps her pass over (somewhat like Lichtenberg's Titus) into the vampiric life. Meanwhile, Stephen's twin brother Charles, driven by despair, has embarked on a murderous rampage with the intent of forcing Stephen to hunt him down and kill him—Austras are incapable of directly committing suicide. In the final confrontation, Charles' death becomes the instrument of Helen's rebirth as a true Austra. Bergstrom gives her vampires powerful psychic abilities, animal strength, speed, and feral grace, and a dislike for but not an exaggerated vulnerability to daylight. They also possess the ability to immerse their donors in their own memories so vividly that the donor feels he or she has lived the past event. Bergstrom achieves sensuality without offensive explicitness and horror without gratuitous gore, while weaving a complex plot with a large number of vividly realized characters. The second book of the series, *Blood Alone* (Berkley, 1990), equally fertile in character and action, follows Stephen and Charles through the early years of World War II. Other volumes are scheduled, including the direct sequel to *Shattered Glass*, *Blood Rites* (1991).

Sunglasses After Dark, by Nancy Collins (New American Library, 1989): A violent, erotic variation on the traditional supernatural vampire. At first the novel appears to be a tale of homicidal psychosis and multiple personality; the Other, Sonja Blue, inhabits the body of supposedly dead heiress Denise Thorne. In fact, Denise has died, and Sonja, the vampire, a new personality with Denise's memories, has come to birth in her body. Collins postulates a demonic race known as the Pretenders, who comprise a variety of subspecies that all prey on human beings. The Pretenders are the truth behind vampires, werewolves, incubi, and numerous other legendary creatures. When a vampire injects his or her body fluids into a victim who subsequently dies, a demonic entity with no selfhood of its own transforms the victim into a vampire and uses the host's memories to build itself a personality. Sonja, transformed by the aristocratic vampire Sir Morgan, whom she wishes to track down and kill, learns the truth about her kind from an erudite vampire-hunter, Ghilardi, and Morgan's rival, the vampire Pangloss. To the latter's bewilderment, Sonja has no interest in joining the Pretenders' "Real World" and the vampire subculture, with its game-playing rivalries. Instead, she pursues vengeance for her Denise Thorne self, thereby clashing with Catherine Wheele, fraudulent psychic and evangelist. Like many contemporary vampire novels, notably *The Vampire Tapestry*, *Sunglasses* enlists our sympathy with a creature traditionally regarded as a bloodthirsty monster by demonstrating that human beings can be guilty of far worse than a peculiar diet and occasional killing in self-defense. Sir Morgan, Denise/Sonja's vampire progenitor, appears on the periphery of *Tempter* (New American Library, 1990), and a sequel to *Sunglasses* is promised.

Carrión Comfort, by Dan Simmons (Dark Harvest, 1989): An expansion of a novella of psychic vampirism by the same title (*Omni*, September-October 1983). Nina and Melanie, a pair of ante-bellum Charleston belles, and Willi, a German aristocrat, meet to perpetuate their long-term rivalry in what they variously call the Game, the Hunt, or simply Feeding. Ordinary human beings except for their mutant ability to drive others to violence by sheer mental force, they have learned to extend life and vitality indefinitely by feeding on the deaths they cause. The story begins with an explosive confrontation in which Nina, after supposedly destroying Willi, attempts to kill Melanie as well. The novella, told in the first person by Melanie, ends with her apparent victory over Nina. The novel expands the story to epic proportions, concluding with a Hunt on a private island, along the lines of Richard Connell's classic short story, "The Most Dangerous Game" (1924). Opposing the psychic vampires are Saul Laski, a professor who began to suspect their nature when he crossed paths with Willi in a concentration camp, Bobby Joe Gentry, a Southern sheriff who delightfully subverts the stereotype of that character, and Natalie Preston, intelligent, courageous daughter of a black man accidentally killed in the random slaughter generated by Nina and Melanie's initial combat. Though almost nine hundred pages long, *Carrión Comfort* compels the reader's attention, and despite the large number of violent deaths, the author manages to make us go on caring about the characters. He even elicits an unwilling sympathy for Melanie, cruel, self-centered, and paranoid though she is. *Carrión Comfort*, in my opinion, is the finest fictional treatment of psychic vampirism yet produced.

The vampires in each of these thirteen novels, whether admirable or the reverse, have in common an appeal to the reader's understanding. None is a ravening bloodsucker devoid of personality. The one possible exception, King's Barlow, deliberately patterned on Dracula, though neither an erotic nor a sympathetic character, is still a character rather than a mindless killing machine—an eloquent seducer promising satanic rewards to his victims. All the others elicit sympathy despite their sometimes amoral and even murderous behavior. The trend toward a sympathetic treatment of the vampire, present in some short fiction before the 1970's, as well as the television series *Dark Shadows*, became dominant with Yarbro's *Hotel Transylvania*, and

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shows no signs of reversal. As mentioned above, the ghastly crimes committed by human beings in recent history make a vampire's predation seem relatively innocuous. Contemporary respect for the integrity and civil rights of minority groups extends, in fiction, to that misunderstood and feared minority, the Undead. Readers of fantasy and science fiction, moreover, are not content to destroy the alien on sight; we want to understand the mind of the not-quite-human, and fictional vampires—Louis and Lestat in Rice's trilogy, Joshua telling his life story to Abner in *Fevre Dream*, Charnas' Dr. Weyland revealing his secrets to his therapist—seem eager to be understood.

Innovative treatments of vampirism, often sympathetic, pervade contemporary fiction, including the following recent novels offered for honorable mention: *The Dracula Archives*, by Raymond Rudorff (Arbor House, 1972), ostensibly covering the years just preceding Stoker's tale, when Dracula telepathically reaches out from his entombed sleep to take possession of several people in turn, culminating in his release to new life on the book's final page; *An Enquiry into the Existence of Vampires*, by Marc Lovell (Doubleday, 1974), an undeservedly neglected short novel in which a pair of brothers, in a tightly woven plot, clash over the possibility of vampirism in the family (here presented as a non-supernatural disease) and run afoul of a cult in the process; *The Space Vampires*, by Colin Wilson (Random House, 1976), an ingenious treatment of psychic vampirism that postulates that some human beings, as well as the aliens of the title, are capable of feeding on the vital energy possessed by all living things; *The Black Castle*, by Les Daniels (Scribners, 1978), in which the Grand Inquisitor of Spain ironically employs his brother, the vampire Sebastian, as an instrument of terror in the service of the Church—also the first of a series, which at this point totals five books; *Sabella or The Blood Stone*, by Taniith Lee (DAW, 1980), in which an alien entity takes over the body and memories of a child living on a colonized planet in Earth's near future (anticipating the transmutation of Sonja Blue in the later *Sunglasses After Dark*), with Sabella's pilgrimage of self-discovery told in Lee's inimitably poetic style; *They Thirst*, by Robert R. McCammon (Avon, 1981), 'Salem's Lot on an epic scale, featuring a satanic vampire lord, Prince Vulkan, bent on ruling Los Angeles; *The Delicate Dependency*, Michael Talbot (Avon, 1982), set in the Victorian era, conveying the human characters through a multilayered plot that culminates in an encounter with an esoteric society of vampires, alluring yet coldly remote from humanity, who guide the history and nurture the genius of the inferior but indispensable human race; *Vampire Junction*, by S.P. Somtow (Donning, 1984), a violent story of a boy vampire, drawing upon Jungian theory to explain vampirism as a spontaneous birth from the collective unconscious; *Necroscope*, by Brian Lumley (copyright 1986; TOR, 1988), the first book in the multi-volume saga of Harry Keogh, whose talent for speaking with the dead brings him into conflict with a Soviet intelligence organization that uses ESP and a vampire, Thibor, representative of a parasitic species that originates in an alternate dimension; *Live Girls*, by Ray Garton (Pocket Books, 1987), about vampires who lurk in wait for prey behind the facade of a sleazy nightclub, leading to a bloody conflict in which one of the viewpoint characters, changed into one of the Undead, manages to resist the temptation to evil implicit in his transformation while destroying the less admirable vampires; *Blood Thirst*, by L. A. Freed (Pinnacle, 1989), the heroine Aijnul's first-person account of her transformation into a vampire (apparently modeled on the pattern of gradual change in Rice's *Interview*), against the background of a vividly realized Charleston, South Carolina, setting; *The Stress of Her Regard*, by Tim Powers (Charnel House, 1989), an account of a silicon-based vampiric life form whose depredations condemn Keats, Byron, and Shelley to untimely death—a suspenseful, erotic, yet horrific tale that weaves together a number of classic myths along with references from the three great Romantic poets' works; *Bloodlist*, by P.N. Elrod (Ace, 1990), first in the "Vampire Files"

series, narrated by Jack Fleming, who (like Killough's Garreth) after becoming a vampire investigates his own murder, this series, however, being set during the Depression as a pastiche of the hard-boiled detective genre; *Children of the Night*, by Mercedes Lackey (TOR, 1990), in which psychic investigator Diana Tregarde combats a pack of life-force predators with the aid of Andre LeBrel, a delightfully sensual and witty vampire modeled, apparently, on Yarbrow's Saint-Germain.

Predictably, the outstanding specimens mentioned here have inspired a flood of vampire fiction, much of it conforming to Sturgeon's Law. Still, if the vampire's popularity continues unabated, we have grounds to hope that the remaining ten percent will permit us an abundance of fresh encounters with these dangerous yet alluring creatures of the night.



"Believability in *Dracula*"

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Then Van Helsing reverses himself, saying: yes, but he is less free than the prisoner in his cell. There are many things on their side; Dracula is limited in his powers. They have on their side the fact that, from sunrise to sunset, the vampire is trapped in whatever form he may be in; he can change only at exact sunrise or sunset—or at the very stroke of noon. Though I don't think that made any difference in the book. The day belongs to them while the vampire is powerful only at night. He is subject to various laws of nature; one gets the feeling—or at least I did—that even Van Helsing with his vast erudition does not know why all this is so. Dracula must be invited in at first to any place—to this end of course he can make use of such people as Renfield the lunatic—and he is subject to the virtue of many plants—such as garlic, "the branch of wild rose on his coffin keep him that he move not from it"—though that was never used against Dracula. Somewhat later in the chapter, Van Helsing becomes reverent, speaking of the protection offered by the Host, which "we must not desecrate needless."

After thus laying out all the things they have working for and against them, Van Helsing and his crew proceed to work out their battle against Dracula strictly according to the rules, pro and con. This gives the book a great deal of suspense, and makes him a very believable villain, and Stoker's book a very satisfactory novel.

Another great master of horror, H. P. Lovecraft, who wrote widely on supernatural horror in literature, wrote in his very frightening "Pickman's Model" that any second-rate dauber could slop around paint on the canvas and call it a witches' Sabbath or something, but it took a master to make such a thing convincing, or make it really scare. Because the master knows the "anatomy of the horrible"; how to evoke the ancestral memory of what is really frightening. That is, a master can make the events believable.

And that's what I think Stoker did; and Lovecraft sometimes, and Henry James and too few since. Many writers now don't take the time to spell out what can really scare; they don't know the anatomy of the horrible. Stoker did; that's why we can still read him when literally hundreds of lesser vampires have come and gone.



"Vampires and Animated Corpses"

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**Gridding the Vampire Filmography:
Tony Scott's THE HUNGER (1983);
Jonathan Demme's THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991);
and
Francis Ford Coppola's BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (1992)
by Robin M. Latimer**

It is a joke in our society to declare anything "alive and well," let alone to apply this statement to the vampire figure, that member of the *nosferatu* (undead), but apply it we must. To witness, a string of vampire movies has been produced and several films are currently in production in the U.S. alone. These include Stephen King's SLEEP-WALKERS; Francis Ford Coppola's BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA; BUFFY, THE VAMPIRE SLAYER; INNOCENT BLOOD; RELUCTANT VAMPIRE; RED SLEEP; TO SLEEP WITH A VAMPIRE; and DRACULA RISING ("Bloody" 11). Too, Anne Rice (whose *Interview With the Vampire* recently came to screen), Tanith Lee, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, and Suzy McKee Charnas have, in the last decade, revived the vampire inside of novels and short stories which invite and suggest an essentialist feminist inscription of this figure inside two new genres: feminist science fiction and the feminist Gothic (Barr 64). By "essentialist," I refer to that variety of feminism which holds that a particular female essence—nurturant, maternal, intuitive—exists in biology and, consequently, in culture, the latter of which suppresses it. Thus an essentialist, frequently termed a radical feminist, recommends reviving and empowering this essence in culture.

If it is not so surprising to find a vampire inside a movie or book, I should add that there have also been recent sightings of real vampires, for, as the Filipino presidential elections drew near in May, 1992, tales of a "supernatural creature similar to a vampire [began] terrorizing Manila slums" ("Tales" 1). This *manananggal*, which appears as a "woman who can cut her body in two...the top half [flying] around at night, searching for babies to devour," was sighted several times, and victims testified to its ferocity (1). (Sitting here in America reading this news item, I had to ask myself what the bottom half of the *manananggal* was doing!)

The vampire myth is global and can be traced as far back as *The Odyssey*; anthropologically it has been associated with cyclic imagery (within Greek civilization) relating the directional flow of blood to the organization of marriage rules and the proper movement of the soul to the afterworld (du Boulay 219-220). John Stevenson views the myth, as presented in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as retentive of these ancient roots, though posing Stoker's work as one which deals less with incest taboos than with the issue of exogamy (139). Others dispute such a narrow anthropological view of the vampire figure, arguing for its association with themes of displaced homoeroticism (Craft 108, Cranny-Francis 65). My task here, however, is not to discuss the vampire figure's enduring universality in world literature nor its sexual associations *per se*. Rather, I will focus on the relation of the literary vampire, primarily the nineteenth century phenomena, to the filmic vampire. In particular, I will focus on a specific attribute of Gothic fiction as it is transformed in the vampire filmography. The "lodging and dislodging of attributes and powers" (McCombs 256) conventional to the Gothic concerns of how and why certain powers and attributes of characters and of forces in the inanimate world are dislocated and relocated. A classic example of such "lodging and dislodging" occurs in E.T.A. Hoffman's untitled vampirism tale in the fourth volume of *The Serapion Brothers*. In this tale, the dialogue, in rationalizing the cadaver-like appearance of the baroness, who often takes nocturnal walks, posits both a medical and a superstitious explanation of her appearance

(Kamla 235, 242). Thus it becomes unclear to what source behaviors and states of being can be traced; that is, the Gothic "interweaves opposing realms of existence inside [itself], obfuscating the borderline between reality and fantasy so that the reader is often unsure to which realm" he or she should be oriented (242). I will reserve the majority of my comments on this particular convention for the three contemporary films I discuss at length: Tony Scott's THE HUNGER (1983), Jonathan Demme's THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991), and Francis Ford Coppola's BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (1992).

First, however, I will set up a grid through which I believe the corpus of vampire films should be viewed. I will then discuss the three contemporary films mentioned above as respective representative examples of the three distinct literary lineages of the vampire filmography, noting as I proceed the ways the individual filmmakers selected to "translate" the Gothic tendency to dislocate powers and attributes. I will conclude with a series of predictions concerning what is to come for the vampire genre.

The Grid

Three distinct lines, providing for some overlap, exist in the vampire filmography: these have their respective literary antecedents (1) in J. Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1872); (2) in thematic material common to John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819), and *Varney the Vampire; or, the Feast of Blood*, "a work...issued in serial form in the 1840s and reprinted in 1853 in penny parts." (Senf, *The Vampire* 42); and (3) in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

My division here is hardly original. The majority of scholars in the area of vampire literature would agree that these four works constitute the primary literary *oeuvre* surrounding the vampire figure. I will briefly outline the characteristics of each of these filmic lines, proffering this as a respectable framework through which to view individual films within the filmography.

The films derivative of J. Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* form, perhaps, the smallest group; and one clear reason why is their focus on the female vampire as part of female heterosexual and lesbian erotica as they both challenge patriarchal culture and pose feminist questions concerning, as Senf notes, the category of "woman" and the implication of some victims in their own victimization (*The Vampire* 48-52).

In this group we find such films as Dreyer's VAMPYR (1932); Vadim's ET MOURIR DE PLASIR (BLOOD AND ROSES [1960]); Hammer Karnstein's trilogy, THE VAMPIRE LOVERS (1970), LUST FOR A VAMPIRE (1970), and TWINS OF EVIL (1971); and Franco's VAMPYROS LESBOS (1970)—all based directly on *Carmilla*. There are other films which do not derive from LeFanu's *Carmilla* but which, nonetheless, deal with similar issues. I will discuss one of these, Tony Scott's THE HUNGER, in detail. And, of course, there is a great deal of drive-in fodder that might loosely fall into this category.

One should note that the films in this line, similar to those of the line derived from Stoker's *Dracula*, either omit or displace the narrative framework of their sources. Both LeFanu's and Stoker's narratives are "contained" in various documents, Stoker's in diary entries, letters, and news articles, and LeFanu's in a manuscript "presented in the form

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of a medical case history written by the subject [Laura] herself, and used by [a] Dr. Hesselius [with whom the narrator claims acquaintance] as an illustration for his essay on the 'strange subject' of our 'soul's dual existence'" (Bhalla 26).

Another line of films, which I see as a derivative of Polidori's *The Vampyre* and the *Varney, the Vampire* serial, is not as clear cut as the film descendants of LeFanu's and Stoker's works. Whereas films derived from these two authors' works maintain characters and events clearly traceable to their source, films in this category maintain only thematic relationship to their sources. I believe it is very simple to establish that Polidori's *The Vampyre* and *Varney, the Vampire* are the flip sides of the same coin. Polidori's work focuses on the metaphorical element of vampirism in human relations, a metaphor which was highly operative in the works of the Brontes, Eliot, and Dickens (Senf, "Polidori's" 197). Polidori's story, which grew out of a writer's challenge among Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, and Polidori during a vacation in Geneva and which resulted, as well, in Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Byron's "A Fragment" (197-201), is often read as a stinging criticism of the social vampirism, notably of Byron himself, who was the model, many believe, of Polidori's vampire, Lord Ruthven (201-202). *Varney, the Vampire*, though it deals with a real vampire, is so focused on the social ills of London society and the manner in which that society produces a mass of ready victims (Senf, *The Vampire* 47; Bhalla 22) that it is easy enough to forget that the horror of it is found in the vampire. As Senf notes, "Whether Varney himself is a supernatural being or not, the novel, as a whole, focuses on ordinary human evil, not supernatural evil" (46).

I believe we can find modern counterparts of this literary ancestor in criminological vampire films of our era, from *THE NIGHT STALKER*, an immensely popular pilot feature which became a series and features a real vampire, to the Academy Award-busting *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, which, I will argue later, must be considered a member of the vampire filmography. The focus of such films is on issues of criminal victimization (primarily of females) as it is compounded with vampiric psychopathy (mutilation, cannibalization, etc.). This line of films has cousins derivative of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the famous Jack the Ripper case, which, of course, are out of the latter days of the Victorian industrial age as opposed to the early part of the century, when Polidori was writing. To suggest an approach to distinguishing these cousins from the vampire filmography proper, I would encourage paying attention to the victimizer's *modus operandi* (M.O.). A powerful, seductive figure typifies the vampire-oriented study. Mr. Hyde and Jack the Ripper assaulted rather than seduced.

A third line of vampire films is that one with which we are most familiar. Derivative of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, these films are the most "faithful," among the filmography, to the source. Discounting shifts of emphasis, the earlier-mentioned displacement and/or omission of narrative frames, and a tendency to combine/confuse characters, such as Lucy Westenra with Mina Harker or Jonathan Seward with van Helsing, these films retain an emphasis, as Bhalla has noted, on the social relations of East and West, the aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and working class, and on the horror of the vampire and the effect on his victim, and on the degenerate condition of the city (London) (35). These films also retain attention, in a variety of repressive filmic conventions, on the erotic content of the novel, which itself is repressed, as Craft has observed, in a variety of narrative displacements in the novel's structure (108).

Whether a film maker's orientation is Marxist (Werner Herzog's *NOSFERATU* [1979]) or expressionist (Murnau's *NOSFERATU* [1922]) or yet something else, these dualities and displacements remain. Beside Herzog's and Murnau's notable efforts in this lineage, one can cite the Bela Lugosi vehicle, Todd Browning's *DRACULA* (1931), *THE HORROR OF DRACULA* (1958), featuring Christopher

Lee, and any number further of Hammer Films' Christopher Lee *Dracula* series, which persisted even while Hollywood spiraled, in the '40s and '50s, into series, comedies, spinoffs, and *Dracula-Werewolf-Frankenstein* combos, drive-in erotica, and the like (McNally and Florescu, "Filmography" 217). The Stoker-based films after the late '60s, such as Roman Polanski's *DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES* (1967), *DRACULA* (1979) with Frank Langella, *LOVE AT FIRST BITE* (1979), with George Hamilton, *BLACULA* (1971), *THE VAMPIRE'S KISS* (1989) with Nicholas Cage, and *BUFFY, THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* (1992), I can only read as part of a trend in the modern era to have to do with Stoker only by way of decodifying the genre. Themes are contemporary and entertaining, focusing on yuppies, minorities, women's lib, and just plain parodies of the genre. I will focus more on these latter films in my concluding remarks on the future of the vampire filmography. Coppola's effort, *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* is not part of their decodifying, parodying trend, except perhaps very subtly (too subtly). I will discuss it, in turn, in the next section of my essay, devoted to discussing three contemporary representatives of the lineages I have outlined here.

Three Contemporary Films

THE HUNGER (1983)

Tony Scott's *THE HUNGER*, with Catherine Deneuve, David Bowie, and Susan Sarandon, has affinities with the criminology line of the vampire's filmography insofar as it is set in the 1980s, and poses to us the serial nature of vampirism and its pathological affinity with a culture that defines and exploits youth and denies aging and death.

Inside the LeFanu lineage, however, *THE HUNGER* reads best. The lesbian eroticism of *Carmilla* thrives in Catherine Deneuve's bisexual vampire. Too, there is the film's consistent reference to the vampire's aristocratic lineage, similar to *Carmilla*'s, which Bhalla construes as LeFanu's assignment of a metaphorical vampirism inherent to the class structure (28). In *THE HUNGER* the vampire lives in opulent wealth surrounded by her "antiques," a decor collected over millennia as far back as the age of the Isis cult in Egypt, a charm from which age the Deneuve vampire uses to penetrate her victim's bodies.

The victim's role in his/her victimization, a theme of *Carmilla* and, in part, a theme of the criminological line of the vampire filmography, is operative in *THE HUNGER*. Thus Susan Sarandon, playing a scientist attempting to discover what ages humans, is very much drawn to the ancient yet ageless aspect of the Deneuve vampire and the two become "lovers." Deneuve's motivation is not only predatory: in the film, only one vampire lover can be functional at a given time; the others, aged, are filed away in a spare room. Thus the Deneuve vampire, stricken with her lonely eternal youthfulness, desires the knowledge Sarandon's character might possess.

Operative in this film, too, as in all three lines of the filmography, is the portrayal of a type of telepathy between victim and victimizer. Reminiscent of the *Dracula* films in which the victim throws open her window or bears her throat for no obvious reason, in this film this telepathy is situated in the context of a very realistically portrayed lesbian encounter in which two women set up a covert tryst, acutely aware of the necessity of relying on non-verbal cues, body language, and eye contact to avert suspicion. This detail is fascinating insofar as it is, to some extent, subversive to the trend in vampire films derivative of Stoker to portray these Gothic "lodgings and dislodgings of powers and attributes" (McComb 256) as instances of telepathic control of the vampire over the victim. In *THE HUNGER* this dislodging of powers is portrayed not so much as hysteric submissiveness as the outcome of a mutual decision based, albeit, on the irrational and intuitive premise that the women must be discreet in their mutual attraction. Such a method underscores the message of *Carmilla*, ultimately,

that the victim is implicated in her victimization. And the point is reified by the fact that Deneuve's and, earlier, David Bowie's victims are normally a "score" from a night out in a popular disco—that is, the victims' immorality leads to their plight. Still, notably, Sarandon's character is not victimized in quite this way, mimicking the film's departure in degree from the traditional complicity of the victim in the line of the vampire filmography derived from LeFanu's *Carmilla* and indicating, as well, the film's departure from the notion derived from Stoker, that the victim is entirely swayed by the vampire and has lost self-control.

If we can say that *THE HUNGER* provides some twists on the *Carmilla* theme, we cannot say that it is ultimately subversive of them. Inez Hedges in her book *Breaking the Frame* (1991) does a very nice job of demonstrating how traditional gender and sexual roles are codified and upheld in *THE HUNGER*.

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991)

The second contemporary film I intend to discuss is Jonathan Demme's *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. Derivative of the criminological lines of the vampire filmography, the feminist issues raised by this film also revolve around a moment of "telepathy" or dislodging of powers as it is translated in film.

When I first saw *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, I knew I had seen a new and powerful type of horror film, one that possessed more horror for me than I had ever felt previously in those young years of my life when I viewed late night reruns of Hammer films' series featuring Christopher Lee as Dracula. I intuited that *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* had a feminist message, as Jodie Foster later urged us to understand in her Oscar night acceptance speech for Best Actress, but, at that point, I had not decided what that message was. As I began to examine my response to this film, I was surprised to find that I was framing the film inside of my pre-occupation with the vampire film, which I had been studying for a year at that point in preparation for writing this article. And I realized, after a bit, that neither my original response nor my later observation of this vampire motif was off the mark.

The film's title focuses the audience on this dual preoccupation. The silencing of the lambs refers to the one moment in the film when Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), the cannibalist serial killer, gains insight into the motivational impulse that led Agent Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) to select her career in the field of crime detection, traditionally a masculine field of employment. That impulse, he finds, is buried in Starling's memory of her adolescent and typically female response to the slaughtering of the lambs on the sheep ranch of her adopted family: she was repelled by the killing of innocents and hysterically ran away. It is not irrelevant, of course, that Starling was an orphan. She is a set-up for being alternatively "fathered." I will return to Starling's confession as it relates to the film's feminism, but, first, I wish to establish the scene's allusion to the vampire myth.

The inverted Christian symbology of the suffering lamb is obvious; Lecter is the slaughterer of innocents just as was Dracula, who could only be dissuaded from his vocation when a crucifix was held in his range of vision. Outside of this scene but in context with its emphasis on a "communion" (Murphy 32) between Lecter and Starling, to which I shall return shortly, the film alludes to the vampire myth, as presented in Bram Stoker's novel, quite directly. The young serial killer, Buffalo Bill (concerning whom Starling seeks information from Lecter, his former psychiatric therapist), has an unusual M.O. He places a death's head moth in the mouths of his victims. This M.O. is part of his psychopathic attachment to images of butterflies, a motif of decoration in his home, and quite clearly an image for him of transformation. (Buffalo Bill wishes to have his sex changed, through Lecter.) This detail of the moth is a direct nod to Stoker's novel, in which Renfield,

a psychopath Dracula uses as a kind of henchman, explains to Dr. Van Helsing that Dracula began to gain control over him by "sending in [to the asylum] such delicacies as the Acheronta Atropos of the Sphinges, what you call the death's head moth" (Stoker 28). But the allusion goes far beyond being just a nod, for it clearly refers us to an inversion of a Christian symbology involving, as Murphy notes, transubstantiation, a doctrine Lecter, by cannibalistic example, has taught his various psychotic serial killer clients/sons in the same way Dracula, the blood sucker, teaches it to his "son", Renfield (31). In addition, the appliqué of a transsexual motif over this broader allusion to transubstantiation in the film has a specific reference to the Stoker vampire insofar as Stoker's vampiric tale is one concerning gender and sexuality as John Stevenson, alertly, has pointed out, in his observation that, in Stoker's novel, the vampire, "like Tiresias, ... has looked at sex from both sides" (146). The film's allusion to the related tropes of transubstantiation and transsexualism in the vampire myth is, I am convinced, no accident, for it is this very compound of tropes that does indeed operate as the latent content of Stoker's novel; and it is this same compounded trope—the confusion of gender identity fused with the issue of power relations—that typifies so much of the psychotic violence, in particular against women, in contemporary society; it was clearly some aspects of this fused trope at work in the mind of Jeffrey Dahmer, and it is this same fusion of tropes that develops around communion of soul to soul, the very substance of human (gendered) relations as they are represented to us in the climactic scene already referred to, in which Lecter refers to Starling's need to "silence the lambs."

It is taxing to explain the feminist message in this scene. My first tendency was to see this scene as inappropriately subversive of the progressive feminism of the film wherein the lead female character plays a daring young agent, comfortable enough in her feminism to correct her boss's sexist terminology and to be ambitious in a field, criminology, where women are not usually included, except in the most minimal ways—that is, permitted under federal statute, and excluded from the real network of communication and ranking hierarchy. But this initial reading of the scene was based on the superficialities that, somehow, Agent Starling's confession is elicited by Hannibal Lecter's strong persuasive powers, much as if Starling is the "hypnotized" victim of Dracula, her power dislodged by his own, as is that of the typical victim of Dracula. This reading would be reified by the fact that, at the film's end, agent Starling, contacted by phone at her ceremonial graduation from the FBI academy by Lecter (how much he must have researched her life to call at such a place and time!), can be trusted to be very much at the mercy of Lecter, who has escaped and informs her he is "having an old friend for dinner" with a gruesome chuckle.

But such an interpretation begins to fail, if it doesn't quite, if one considers that Starling doesn't confess to Lecter so much as strike with him a "Mephistophelian bargain—in essence, his knowledge for her soul" (Murphy 32). In this view, Starling remains self-possessed; in fact, she is a self-starter, becoming and behaving more and more like "one of the boys" of crime fighting insofar as she is willing to break rules (her boss ordered her paternalistically to offer no knowledge of herself to Lecter, no matter what) to get her man. Lecter's call, in this case, typifies the behavior of so many literary criminals, a kind of homosocial bonding with the detective. The only problem, here, is that Starling is not a man. Of course, as many feminists have pointed out, progressive feminism's very problem is that it is modeled on a kind of de Beauvoirian feminism which proposes that women become like men in order to assume power. On the other hand, one could also view Starling's bargain as mere rebellion, a covert subversiveness typical of women who have accepted their "place" in the patriarchal system. In this latter case, Lecter's telephone call might be construed as a threat of the punishment Starling has earned for disobeying "the father," her boss.

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A third, and very different approach to this theme, is to view it in terms of radical feminism: Lecter's chivalry is pitiful, his need for real human communion is mournful, and Agent Starling, a woman whose basic motive is nurturant and clearly aware of masculine needs, coolly (shall one say, condescendingly?), gives him what he needs—permission to stroke her hand and see into her soul a bit. The telephone call then becomes not a threat but one more clear and dismal sign of Lecter's desire and emotional incapability of asking to have it fulfilled.

In a less-gendered interpretation of this scene, one might simply find an existential moral moment between the two: human need precipitates human bonding with all of its tangential moral obligations and responsibilities, inequities, and the like.

The feminism of the film resides in all of these possibilities and, as such, makes, perhaps, the feminism neither progressive nor essentialist nor existential but merely a question, that questioning being most like the post-modernist feminist approach. I might add here, in favor of approaching the film's feminist message as post-modernist, that what is really at stake is who is in power relative to the communion between Lecter and Starling. As in many vampire films and as in the Gothic literary tradition, powers and attributes are lodged and dislodged in the scene; and, since one is left unresolved concerning who or what power dislodged the other, one is left with the formidable task of finding no way to "place" this scene. Its impulse is resistant—post-modernistic, perhaps—and its feminism of this variety—perhaps. Whatever the case, the film is rich in this variety of feministic equivocation, and it enriches the vampire trope in which it is cast.

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (1992)

The final contemporary film I will discuss, Francis Ford Coppola's *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*, apparently intended to "bring life and respectability to the legendary Count who ... had been dishonored by the earlier horror films" (Louveire 3). So stated its co-producer and screenwriter, James Hart, of both his and Coppola's intentions after "an exclusive screening of the film" for college journalists (3). Certainly the title of the film led us all to conclude this would be so. But Coppola's film, unfortunately, did not "do for horror films what *APOCALYPSE NOW* did for the Vietnam genre" and "what *THE GODFATHER* did for the gangster genre," as Hart had hoped (3). Both Coppola, who should have known better, and Hart, a Texan whom I, a

Texan myself, wished better for, failed to achieve adaptational fidelity. The film is no more faithful to the original than its predecessors, but it is clearly a rightful member of the films of the Stoker line in the filmography which, to some degree, maintains the total fidelity which the more recent films (from the '70s through the '90s) in the line have overthrown in favor of humor, lightheartedness, and parody.

Dracula is a presence, and he has an effect in this film; unfortunately, one is not horrified at anything more than the fact that his volatility is that of those explosive soap-opera leading men, *Santa Barbara* style. Coppola's Count (Gary Oldham) lacks depth. Too, the Lucy Westenra character is exaggerated, as is her sexuality. At a low point in her physical health, she writhes orgasmically on the bed with the verve of a porno queen. There is not enough bad one can say about either the film or its pretense of fidelity; it was a complete disappointment and in no way horrifying, except in its tastelessness. From its operatic patterns of color and dress to its drippy and depthless (and unfounded) love story with Winona Ryder as a love-struck Mina Harker (the only movie Winona ever did well was *WELCOME HOME, ROXY CARMICHAEL*), the film smacks of pretentious artsiness and communicates nothing. Coppola's guest inclusion of Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing was the only redeeming aspect of the film, and clearly this selection was based on Coppola's tendency to rely on the "cultural memory of his audience" (Hedges 30), which could macabrely relate Van Helsing to Hannibal Lecter of *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. Even this, however, was a mistake. Hopkins should have played the Count, but, oh, that would be too obvious I suppose. Or he could have played both roles.

One thing Coppola did not fail to do was emphasize the narrative framework of Stoker's novel, a feature Hollywood has normally repressed. Unfortunately, Coppola emphasizes it in a nodding fashion: with subtitles indicating which letter or diary entry a particular scene comes from, in flashes of newspaper titles across the screen, and, more interestingly, by equating the camera with the Count.

That is, Coppola's efforts in this direction are weak and in no way up to the filmic task Stoker's novel poses. Bram Stoker's narrative techniques might be called "a set of reflections and meditations on the very nature of story-telling itself" (Mayne 26), and Stoker's era was much concerned with this documentary aspect of empiricism—that is, with the methodology of both scientific and lay reporting of observation and experience, (recall that the very popular and contemporaneous *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was also, toward its end, "epistolary"). If we grant that the issue of gender and sexuality as part of the larger questions posed by empirical philosophy, was most definitely an issue, repressed or not, in Stoker's novel, as most readers would concede it is—as, indeed, the screen writer, James Hart, points out that it is, in his statement that the movie "was meant to portray a woman's story" (Louveire 3)—if these facts are taken into consideration, then Coppola's efforts to adapt Stoker's narrative techniques are meager.

It would be better to say that Coppola is adapting Coppola. It has been in Coppola's vocabulary before to pose to his viewers "the uncertainty of words" (Hedges 30) in "a metacommentary of the authority of the cinema spectacle itself" (30), as observable in *APOCALYPSE NOW* where "Coppola himself plays the role of a television newsmen filming the attack: 'Don't look at the camera,' he shouts ... 'just go by like you're fighting'" (30). Coppola does use various camera effects (ultra-violet, sharply edited tracking shots, and the like) to identify the count's powerful, supernatural physical abilities to leap quickly, to see in the dark, etc., with those of the camera. And, of course, there is that scene where the Count, dressed like John Lennon, visits the newest vogue in London, the early, silent cinematograph, wherein he has a fantastical (near fatal) tryst with Mina. The viewer, I believe, is supposed "to get" that cinema, the storyteller, is implicated in all fantasy. Other notable allusions to cinema include the chase scene at the end, which, for unclear reasons, reads like a cowboy "cut 'em off at the



pass" sequence. What is so dismal about it all is how Coppola could fail to "quote" Stoker in favor of "quoting" himself or other cinema spectacles.

The only high point in all the tomfoolery about the camera and the cinema spectacle for me was the fact that Coppola proved my point: contemporary films of the vampire genre are somewhat equivocal concerning their literary ancestors' tendency to present either a hapless victim or an implicated one. If, in *THE HUNGER*, the victim is only somewhat at fault and if, in *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, the victim is more a potential than an actual one, or possibly not one at all, then in Coppola's film, the victim and the victimizer are both irrelevant: the camera is the vampire, the story its victim; the "attributes and powers" of the characters are dislodged by the storyteller. Such is faithful to Coppola's simplistic deconstructionist tendency—that is, his interest in critiquing and dissecting the apparatus of narration; but it does a disservice to Bram Stoker's original, tentative, and precocious philosophical flirtation with the contradictions inherent to empiricism and its construction of genre and sexuality.

The Future

In the vampire films to come, I believe that we can continue to expect a trend towards parody similar to that of *LOVE AT FIRST BITE* (1979) in which the vampire motif is used primarily to parody social trends. Possibly *BUFFY, THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* (1992) is, in its slap at '90s adolescents, such a film. I believe we can also expect more parody of the genre itself, as is contained in the recent film *VAMPIRES' KISS* (1989), which, while maintaining a critique of social trends, also parodies the specifics of the genre. Thus in *VAMPIRES' KISS*, the vampire impales himself, the victim of his own neurotic self-projection as a vampirific but impotent '80s corporate worker. Parody, insofar as it emphasizes representational conventions, is invariably one of the first signals that a genre is undergoing transformation via decodification, by which I refer to the laying bare, effacing, and transformation of a genre's conventions.

Another decodifying trend I anticipate is greater adaptational fidelity to literary source material. As I have observed throughout this essay, it is clear that very few filmmakers have dealt with the questions raised in the source material relative to narrative strategies, emphasis on gender relations, and evocation of mood. Only the very earliest directors, Murnau (*NOSFERATU* [1922]) and Dreyer (*VAMPYR* [1932]), seem to have attempted to find filmic expressions of these particular aspects of *Dracula* and *Carmilla* respectively. We may see more adaptations of the realist fiction which, Snef observed ("Polidori" 197), forms the basis for the metaphorical use of the vampire motif, such authors including Dickens, Eliot, and the Brontës. Surely Coppola's *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* (1992) will stimulate some of this interest in working inside this old genre again, inasmuch as it set forth to be a faithful adaptation and dismally failed.

I suspect, especially with Coppola's film on the scene, that we can also anticipate some European and Third World film attention to the vampire motif; but, in the decodifying trend I perceive to be at hand, I suggested there is likely to be an interest in pursuing the folkloric vampire, rather than the vampire of Victorian ancestry. I am looking to films which will seek the types of vampires we see represented in some of the stories of Gabriel García Márquez and the author of *That Obscure Bird of Night*. José Donoso, the *Manananggals*, as they represent, literarily and metaphorically, the fears, the thinking of a native peasantry inside of imperial colonies: too, since these colonies are now experiencing the economic dispossession by which they are called upon to leap into the information age or sink into an even greater economic oblivion (Toffler 394-96), surely we can expect some technological, science fictional orientation toward the *manananggals* motif. In fact, I anticipate across nations an orientation toward the

high-tech vampire film inasmuch as we know "numerous writers use a vampire as a generalized metaphor to explain some kind of exploitation" (Thompson 157). I expect these to be more engaging than the science fiction exploits of previous decades, *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*, directed by Edwin Dmytryk, being an especially notorious example. (Postproduced in a garage, this film features Bela Lugosi, by then insane and addicted, who died in mid-filming; hence the repetitive shots.)

Another process for decodifying the vampire genre will also engage, in part, science fiction. I am referring here to the distinct possibility that Hollywood and the giant independent film studios will begin to release films based on popular narratives, primarily by women, which focus on the frequently repressed content of the vampire myth associated with the female—as victim, as pre-Oedipal mother figure, as symbol of orality, reproduction, etc. This narrative urge has arisen in the science fiction vampire tales of Suzy McKee Charnas, author of *Walk to the End of the World*, *Motherlines*, and *The Vampire Tapestry*, as well as in the fiction of Anne Rice, including *Interview with the Vampire* and *The Vampire Lestat* and her new *The Tale of the Body Thief*. These writers and others have created "a number of sympathetic vampires, all in fiction published since 1980" (Gordon 227). Of course, to suggest that such films will be produced is not necessarily to label them as inclusively feminist, for, as Doane and Hodges have so astutely pointed out, Anne Rice falls prey to essentialist feminism "by idealizing the pre-Oedipal [insofar as the] degraded mother becomes a privileged mother and origin" (438); and we can rest assured that other writers working in the same genre of "feminist science fiction and gothic" are doing much the same. Too, these writers face the interventions of Hollywood conventions into their feminist visions, a reality Rice has recently deplored in her dismay at the casting of Tom Cruise in *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*. Nonetheless, films which portray these works can raise some of these questions, essentialist and otherwise, which underlie so very much of the displaced erotic content associated with the Victorian vampire.

Conclusion

There is a host of what Old English scholar Ed Duncan refers to as "interstitial beings" in our literary and film history. These beings, from Tiresias to Myra Breckenridge, Grendel to Gollum, from vampire to werewolf to Robo-Cop and the Six-Million Dollar Man, comprise a vast company involved, as is the genre of fantasy itself, in an unbelievable interrogation of our assumptions about "the real" and our habit of falling asleep inside the conventions of representation. It is my sense that filmmakers dealing with the vampire might have only begun to understand the interrogative capability of the vampire figure and that they will continue to deal with that capability in the future. And I and others will be viewing these future works, no doubt, ascertaining how the films engage questions of gender and sexuality and considering what methods of adaptation of their literary and cinematic forebears they use.

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A FORETASTE OF BLOOD TO COME

by Joe R. Christopher



For Mary Jane Mingus,
in memory of an autumn party . . .

SCENE ONE

[The curtains open (or the lights come up) on a large room in a mansion. The setting is the American Southwest — a Navajo rug or other motifs may be used to show this visually. At the center back, or perhaps off center to the right, is a double door (or perhaps an archway) opening to the front hall; on stage left, rear, is a short flight of stairs (open except for the banister), leading up to a landing before a door (these stairs and this door are there for symbolic purposes and will not be used until the third scene); below the stairs is a small bar with two stools; front left is a closet door with a chair beside it. On stage right is a large casement window with a window seat before it — this window seat opens and a person can get into the storage space thus provided (if possible, the window seat should slightly suggest a coffin). Beside the window hangs a bell cord. (In the first production, a fireplace appeared upper right — right of the double door against the back wall — but it has no function in the plot.) Oil-painting portraits or large photographs of sheep, with blue ribbons on the frames, hang on the walls, on either side of the double door.

[Two characters are on stage. One is Dr. Gratiano, down right, a slightly shabby physician. He may well be dark-skinned (Spanish American) with a moustache; however his English speech is only lightly accented. He is fiddling with an elaborate machine on wheels which suggests the sort of mad scientist's laboratory (in miniature) which used to infect movies; it is actually a machine for blood transfusions. The other character, named Ramsbottom, center stage, is an old Anglo in a wheelchair; he has a blanket over his legs — a woolly lamb with a blue bow is embroidered on the blanket.

[Although the first production was fairly realistic one, it is possible to imagine a version done with puppets. Or one done in the style of the *Commedia dell'Arte*. In the latter case, the four masks should be distributed in this manner: (1) Pantalone's mask to Ramsbottom, (2) Dottore's mask to Gratiano, (3) Harlequin's mask to Brother John, and (4) Scapin's or Pedrolino's (i.e., Pierrot's) mask to Horatio. Obviously,

only Gratiano's name comes from the *Commedia*, although here it is pretended to be Spanish rather than Italian. Gratiano's occasional Spanish oaths in this play are fairly mild; an actor who knows Spanish well can strengthen them if he wishes.]

RAMSBOTTOM: Where is this man you have invited? [He pounds the arm of his wheelchair.]

GRATIANO: Have patience, have patience! [Aside:] ¡Por Dios! [To Ramsbottom:] He said he could not get here before this evening.

RAMSBOTTOM: It is afternoon already! May his blood boil if he doesn't show up!

GRATIANO: Your blood will boil if you don't quiet down, Señor Ramsbottom. You know quite well that you're not supposed to get excited. Do not upset your machinery.

RAMSBOTTOM: There's nothing wrong with my heart. It's a healthy muscle. It pumps day after day as it's supposed to. [Turning anxious.] There is nothing wrong with my heart? You're not lying to me, are you?

GRATIANO: No, no — your heart's fine. [Aside:] Poisonous, perhaps. [Aloud:] Quite healthy. A good pump.

[Ramsbottom wheels himself over to a cord and pulls it; the doctor seems to finish his adjustments on his machinery and straightens up, and Ramsbottom turns his wheelchair to watch him.]

RAMSBOTTOM: It is ready?

GRATIANO: Sí, sí — I'll make the final adjustments just before the transfusion. [The housekeeper enters. She is a middle-aged Chicana, wearing a "military" uniform beneath her apron. The uniform should vaguely suggest the Salvation Army — more examples will appear in Scene II.]

MARTA: Yes, Señor Ramsbottom?

RAMSBOTTOM: Is dinner nearly ready?

MARTA: It is slightly early, Señor. So you wish the dinner hour moved up?

RAMSBOTTOM: No, no. Tell my nephew and wife — wherever they are — that it's time for our before-dinner cocktails. [To the doctor:]

Mixing drinks is the only thing that nephew of mine is good for.

GRATIANO: [Aside:] That's not what your wife thinks.

RAMSBOTTOM: What's that? Speak up, man!

GRATIANO: I said, I dote on nice drinks.

RAMSBOTTOM: Good, good. That's all, Marta; you may go.

[She starts to leave, but pauses by the door.]

RAMSBOTTOM: Have you ever thought about what long life means, Gratiano? [He stretches his arms upward in a gesture of control.] This measly three score and ten or twenty that we have is not enough; a man is just beginning to learn how to control things, what the price of everything is. He is just becoming mature when he's cut off, when he dies. It is not fair! [He catches himself as he's becoming emotional.] But of course you know — otherwise you wouldn't have come to me with your project, eh?

MARTA [before Gratiano can answer]: ¡Es una transgresión, that's what it is! All this talk about living beyond your time! God didn't intend for anyone to live beyond his time! . . . Except, as the blessed St. Bernardo says, by mutation. Those are caused by God. [Her voice has softened on the previous sentence, but she returns to her original tone:] But not by machine! That's sinful; that's not natural! If God meant for us to be tied to machines, He'd have created us with pistons instead of muscles.

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your blood, woman! Who asked you to stick your asinine, God-fearing nose into my business! [He hurls a plastic bottle (or something else the director wishes to substitute) from off a rack on the side of his wheelchair at her; unfortunately, he misses and the bottle does not break. Marta flees out the door.] Anything a man does is natural; he's part of nature, isn't he? [This last sentence starts out aimed at Marta; but, when she vanishes, his voice quiets and he ends saying it to Gratiano.]

Essays on Dark Fantasy

GRATIANO: It is the matter of definition, I suspect. [*He crosses to the bar and fixes himself a drink.*] Most people seem to think that only non-intellectual things are natural — perhaps for them thinking is not natural. [*At this point the nephew — Horatio Ramsbottom — appears in the doorway. He is the ninety-pound weakling of the old ads, with large glasses — but, as will appear, he is not effeminate. Aside:*] Speaking of the nonthinking and unnatural . . .

HORATIO: Hello, uncle. Hello, doctor. Did I hear some shouting?

RAMSBOTTOM: Nonsense, my boy. You know the doctor doesn't let me shout anymore.

GRATIANO [*crossing to the hall door, looking out; to Ramsbottom*]: Señor Ramsbottom, where did you get that housekeeper?

RAMSBOTTOM: She came with the last herd of sheep. She's an abandoned bassoon from our closet full of the band instruments. [*He gestures toward the closet, chuckling; then he catches himself up.*] No, actually she's been here for many years — it's just since she got converted two months ago that she's been bothersome. [*He begins to forget that the others are there.*] Why, I remember how she was years ago . . . lots of things were natural then . . . and my nature was much stronger! [*He hits the arm of his chair, which recalls him to the immediate situation: he looks at his nephew.*] Er, yes — that was before I married your new aunt, my boy. Where is she, by the way?

HORATIO: The housekeeper?

RAMSBOTTOM: My wife, you young idiot!

HORATIO: Why, when I left her just a few minutes ago, she was going to get into — that is, change into — some evening clothes. [*Desperately:*] Isn't it about time for cocktails, uncle?

RAMSBOTTOM: Of course! Why do you think I sent for you?

HORATIO: You sent for me?

RAMSBOTTOM: Don't echo me! Where are the cocktails?

[*The nephew rushes to the bar. As the following conversation continues, he mixes four drinks.*]

RAMSBOTTOM [*to Gratiano*]: At least, anything I want to do is natural. And that machine is going to make it possible. [*Ramsbottom and Gratiano have come together across the room from Horatio; Ramsbottom speaks in a rather unsuccessful attempt to keep his voice from carrying.*] I'll disappoint that young man, at least — he's just waiting for me to die so he can inherit the bitch — er, the dogs and the sheep, the ranch, that is. [*He glares at the doctor as if daring him to read some other meaning into his phrasing.*] But I'm going to outlive him! How does the song go, "The golden boy will turn to dust"? [*The doctor, at his gesture toward his nephew, takes hold the chair and rolls Ramsbottom in that direction; they reach the nephew and the liquor in time to pick up the first two glasses. Gratiano pours the new drink into a previous glass.*]

GRATIANO [*raising his glass to the light*]: Here is the true gold, that which never faileth. [*He sips.*] Money exists only to buy tequila; machines are built only to make money to buy tequila; the whole world is ransacked — aluminum, beryllium, actinium — but to build machines to make money to buy tequila. [*He turns directly to Ramsbottom:*] And you talk of blood — of the blood which is the life: I tell you no blood is worth half of a bottle of tequila.

RAMSBOTTOM: The blood is the life. And life is power.

HORATIO [*interrupting as he crosses right center, to sit on the window seat; he takes his drink with him*]: "I sometimes wonder what the vintners buy / One half so precious as the stuff they sell."

RAMSBOTTOM: What? [*He and Gratiano stare at Horatio.*]

HORATIO: It . . . it's a quotation.

RAMSBOTTOM: Harrumph! [*Ramsbottom has his back to his nephew, and continues, speaking to the doctor, in a lower tone:*]

There's bad blood in my sister's line; I knew my nephew was no good for our purposes. I thought about him, but we want something better than that. This man that's coming —

GRATIANO: A count, *un hidalgo*, some sort of European royalty. Not

the best line in Europe, no doubt — out of the Balkans, I believe — but this time you cannot be too choosy. Next time you will have a chance to prepare properly.

RAMSBOTTOM: Blue blood! [*He waves his hand.*] I know it's just a metaphor, but there's some truth to it anyway. Those European families have always properly chosen whom their children will marry. [*The door opens and his wife, Candace (pronounced with the accent on the first syllable) enters. She is much younger than her husband, and heavily made up. Archetypally, she should be a blonde. Her dress for dinner leaves her with bare arms, nearly bare shoulders, and a décolletage which plunges to her navel — in short, she is dressing formally. She pauses for effect.*]

GRATIANO [*aside*]: Speaking of choices in marriage — [*Horatio manages to spill his drink by the window seat.*]

HORATIO: Oops! How silly of me; I dropped it. [*He produces a large lacey handkerchief out of some pocket and begins mopping "it" up.*]

CANDACE [*undulating toward Horatio*]: Have you fixed a drink for little ole me? [*With a foolish smile, Horatio rushes across to the bar, grabs up the drink he made earlier and scurries to her nearly tripping on the way.*]

HORATIO: Here you are. I made it your favorite way.

CANDACE: Ooooo! All for me? You is a good ums. [*She fiddles with his tie, if he's wearing one.*]

RAMSBOTTOM [*rolling in his wheelchair down center*]: Damn your blood! Heel, bitch! [*Candace looks around in wide-eyed amazement.*]

CANDACE: Who're you talking to, Snookums? [*This is said innocently, not in irritation.*]

GRATIANO [*who has drifted toward the couple, saving the situation*]: Er, Señor Lambkin, I believe I would like another margarita before dinner. [*The nephew takes the hint and the glass and returns to the bar; Gratiano follows him.*]

RAMSBOTTOM: Candace. [*She undulates toward him — evidently she can't help it. Ramsbottom takes a look at the doctor and his nephew, to make certain they are out of earshot.*] I know our marriage has not been perfectly satisfactory for you, my dear. But I think that tonight I can give you what you've been waiting for.

CANDACE: Ooooo! My allowance, this early in the month?

RAMSBOTTOM: No, no! [*But it is too late; he sees that Horatio and Gratiano have reacted to her squeal (or was it a coo?); they are watching and listening.*] I'll explain to you later — at bed time, my dear. [*Hastily:*] But you won't be sorry for waiting.

CANDACE [*smiling brightly, as if she understood what he meant*]: Of course not, Snookums — it's only five or six hours. . . . And I'll have to get up early, so I can get to town in time to do some shopping. Ooooo! I just love shopping.

GRATIANO [*aside*]: That is one of the things she loves. . . .

RAMSBOTTOM [*rolling his chair toward the bar*]: What's that, doctor? Speak up, speak up!

GRATIANO: I said, this is a wonderful drink — ah, *eccloves*!

RAMSBOTTOM: Eccloves? That's a margarita. Is eccloves Spanish?

GRATIANO: No, no — *eccloves* is a — medical term; it means it is very good. [*Aside:*] I wish I had thought to say "By Jove" instead.

[*Back to Ramsbottom:*] We doctors use it to communicate among ourselves — to mark the best types of treatments, you know.

RAMSBOTTOM: I've never seen it.

GRATIANO [*sadly*]: No, *es lástima*, that is the pity of it; so few treatments are any good.

HORATIO: "Physician, heal thyself."

RAMSBOTTOM: What?

HORATIO: It . . . it's another quotation — about doctors, this time, you know.

RAMSBOTTOM: Quite! [*He turns his wheelchair so his back is toward his nephew.*]

[*Candace suddenly becomes conscious of the doctor's machine; her*

face lights up, and she moves toward it.]

CANDACE: Ooooo! Tinkertoys. I haven't seen anything like this for years.

RAMSBOTTOM: Doctor, the machine!

GRATIANO [simultaneously with Ramsbottom]: ¡Por Dios! That's expensive! [The word expensive catches Candace's attention, and she looks toward the doctor, who's hurrying toward her and the machine, as she continues her drift toward the "tinkertoys."]

CANDACE: Is it very expensive? I just love expensive things. [She turns her attention to the machine just as the doctor reaches her — they may circle the machine opposite each other.] What does this do? [She turns a valve which comes off in her hand. Note: in the original production, she pressed a button while doing this and compressed air blew some talcum powder toward the audience.] This can't be very expensive — it doesn't stay together.

GRATIANO: Believe me, my dear, it is very expensive. But it is also fragile — like you. [He has her by the arm, having gotten the valve from her on his first sentence, and guides her back toward her husband.] It has a rare delicacy, and must be admired from a distance, like . . . like you. [A warmth, not just speaking down, comes into his voice as he continues.] Have you ever drunk a — ah — grasshopper, my dear? [At her look of puzzlement:] It is the name of a drink. Well, the drink is a blend of creme de menthe, creme de cacao, and cream itself — real cow's cream. [She starts back to the machine; he realizes that she is gone only a sentence or two later, and catches her before she gets all the way to the machine.] It perhaps sounds forced on the basis of names, and certainly grasshopper is a poor name for it — except that the creme de menthe does make it green; [at this point he realizes she is gone] but the truth is that these three ingredients, mixed in equal measure, combine perfectly to produce a rich drink. Rich is perhaps the only term for it, not sharp, not tangy, not bitter — just smooth and rich. [He by this time has her back by her husband's wheelchair.] Ah . . . sí . . . well, that is the way your husband is, too. [He leaves her by Ramsbottom and goes for the bar and another drink.]

CANDACE [at his retreating back]: Ooooo! You do know how to make a girl feel important. [It is wasted; the doctor is more interested in his drink. Perhaps she sticks out her tongue at his back when she realizes he is not paying attention.]

RAMSBOTTOM: Damnation! Can the machine be fixed?

GRATIANO [turning with a bottle in his hand]: ¿Qué? Sí, sí, no problem. I have a replacement for the valve. Just as soon as I have another drink . . .

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your blood if you muddle this through your drinking!

GRATIANO: No problem, no problem. [He is pouring, and it does not seem clear whether he is referring to the valve or the pouring.]

HORATIO: Could I help to fix your machine, uncle?

RAMSBOTTOM [pounding his wheelchair arm]: You touch that machine, and I'll drink your blood! [Turning his wheelchair so he faces his nephew:] I'll grind your cullions and feed them to the sheep. I'll disinher — [But he becomes aware that the hall door has opened, and the housekeeper is there.] Well, Marta — is dinner ready? [This is almost a snarl — taking out on her his feelings of the moment.]

MARTA: In ten minutes, Señor. But now I wish to announce — Vladimir, Count Viscosity!

[If the director thinks the audience is not likely to pick up the obvious, the following two lines of dialogue may be added.]

RAMSBOTTOM [aside to the doctor]: I though you said his name was Dracula.

GRATIANO [aside to Ramsbottom]: That is the English translation. [The count enters; his skin is very white, his lips are blood red, his eyes are sunken (shadowed), and his two front teeth are pointed; he is wearing a cape. In the first production, a smoke box produced a cloud just as he appeared in the doorway.]

RAMSBOTTOM: Doctor, I believe this is your guest.

GRATIANO: Ah yes — [he is genial because he has managed to get down a huge gulp] — Count, how good it is you were able to come. ¡Bien venido! [Shakes hands.] This is your host, Señor Ramsbottom, whose impressive ranch this is. And, Ramsbottom, I know how you have expected your guest, who has come to see our little experiment. [It would not be inappropriate for the doctor to nudge Ramsbottom on the see.]

RAMSBOTTOM [who has wheeled himself toward the count]: Fine, fine! Always glad to have an observer [perhaps he nudges the doctor back] at these little contributions to science. [He shakes the count's hand:] Damnation but your hand is cold! [A sudden thought:] You're not anemic, are you?

THE COUNT [speaking always with a Slavic accent, hissing his s's, rolling his r's, and using his hands to gesture with as he speaks]: Ah, mine host, how happy this poor parasite is to have a host!

GRATIANO: But your blood condition, Count? Ah, we do not want to cause you to overexert yourself.

THE COUNT: Ah, my blood condition! No doubt you as a doctor are worried about my blood condition; but I am not worried. It is not what you know as anemia — otherwise I would not be as active as I am; and it's not low blood pressure neither — not what you know as low blood pressure. I am nearly healthy; just a little time with mine host, and I will be perfectly healthy again!

HORATIO [after clearing his throat]: Hello, I don't think we were introduced — I'm Horatio Lambkin, your host's nephew. I'm very glad to meet you. [He shakes hands with the count.]

THE COUNT: Ah, what a nice, fresh, tender little Lambkin you are! I am most happy to meet you!

GRATIANO: Ah yes — dispense usted, I'm sorry my concern about your health made me forget the courtesies. And I'd also like you to meet Señora Ramsbottom.

[Candace is downstage front, and the Count crosses down to her; he takes her hands in his, and kisses them; then, holding her left hand in his right, he works his way up her arm with kisses (they will be more or less facing the audience as he does this, with the Count standing behind the arm he is kissing); finally, reaching her shoulder, he tries for her throat.]

CANDACE [squirming just barely out of his "kiss's" reach]: Ooooo! What big teeth you have, grandpa! [Fast curtain or sudden blackout.]



SCENE II

[The scene remains the same. As the lights come up, the various characters of the previous scene are filing back in the main door; the doctor is pushing Ramsbottom's wheelchair. They go toward the window; Candace goes to a bar stool and perches; the Count follows her to the end of the bar. Horatio is left in the center rear of the stage.]

RAMSBOTTOM [as they enter]: Count, you didn't eat your mutton at dinner.

HORATIO: Or your vegetables.

GRATIANO: Or drink your wine.

THE COUNT: Ah, mine friends, how I appreciate your concern over me. But I am fine, fine! Doctor, you will remember when we met at that dinner party that I did not eat much. Never, early in the evening! But later on, I feast!

RAMSBOTTOM: Harrumph! I'll tell Marta to leave some things out for you.

THE COUNT: Do not bother, do not bother at all! I will find my own food when the time comes. . . . [He drifts from the bar toward Horatio, who moves away.]

GRATIANO [crossing toward the bar and gesturing at the door]: Speaking of food, *Señor* Ramsbottom, what does that housekeeper do to your meat? [Candace ogle the doctor.]

RAMSBOTTOM [moodily]: She drains it of blood — that is, for the last two months, ever since she got converted, the mutton has been kosher. [He rolls the wheelchair to stage center.]

HORATIO: Oh, she converted to Judaism? She didn't tell me that.

RAMSBOTTOM: No, you idiot, to something called the Army of God.

GRATIANO [pouring himself a drink and ignoring Candace]: But they must believe in the dietary restrictions.

CANDACE: Isn't that nice? [She is trying to decide between the doctor (who is drinking) and the Horatio-Count group; the latter wins, and she starts tentatively toward them.] Oooooo! [at the Count:] as I always say, a person should believe in something. [Candace and the Count are by the window seat, Horatio slipping away from the Count — and ending up near the bar.]

GRATIANO [aside]: Even if its foundation is a bed . . .

THE COUNT [patting Candace's arm, but speaking to Ramsbottom]: I would very much like to speak to your housekeeper, as you call her; I wish to know about mine — ah — trunk; I asked that it be put in the storm cellar. . . . [Ramsbottom and the doctor look at him oddly, but

they are obviously determined to keep their peace with their guest.]

HORATIO [not so restrained]: The storm cellar! Why was that?

There's nothing down there but spiders and cobwebs.

THE COUNT: That's fine, that's fine. I love spiders! But it's for mine nervousness, you see. I stay up late, yes, very late; but when I sleep I wish to be undisturbed. If one stays in bedrooms, maids are always bustling in, wanting to raise the window shades. To let in that hideous, disfiguring sunlight.

GRATIANO [aside]: ¡Por supuesto! So that's why he's so pale. . . .

THE COUNT: But if one sleeps in the earth, he finds true rest, no disturbance. And besides, here in the American Southwest, there are so many storms I did not find in the old country. You have hurricanes, no?

HORATIO: Tornadoes, yes.

THE COUNT: And other storms. [He sits beside Candace on the window seat; puts his arm around her and runs his hand up and down her arm — up to her neck at times.] Who knows what sort of storms you have in this flat country? So it is better I sleep in the storm cellar, you see. [He pauses, while everybody looks puzzled as how to reply.]

CANDACE: Oooooo! I don't like the cobwebs down there. [She waves her hands as if trying to eliminate the webs.]

THE COUNT: Of course not — yet! These things grow on you as you get older. After a while the spiders are not upset by you and you are not upset by the spiders. It is a peaceful coexistence, yes?

GRATIANO: *Sí, sí, cómo no!* That is what we all believe in. I coexist peacefully with tequila, *por ejemplo*. [He raises his glass.] But I cannot say what it does for the agave plant.

HORATIO [who is perched on a bar stool by this time]: Dr. Gratiano, somebody said that man is just a machine for turning sparkling wine into urine.

RAMSBOTTOM [pounding his wheelchair arm]: I hate people who are constantly quoting; they have no original thoughts! They are carbon paper!

CANDACE: I don't know, Snookums — some of the things Horatio can quote when we're alone aren't like anything I ever supposed people wrote down.

THE COUNT: Besides, he is wrong [rising, crossing toward (but not to) Horatio] or, that is to say, the man you are quoting is wrong; he forgets the blood. [Almost to himself:] There is nothing better than blood with a slight alcoholic content. . . . [Coming back to the present:] But I do now need to speak to the housekeeper. [He starts toward a door — the door to the closet.]

RAMSBOTTOM: Damnation! not that door!

GRATIANO [aside]: I knew he would forget to be pleasant to our guest. [To the count:] That is the closet, I am afraid.

CANDACE: Ooooo, yes! That's where the horns are.

THE COUNT: Horns? [Upstage a step.]

GRATIANO: She means the musical instruments. *Señor* Lambkin, didn't you tell me that they were left here in hock?

HORATIO: Yes, by a carnival . . . or circus . . . two years ago — the Great Southwestern Circus, it was — they wanted to graze their bison on uncle's grassland.

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn their blood! They never did pay me for the sheep the bison trampled — and those roustabouts roasted them, too!

CANDACE: Do you love horns, Mr. Count?

THE COUNT: Shall we go into the closet and consider them, my dear? I am certain we can have a penetrating discussion, a pointed agreement, on your musical taste. [Candace crosses toward the Count.]

RAMSBOTTOM [turning his chair toward the window, not conscious of this by-play]: But I got back; I roasted one of their buffalo! Damn its old blood! It tasted awful. And they still owe me for a week's forage.

HORATIO [as Candace reaches the closet and starts to open the door]: Candace! [When the Count looks at him with a smile:] Oh, that



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is, Count Vladimir, don't you need to talk to the housekeeper?

THE COUNT: Ah yes, yes, I had forgotten. *[To Candace:]* Forgive me, my dear; a little bit later, perhaps, yes?

HORATIO *[continuing his pressure]*: Here, let me ring for her. *[He pulls the cord.]*

CANDACE *[pouting]*: I don't know why you won't discuss music with me. You don't think I know enough. I do — I do know how to make music!

RAMSBOTTOM *[to himself]*: I couldn't keep the buffalo; they were more trouble than they were worth. But what good are band instruments?

GRATIANO *[aside]*: The tone deaf have no pitch to rise to . . .

RAMSBOTTOM *[looking at the doctor suspiciously]*: You keep muttering, doctor! Have you fixed the valve?

GRATIANO: You saw me fix it before dinner!

RAMSBOTTOM: Oh, yes, yes, that's right! I forget. My age is creeping up on me. If it were not for tonight — for your machine, doctor! — I would be facing the eternal darkness. All power slipping away. . .

The ranch going to an idiotic heir, whose blood is not good enough, even if it is my sister's. . . Power, power lost! Decayed in the tomb . . .

THE COUNT *[caught by this vision]*: One need not decay there; immortality is its own goal and its own reward; that end justifies the means — for the man who does not die there is no day of judgment, there is life eternal here on earth! Who would not trade his life in the sun for an eternal life beneath the moon? *[Ramsbottom has turned his wheelchair towards the Count.]*

RAMSBOTTOM: Who would not trade the life of other men for his own life? For the blood is the life, and — *[His attention is caught by the opening the door from the hall.]* Marta? Who are you?

[The couple who have appeared in the doorway — Brother John and Sister Mary — are dressed in uniforms vaguely reminiscent of the Salvation Army, like Marta's; since their theology is going to prove very much like that of the Jehovah's Witnesses, these uniforms are useful to indicate a difference. There is no special reason for this couple to be of any particular race; their age is fairly young; they are not married to each other. Probably Sister Mary is dark haired, to contrast with Candace. Brother John's part needs to be played slightly slickly throughout.]

BROTHER JOHN: We were praying with Sister Marta when you rang. We said it was an answer to our petitions. We have come to convert you from eating blood.

GRATIANO *[aside]*: ¡*Por Dios!* Kosher Christians!

SISTER MARY: We want to enlist you in the Army of God! To prepare you to get up when the Great Reveille is sounded! *[She clicks a pair of castanets and perhaps does something like a Highland Fling.]*

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your army blankets! Where is Marta? How dare she let you in?

BROTHER JOHN: We forgive you, brother!

SISTER MARY: Curse us, revile us! Our reward will be greater! *[Castanets again.]*

BROTHER JOHN: You also need to give orders about how your sheep will be slaughtered. It is not enough that you do not sin yourself in eating blood; you must also not cause others to sin.

SISTER MARY: Amen! Hallelujah. *[Castanets with a leap in the air.]*

RAMSBOTTOM: You will tell me how to run my business? Damn your blood!

BROTHER JOHN: You will see these things differently when you're converted! Let me explain —

GRATIANO: Why don't you introduce yourselves if you're going to stay for a while?

BROTHER JOHN: Names are so unimportant to the messengers of God. *[With a smile:]* But if it's important to you, why surely! This is Sister Mary — Mary Alexander, in worldly terms — and I'm Brother John — John Barclay, in the same terms. *[No doubt he would become*

Brother Harley Quin in a Commedia dell'Arte version; if either appears Hispanic in a production, a Latino name may be substituted for those used here.]

CANDACE: Ooooo! I never had a brother of my own; will you really be like a brother to me, will you, John? *[She has reached him by this point, and has her hand on his arm.]* You look so handsome in your uniform!

THE COUNT *[who left the closet area slightly after Candace did]*: Ah, Sister Mary, I am so pleased to meet you! *[He kisses her hand.]* I hope you will stay late tonight, and tell me all about these beliefs of yours. I am fascinated, to be sure! *[He takes her arm and guides her toward the closet — she is not at all certain about this development.]*

BROTHER JOHN *[speaking mainly to Candace]*: Why, yes — we'll be most happy to explain our beliefs . . . to both of you! *[He may well be glancing at her cleavage at this line.]*

SISTER MARY: Salvation is at hand for you! *[She manages to grab hold of the chair by the closet door and get herself seated in it.]*

THE COUNT *[by or behind her chair]*: But it is not necessary for us to look at a cross, I hope? *[Aside:]* I have a psychological aversion to crosses — to Stars of David, too, for that matter!

HORATIO *[crossing to her]*: I also am glad to meet you, Sister Mary. I'm Horatio Lambkin.

RAMSBOTTOM *[cutting everybody off loudly]*: And I am most *un* happy to meet you! *[rolling to the cord and pulling it]*: I'm going to fire that idiot woman! I can only put up with so much piety! Why is everyone around me mad?

BROTHER JOHN *[moving a few steps toward him, leaving Candace behind]*: But you haven't heard our arguments yet.

SISTER MARY *[leaping from the chair and thus escaping both the Count and Horatio — up stage center, for a few steps]*: Convince him, brother! *[Horatio starts following her; when the conversation becomes religious, he shrugs and returns to the chair and sits.]*

BROTHER JOHN *[pulling a small book — presumably a Bible — from his pocket]*: We are commanded: “. . . you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water.”

SISTER MARY *[slightly louder than Brother John in each of these responses]*: Deuteronomy 12:16! *[Castanets.]*

BROTHER JOHN: And we are told that this applies to getting the blood out of meat: “. . . be sure that you do not eat the *blood*, for the *blood* is the *life*, and you shall not eat the *life* with the *flesh*.”

SISTER MARY: Deuteronomy 12:23. *[Castanets.]*

BROTHER JOHN: And we are told in the New Testament that the Law remains in force: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law . . .”

SISTER MARY: Matthew 5:17! *[Castanets, with a leap in the air.]*

BROTHER JOHN: Thus I have made clear the commandments for you, brother!

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your pious impudence! I don't believe in your Scripture; all I'm trying to do is live a long life in this world.

GRATIANO *[raising his glass]*: As *Señor* Lambkin might quote, “One world at a time!”

HORATIO: How lovely! *[Gratiano grimaces.]*

RAMSBOTTOM: I believe in money; I believe in power; I believe in life — in this world; and I believe in eating blood! *[This last is said in a dramatic whisper, aimed directly at the Army of God members.]*

SISTER MARY: We're being persecuted — hallelujah! *[Castanets.]*

RAMSBOTTOM *[pounding his wheelchair arms with both hands]*: Get them out of here!

THE COUNT *[seizing the opportunity and, as he crosses, Sister Mary's arm]*: Come with me, my dear; I am very interested . . . in what you say. *[He pulls her toward the large window above the window seat; as Candace speaks the following lines, they reach the window seat and step on to it; the Count opens the latch of the casement window and opens it, and they leave the room. Sister Mary is pulling*

back all the way.]

CANDACE [*grabbing hold of Brother John's arm*]: Ooooo! You know so much about the old-timey Law. [*She concentrates for a moment.*] Uh! [*Then she gets her idea.*] Do you know what musical instruments are okay in services? We have just lots of horns and things. BROTHER JOHN: King David used harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

SISTER MARY [*as she vanishes out the window*]: Second Samuel 6:5!

CANDACE: Ooooo! How much you know! Let's go look at the stuff in our closet. [*She has practically pulled him over to the closet before she says this.*]

HORATIO [*who has risen as the Count crossed the room and has reached the center of the room just as Candace and Brother John go the opposite direction*]: Candace! [*Candace gets the door open and pulls Brother John into the closet.*]

GRATIANO: ¡Extraño! I never thought they'd fit in there — it was full!

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn their blood! [*He hits the arm of his wheelchair.*] Doctor, get busy — I'm tired of waiting, I want to be like our active nobleman — even like that idiot preacher!

HORATIO: What do you want the doctor to do, uncle?

RAMSBOTTOM: Never mind! Go read a book of quotations!

GRATIANO [*who started over to the machine on Ramsbottom's "get busy"*]: There are really very few adjustments that need to be made; what we need is for the count to come back in here.

RAMSBOTTOM [*rolling himself over to the machine also*]: We can call him back in when we're ready; make your final adjustments.

[*As Gratiano fiddles with the machine, both he and Ramsbottom have their backs to the large window; as the following action takes place, the doctor also pours a fluid on a pad which he puts in a covered glass — and he shows Ramsbottom a blackjack. Suddenly, Sister Mary appears in the window — her military uniform has been ripped open at the neck, showing (in addition to her cleavage) a large gold cross on a chain around her neck; she enters the room.*]

HORATIO [*crossing toward her*]: My goodness, Sister Mary, what hap—

SISTER MARY [*holding a finger to her lips*]: Sssh! [*She looks at Ramsbottom and then back out the window.*] They're all sinners here! [*This is said pretty much to herself, but Horatio has reached her.*] What was that? [*She grabs his arm, while looking back out the window.*]

HORATIO: I didn't—

SISTER MARY [*with a forefinger to her lips*]: Ssssh! [*She looks around rather desperately; then she sees the window seat, opens it, and climbs in, pulling it shut over her — it bangs shut.*]

GRATIANO: ¿Qué pasa? What was that?

HORATIO: It was Sis—

RAMSBOTTOM: Are you still here? Why can't you let us concentrate, talking to yourself and slamming doors?

HORATIO: But it wasn't me; it was—

[*Suddenly there is the sound of a drum from the closet; all three look at the door.*]

GRATIANO: Great Bacchus! They are keeping time in there. Setting the rhythm, that is.

RAMSBOTTOM [*hitting his chair arm once again*]: Get the transfusion machine ready! [*He wheels himself toward the window.*] Count! Count! Where are you? Will you come here please?

HORATIO: Oh, is that machine for a transfusion? [*Taking a few steps toward the machine.*] But Marta was telling me just yesterday that that was sinful, that it was the same as eating blood. [*Meditatively.*] I wish I'd asked her more about the Army of God — I liked the way Brother John could quote Scripture; that sounded like even more fun that quoting poems.

RAMSBOTTOM: What happened to that housekeeper? I rang for her

ages ago.

GRATIANO: She probably knew your mood after the Army couple came in here.

HORATIO: Why are you setting up a transfusion here, rather than at the hospital? Marta told me that hospitals were very sinful places.

RAMSBOTTOM: Why don't you go transfuse a canary's brains into your skull?

HORATIO [*taking a few steps backward, his hands to heart*]: Did my question show a lack of intelligence?

GRATIANO [*aside*]: No, but that question did. . . .

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your brains! No, no more than a bird shows feathers, or a sheep shows wool!

THE COUNT [*appearing at the window*]: Or a bat, blood — others' blood. [*His condition has changed from his previous appearance — he is no longer pale white, but ruddy; he is no longer lean but extended in the stomach.*]

RAMSBOTTOM: Well, well, welcome back. Did your religious conversation with the young lady go well?

THE COUNT: No, I regret that it did not — we were at cross purposes. [*Aside.*] Oh, how I hate crosses. . . . [*He lackadaisically clicks a pair of castanets — obviously Sister Mary's — and drops them in his pocket.*]

GRATIANO [*giving him a hand down from the window seat*]: You look a little better, I must say — perhaps the exercise. . . .

THE COUNT [*reviving from his regret over a missed opportunity*]: Ah, yes, I feel much better. [*Aside to the doctor.*] I have been at the sheep, you understand. [*He rubs his stomach and burps.*]

GRATIANO: The sheep? I have heard of that being done, of course. But I really think the young lady was preferable.

THE COUNT: Of course, she was! — so young, so tender, so full of blood. I would much rather have had her. But one must make do, you know.

GRATIANO: Have you tried continence? [*As he says this, he offers a handkerchief with a gesture at his chin, meaning the Count's chin.*]

THE COUNT [*who discovers a trickle of blood running down from one corner of his mouth, wipes it off with a finger, and sucks his finger; then.*]: My dear sir, it is my life you are talking about.

GRATIANO [*aside*]: Different cultures, different life styles. Some people don't approve of alcoholics. . . . [*To the Count, as he discovers he is still holding the handkerchief and puts it away.*] What was that?

Wine? ¿Vino tinto? I love dark red wines. . . . [*Aside.*] Or any wines.

[*To the count.*] You understand, since man is just a sickly machine and nothing supernatural exists [*the Count draws himself up*], there is no better way to pass one's time than drinking.

RAMSBOTTOM [*impatiently, before the count answers*]: Are you tired, Count? A nap perhaps? [*Aside to the doctor.*] *Post coitum*, tiredness.

GRATIANO [*aside back*]: That's *tristia*.

THE COUNT: Yes, I would like a little nap [*rubbing his stomach*] — just for an hour or two; I'll get up and go to the storm cellar before dawn, naturally. [*Aside.*] Or is it unnaturally?

GRATIANO: Here, *mi conde*, why don't you lie down on the window seat?

HORATIO: I think—

RAMSBOTTOM [*rolling backwards*]: Very seldom! Stay out of this, Horatio — if our guest wishes to take a nap, he can take a nap.

[*The Count stretched out on the window seat, his feet toward the audience; the doctor at the same time gets the pad out of the covered jar or glass he put it in during Sister Mary's entrance, and tiptoes across to the count. Perhaps the count rouses once or twice, and the doctor has to hide the pad; but finally the doctor is able to ease the pad over his face (his nose specifically).*]

HORATIO [*who has been forced back by his uncle*]: Doctor, do you have some medical reason for this? I thought he was just taking a nap.

[He is stage-whispering above Ramsbottom's head, so as not to disturb the patient.]

GRATIANO: *Sí*, this is a medical treatment — [aside:] for your uncle! [To Ramsbottom:] I think that has done it.

RAMSBOTTOM: Good, good — let's get going. I'm afraid I may die in the next ten minutes — before the transfusion is over. Now! Now!

HORATIO: A transfusion? Now?

RAMSBOTTOM [shouting]: Get out of here, you idiot! [He throws the same plastic container at his nephew as he threw at Marta in Scene I; his aim is still bad.] Get your asinine, poetry-quoting nose out of my business! [Horatio retreats to the main door, opening it and getting behind it, from whence a few moments later he sticks his head around to watch the proceedings. The doctor meanwhile has rolled or is rolling the machine up by the Count's head; the placement of the machine needs to be far up enough upstage that the audience's view of the count is clear.]

GRATIANO: Try not to shout, *Señor* Ramsbottom. I do not know how deeply *il conde* is under — his breathing was very shallow. [Aside:] He just barely was breathing.

RAMSBOTTOM: I thought we were going to have to have to use the blackjack.

GRATIANO: It was only as a last resort; people's skulls are so different in thickness — and we do not want him dead before the operation. [Aside:] Mainly it was to impress Ramsbottom. . . . [Drum beats from the closet.] The second time in twenty minutes? ¡*Por Dios*! What verve! What power!

RAMSBOTTOM: What youth! Hurry up with that transfusion! Damn their blood! [The doctor begins to attach tubes to the wrists and ankles of the count — i.e., he seems to push needles in, attached to the tubes, which in turn are attached to the machine. In the original production, a series of flashing Christmas tree lights was used, along with some mechanisms to bubble various tubes of colored waters.]

HORATIO: You can't do that! [He comes out from the doorway.]

That's sinful; that's eating blood. And he's your guest — would he do something like that to you? You must treat him as he would treat you! That's what Marta says.

RAMSBOTTOM: Get my lawyer! I disinherit you! You bloodless idiot! You turniplike stone! You fecal-growing fungus! You misbegotten miscegeny of my sister!

HORATIO: I don't care what you call me — that's sinful. I'll stop you! [He pauses a split second when he realizes what he's said; then he brightens up.] I'll get Brother John to help me stop you!

RAMSBOTTOM: Doctor, get the blackjack! [The doctor produces a bottle from his inside coat pocket and drinks from it instead.]

HORATIO [rushing to the closet door and throwing it open]: Help! [Enter Candace and Brother John; he is beating a bass drum, and she is jingling a tambourine.]

CANDACE AND BROTHER JOHN:

Are you washed in the Blood of the Lamb?

Are you saved from the fate of the damned?

Are you right with the great I AM?

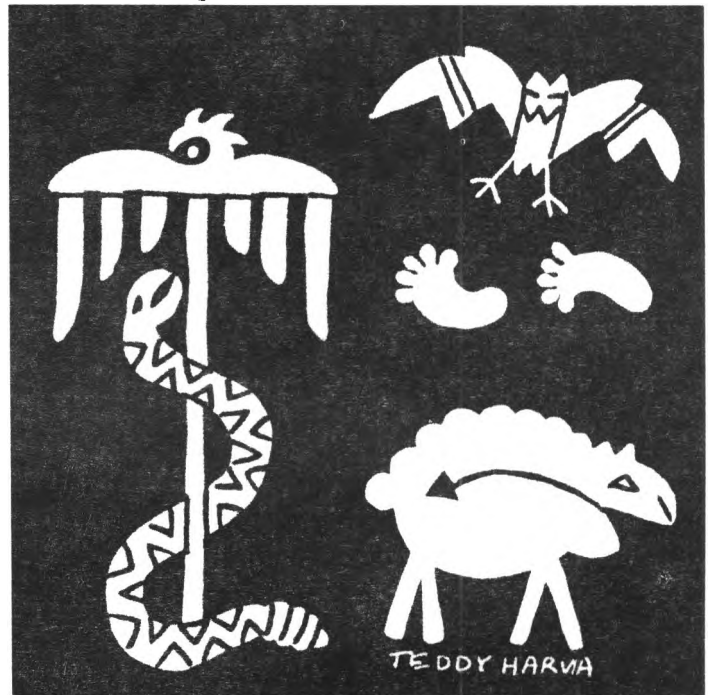
Are you washed in the Blood of the Lamb?

RAMSBOTTOM [at the top of his lungs, pounding his wheelchair arms]: Be quiet, you Lamb freaks, you Blood freaks! Can't you see our guest is sleeping?

CANDACE: Ooooo, Snookums! I can't help it. This nice man has converted me! [She raises her tambourine toward the sky.] I'm saved, I'm saved!

SISTER MARY [pushing up the lid of the window seat (despite the count on it) so that her face appears, clearly visible to the audience]: I'm saved, too — save me! [Blackout or fast curtain.]

[Technical note: In the original production, in order for her to do this, the top of the window seat had to be double-hinged; it folded up, like an ordinary windowseat top, but also, inside the down-stage half of the



top, was another lid, hinged at the center. This allowed Sister Mary to raise only the count's legs (which were toward the audience) and for her to half face the audience during her cry.]

SCENE III

[The scene remains the same. As the curtains open or the lights come up, Dr. Gratiano is closing the lid to the window seat. Ramsbottom, his lap blanket on the corner of the machine, is still in his wheelchair. No one else is in the room (except in the window seat). The transfusion machine has a few broken tubes; the rest should appear slightly different, some bottles having a residue of red fluid.]

GRATIANO: Well, that takes care of the count for the time being.

RAMSBOTTOM: Yes, yes, it's too bad the machine broke down and you couldn't put my old blood into his body in exchange.

GRATIANO: If you hadn't tried to leap out of that chair, ¡*por Dios*! — after I told you it wouldn't be an instantaneous recovery — you wouldn't have fallen on the machine.

RAMSBOTTOM: Well, well, accidents will happen.

GRATIANO: How touching your concern for the count is! You will bury the body in the far reaches of the ranch tomorrow?

RAMSBOTTOM: I had thought of putting it in the compost heap — yet we'll see.

GRATIANO: What do you mean, "We'll see"? Do you not realize the county sheriff will be after us, or the state police will, if this body is discovered?

RAMSBOTTOM: I realize they'll be after you; you were in charge of the operation.

GRATIANO: But you fell on the machine!

RAMSBOTTOM: But you failed to strap your patient down! [His head jerks slightly on the first word, and again on his next speech.]

GRATIANO: But— But—

RAMSBOTTOM: But me no but's, doctor. [Aside:] Why does my head want to jerk when I say *but*[t]? [Back to the doctor:] If I'm walking by tomorrow, I'll take care of the body; if I'm not, I'll take care of you.

GRATIANO: But I'm not supposed to be here tomorrow; you're supposed to pay me, and I'll leave.

RAMSBOTTOM: You'll walk out of here when I walk out of here [hitting his wheelchair].

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GRATIANO [*aside*]: I suspect something else is more important — or less impotent — than walking. [*To Ramsbottom*:] Oh come now, *Señor*, you know no doctor gets paid only if the operation is a success; we do not work that way.

RAMSBOTTOM: You'll get properly paid if this operation isn't a success, I promise; and we'll see what way you work then.

GRATIANO [*heading across the room towards the bar*]: I need a drink. [*Aside*]: An honest day's pay for an honest day's work . . .

RAMSBOTTOM: That's the trouble with you idea men — no strength! You don't think I run this ranch by being agreeable, do you? A man must have strength, he must have power — *he must be able to stand on his own two feet!* And if the blood is the life, as they say — [*his role breaks*] — well, is it? Why can't I walk yet?

GRATIANO: No worry, no worry! These things just take a little time. [*He pours himself something to drink, heavy on the liquor — a double Scotch, perhaps — or mixes himself a Black Charro (to keep the southwestern flavor). His hands tremble some as he says "No worry", spilling liquor on the bar.*]

RAMSBOTTOM: "No worry" you say, but you're so nervous you can't even pour a drink. [*His head jerks on the "but."*] Or is it the alcohol getting to you at last? Are all of your dreams about transfusions just the product of your alcoholism?

GRATIANO: No worry. [*He has hastily wiped at the bar before he says this, and as he speaks, he raises the glass — it is difficult to tell whether he speaks to Ramsbottom or to the liquor. Almost to himself.*] I may be a sickly machine, but you are . . . no longer.

RAMSBOTTOM [*pounding the arm of his chair*]: I want you to worry! About! My! Legs!

GRATIANO [*loudly*]: What is the matter? Do you not feel better? [*He drinks.*]

RAMSBOTTOM: B-b-better? [*This should not be a stutter but a bleat. Ramsbottom claps his hands over his mouth.*]

GRATIANO: How odd! That sounded almost like a bleat. *Señor* Ramsbottom, are you letting your ranch business get to you? [*In his interest, he even sets down his drink.*]

RAMSBOTTOM: It must be your fault — yours and the count's! I've never done that before. [*Accidentally asking the right question:*] What kind of blood is this that you've given me?

GRATIANO: It must be an accidental occurrence, a sheer chance —

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your words, dry up your logorrhea.

GRATIANO: It's just a fluke. . . .

RAMSBOTTOM [*grabbing his lower abdomen*]: Don't say that word!

GRATIANO: *Fluke*?

RAMSBOTTOM: It gives me a pain in the liver.

GRATIANO: This is the oddest set of symptoms I have ever seen.

[*Aside:*] Surely it is not the transfusion — I used sterile needles. . . .

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your doctor's bag! It's — [*He pauses as he and the doctor become aware that the lid to the window seat is being slowly pushed open from the inside, creaking. Here, at last, is why the window seat should slightly suggest a coffin — this is the archetypal vampire emergence.*]

THE COUNT [*as his head appears above the edge of the window seat*]: Ah, how hungry this poor foreigner feels! — and I just ate. . . . [*He sees Ramsbottom and the doctor:*] Is it morning yet?

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your rotten blood! [*To the doctor:*] Get the count down!

GRATIANO [*starting toward the window seat*]: It is down for the count!

THE COUNT [*long before the doctor can cross the stage to him*]: I feel so weak! [*He collapses back into the window seat and the top bangs shut.*]

GRATIANO: We must get him to a hospital!

RAMSBOTTOM: Or the compost heap!

[*The doctor reaches the window seat and opens it.*]

GRATIANO [*reaching in*]: Here, Count Viscosity, we will have you in for a transfusion in less than an hour. *¡Hombre!* [*He jerks his hands out and slams the lid. To Ramsbottom:*] He tried to bite me!

RAMSBOTTOM: Perhaps he doesn't want to go to a hospital.

[*The door from the hall bursts open, and Horatio, Candace, Sister Mary, and Brother John enter, with enthusiasm. Sister Mary's uniform is still open at the neck — evidently she lost some buttons earlier — and the cross is still visible. Horatio and Sister Mary are holding hands.*]

HORATIO: We've just had a marvelous prayer meeting out in the kitchen.

CANDACE: Ooooo yes, Horatio and I just confessed everything!

GRATIANO: I thought you were out there calming down Sister Mary.

HORATIO: That didn't take long — just a couple of prayers.

SISTER MARY: *Hallelujah!*

[*Candace emphasizes this by banging her tambourine on her rump and then jingling (the tambourine) in the air. The doctor and Ramsbottom are over near the window seat, where they had been interested in the Count. Horatio and Sister Mary are on the opposite side of the stage — stage left — and Candace and Brother John have stayed upper center.*]

BROTHER JOHN: We have been talking about their new responsibilities.

HORATIO: Because I've converted too! I'm going to get to quote Scripture like Brother John here.

GRATIANO [*aside*]: Then no one will kick sand in your face. . .

CANDACE: And, Snookums, one of the things we have to do is to confess our sins.

HORATIO: We have to confess to those we have wronged, and see if we can make it up to them.

GRATIANO: You are going to confess here and now? [*They nod yes.*] That will be most interesting — ah, spiritually enlightening, I mean.

BROTHER JOHN: For we are told to confess our sins, one to another.

SISTER MARY: James 5:16!

BROTHER JOHN: And we are told to be reconciled with others before we offer to the Lord.

SISTER MARY: Matthew 5:24!

CANDACE: And Brother John reasons we might as well do both at once.

HORATIO: What better way to be reconciled than to confess what we have done?

GRATIANO [*aside*]: *¡Por Dios!* I can think of several. [*To Horatio:*] Why not simply have a drink on it?

HORATIO: Oh no, we can't drink the wine which is the blood until after we confess!

GRATIANO: The blood-red wine? Great Bacchus! [*Aside:*] I have heard of their ceremonial cannibalism. . .

HORATIO: I want to be first — uncle, I want to confess my sins. I have committed sins of pride, and sloth, and envy, and lust, and —

GRATIANO: Ah, could you not be a little more specific?

HORATIO: Oh yes, I have committed adultery —

GRATIANO: That is better.

HORATIO: — and murder —

GRATIANO: Murder? You say you have committed murder?

HORATIO: That's right. I've gotten angry at people — and that means I murdered them mentally.

SISTER MARY: Matthew 5:22!

HORATIO: Oh boy, I quoted Scripture.

BROTHER JOHN: Well, paraphrased, really.

GRATIANO: But you mean that these sins you're confessing may all be mental?

HORATIO: Oh yes, mental sins are still sins.

GRATIANO: But what is the satisfaction of hearing them if I do not know which ones you have really done?

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RAMSBOTTOM [*who has been building up pressure for some time*]: Doctor, instead of this idiotic by-play, why don't you tell these enthusiasts about the transfusion you just performed?

CANDACE: Ooooo, Snookums, we just prayed about transfusions.

[*Turning to Brother John*]: I forget, were we for or against them?

BROTHER JOHN: We are against all such — [*He breaks off as the count tries to get out of the creaking window seat again.*]

SISTER MARY [*draws back at first, unconsciously clutching her cross, but Brother John motions her toward the count, and she then lets go and marches toward him, saying*]: We are under orders, in our Army of God, to love our enemies — [*She pauses in her speech and in her advance, having nearly reached the window seat*] — that's with spiritual love, you understand.

THE COUNT [*looking toward her*]: Curses, crossed again! [*He collapses back into the window seat, the lid slamming shut again. Sister Mary looks back at Brother John for guidance in this event; he shrugs. She sits on the window seat.*]

GRATIANO [*heading for the bar*]: Why do we not have drinks all around and then we can discuss transfusions and things?

RAMSBOTTOM: There is nothing to discuss! These idiots — damn their blood! — believe in substituting wine for blood.

GRATIANO [*aside*]: So do I!

RAMSBOTTOM: They believe an eternal tomorrow is b-b-better [*a bleat again; Ramsbottom clasps his hands over his mouth, then he hits his wheelchair arm in frustration*] — they believe an eternal tomorrow is preferable to an intense today! I don't! I believe in the pleasure of power today!

GRATIANO [*aside*]: And other pleasure at night.

RAMSBOTTOM: I believe in the feeling of power. I sit here in the ranch house and imagine how many men are out working at my orders on the ranch; I plan to hire an advertising agency to get me elected governor — then I can have the pleasure of all those civil servants working at my whim. But [*head jerk*] this is all in this world! It's not in some eternal tomorrow. In Heaven, I would have to organize strikes to get power.

SISTER MARY [*leaping to her feet*]: Satan! [*She turns her back to him.*]

RAMSBOTTOM: That's why I don't believe in Heaven; I don't want to start over, to struggle for power again — I want to enjoy it!

SISTER MARY [*surprisingly taking the lead*]: And what about you, Dr. Gratiano — [*she crosses toward the bar*] — do I have your name correct? — [*he nods yes*] — what about you, do you also believe only in this world?

GRATIANO [*raising his glass*]: Ah, sister, ¡por Dios! you would be surprised how spiritual my concept of life is. Why, I look forward to the Great Final Communion — there we sit, all of us saved souls, and the angels appear, carrying around to us our trays of wafers and wine — real wine, mind you not just Welch's grape juice; and there we sit, drinking our wine! Oh, it is a moving vision to me, Sister Mary!

SISTER MARY: I see; you mean that you believe only in earthly wine, not in the heavenly blood. [*She turns toward the audience, and drops to her knees, down center.*] O Great General of our Army, give us a sign! Show these unbelievers the truth about the eternal life thou promise. Reveal thy eternity to us!

[*And finally the landing at the top of the staircase is used. An angel opens the door and steps onto this landing. (Note: since no one is going up or down these stairs, this "staircase" could have been from the start of the show just a platform, about head-high to the actors, at the back of the stage. Another possibility is to have part of the back wall made out of gauze, and when the angel appears, simply to light this scrim from the back for the first time. If this script is ever put on as a puppet play, the angel will just descend on its strings, of course. In the first production, a smoke machine was used for the coming — to parallel the count's.) About the appearance of the angel: (1) if the*

director is trying to balance the cast sexually, a woman may play the angel; this is not theologically accurate in traditional terms, but it may be dramatically effective to the Victorians in the audience; (2) theologically and archetypically (in the western European tradition), the angel should be a blond male, handsome and strong; (3) another possibility is a black male, perhaps rather short, dressed like a New Orleans trumpeter (since the angel is carrying a trumpet), with a halo encircling his Derby — a New Orleans jazz player with wings; and (4) the last variation on these two sexes and colors, of course would be in the tradition of the modern joke: a black woman. Given the southwestern setting, however, either (5) a Chicano angel or (6) an Indian angel — vaguely suggesting a Kachina perhaps — would be quite appropriate. A real Kachina would be too pagan for the purpose, simply confusing the audience. In the first production, the angel was a white male in a white gown with wings and halo — and a black derby. The horn may also take various forms, from the long, slender medieval trump to the shofar.]

THE ANGEL: Daughter, I have been sent in answer to your prayer. When I blow my trumpet, the world will end and eternity begin. [*The characters go through various actions of surprise; Sister Mary stands up; the doctor downs a drink.*]

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your blood! How dare you try to keep me from living?

THE ANGEL: I have no blood; in my veins flows immortal ichor.

RAMSBOTTOM: But [*head jerk*] the blood is the life!

THE ANGEL: Not my immortal life.

GRATIANO: However, one small prayer seems a minor thing to cause the end of the world. Is this not overdoing it just a little?

THE ANGEL: Perhaps, perhaps. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll blow softly [*in the case of (3) above, he says, "I'll use a mute"*], and only wipe out this house and an acre or so around it.

GRATIANO: But is this not, even so, likely to cause questions asked in Congress? After all, an acre of ground just does not vanish for no reason.

THE ANGEL: Oh, protesters will decide that the U.S. Air Force accidentally dropped an atomic weapon; it will cause the biggest uproar since the poison gas killed those Nevada sheep. Eventually, the Air Force will begin to suspect that it *did* do it — but that some officers are covering up. It should keep everybody busy for six months or so. However, this is hardly important in light of eternity. [*The angel begins to raise the trumpet.*]

BROTHER JOHN: Just a minute, sir [*ma'am*], if you please! I want you to understand that I deeply appreciate the honor of this visitation; it is the sort of thing any evangelist prays for — but, just the same, shouldn't we consider the analogy to Noah? Noah was found righteous, and was spared when all of the sinners were destroyed.

Therefore, shouldn't a righteous man be left to tell the tale?

SISTER MARY [*crossing to Brother John, upper center*]: Brother John, I'm ashamed of you! Why are you worrying about your will instead of God's will at this point? Delight in the immediate prospect of meeting your Maker!

BROTHER JOHN: Oh, I do, I do — but, Sister Mary, you just don't understand! He [*"She" — with a gesture toward the angel*] changed his [*her*] will about the amount of territory; why not about this? [*Suddenly the window seat lid bangs open, and the count staggers upright.*]

THE COUNT: It's nearly morning! I can't stay here! I must get— Aaargh! [*He has seen the angel.*] Get away from me! You clean, moral creatures sicken me! [*He shields himself from the angel with his cape.*] For this did I come to this country from Transylvania? Never! I will go back where I am understood and appreciated for what I am! Tomorrow night I start, no matter how hungry I am! [*He disappears out the window; Ramsbottom has pulled his chair around during this exit, and backed center stage.*]

NIEKAS 45

Essays on Dark Fantasy

THE ANGEL: Poor, misguided creature! Yet the trumpet sound will reach the storm cellar.

GRATIANO: But what will happen to him when he is judged? What if he is damned?

THE ANGEL: You ask about yourself, really, don't you? All of you must take your chances. [*The doctor downs a drink.*] All you can be certain of is that the risen body, with the risen blood in its veins, will achieve the best or the worst you can imagine.

GRATIANO: If a person is drunk enough, perhaps his imagination will not be working.

THE ANGEL: And, on the other hand, perhaps he will have the d.t.'s.

BROTHER JOHN: That decides it. Come on, Candace, we're leaving.

GRATIANO [*aside*]: Aha! I thought more than a conversion was going on in that closet. . . .

SISTER MARY: Brother John!

BROTHER JOHN: You don't understand; I'm not running away with another man's wife — after the angel blows his [*her*] trumpet, Candace will be a widow — and I'm going to look after her spiritual needs.

RAMSBOTTOM: Damn your blood! I'm not dead yet! I'm a b-b-better man that you are now. [*He staggers to his feet.*]

CANDACE: Ooooo, Snookums, a miracle! You can walk!

GRATIANO: My check! [*He catches himself and looks at the angel:*] No, it does not matter. [*As the action continues, he pours himself another drink, and drinks it.*]

BROTHER JOHN [*who has been dragging Candace by the arm toward the window*]: We've got to get two acres away!

RAMSBOTTOM: Damnation! Stay and fight for her — butt heads like you're supposed to! [*He tosses his head, perhaps more like a bull than a billy goat.*]

CANDACE [*as Brother John drags her out the window*]: Ooooo, Snookums!

SISTER MARY: Remember, Matthew 5:28! [*This is shouted after Brother John.*]

[*Candace's tambourine is heard outside. Ramsbottom is somewhat wobbly on his legs, but he manages to paw the earth (i.e., the floor) for the moment, and slowly and somewhat unsteadily charge after them, perhaps hitting the transfusion machine on the way — he manages to get up on the window seat, but then he trips and falls out of the window.*]

GRATIANO [*crossing to the wheelchair*]: The most remarkable cure of my entire medical career. [*To Horatio:*] Señor Lambkin, are you going to run away, too? Your quotable friend seems to have.

HORATIO [*crossing to Sister Mary*]: No . . . no, I don't think so. [*To Sister Mary:*] If you don't mind, I'll wait for the judgment here with you.

SISTER MARY: Any believer is welcome.

HORATIO: I do wish I had got all of my sins confessed, though.

GRATIANO [*to the angel, going back towards the bar*]: Well, what are you waiting for? Are you going to let them [*with a gesture toward the window*] get away?

THE ANGEL: No, they won't escape. The two gentleman are outside fighting now. But we are waiting for one more person.

[*In answer to the angel's remark, the door opens and Marta appears.*]

MARTA: Señor Ramsbottom, the foreman says he found — [*She sees the empty wheelchair.*] ¿Donde es Señor Ramsbottom? [*She looks at Horatio, who is pointing behind her, at the stairs. Looking around, she sees the angel.*]

[*Dios mio!* [*She sinks to her knees, ecstatic.*] Has this sinner's time come at last?

THE ANGEL: Yes, my daughter. Your message about the discovery of the dead sheep need not be delivered. It was just a way to send the ranch hands off on a search, outside of my trumpet's sound.

[*The angel raises the trumpet to his (her) lips, as Sister Mary and Horatio also kneel. The doctor takes one last drink, straight from a bottle, and turns his back to the angel, sticking his fingers in his ears. The angel blows a clear, very loud note and holds it; thunder, beginning about three seconds after the trumpet's sound, grows in volume until it almost drowns out the trumpet; then, suddenly, the stage and the whole theater is plunged into complete darkness; the sound of the trumpet and the thunder cease; obviously, this is*

THE END.

A Foretaste of Blood to Come

Written by Joe R. Christopher, Ph.D. (English)

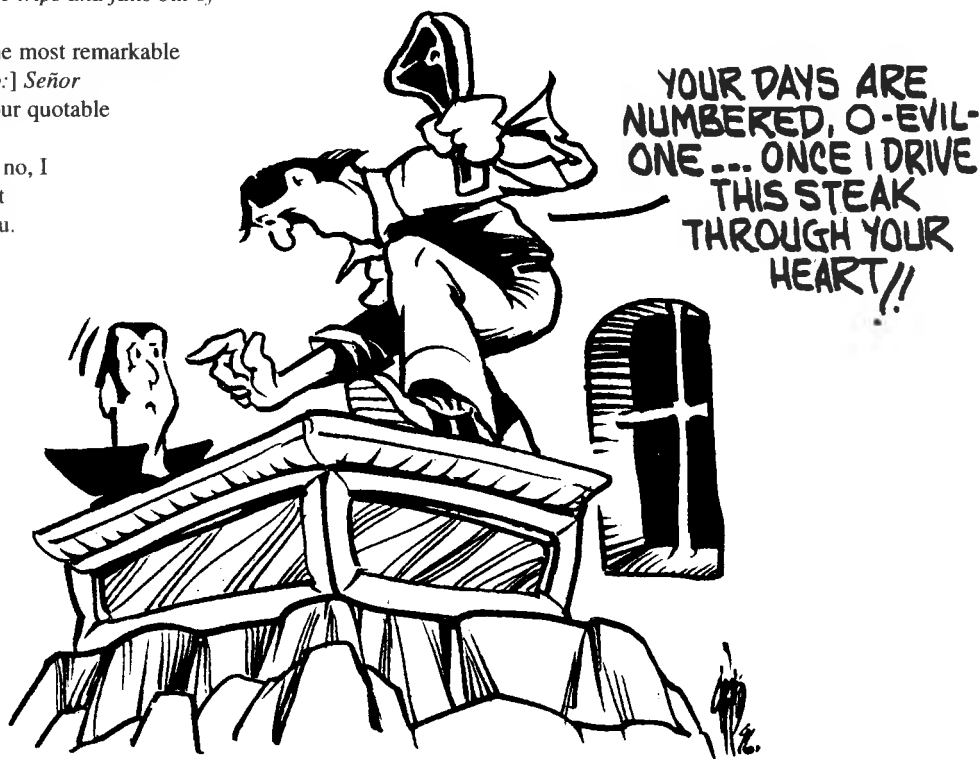
Directed by Mary Jane Mingus, M.A. (Speech and Drama)

Costumes by Jeanine Caraway, B.A.

Stage set, etc., by students at Tarleton State University

Produced at Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas, on April 25-28, 1973.

Ramsbottom	Dennis Butler, M.A. (English)
Dr. Gratiano	Russell Long, M.A. (English)
Marta	Sue McGinity, Ph.D. (English)
Horatio Lambkin	Don Zelman, Ph.D. (History and Sociology)
Candace Ramsbottom	Alice Cushman, Ph.D. (English)
Vladimir, Count Viscosity	Mark Davis, M.A. (Art)
Sister Mary (Mary Alexander)	Lin Lilley, M.A. (Speech)
Brother John (John Barclay)	Keith Sutherland, Ph.D. (History and Government)
Angel	Louis Bolieu, Ph.D. (English)



Transformations: Mirrors of Humanness in the Dark Fantasy of Ace G. Pilkington by Stephanie Chidester

No matter how fantastic or horrific the inhabitants of our literature may be, there is almost always some thread of understanding between character and audience, giving the former an enduring appeal to the latter. Accordingly, we are fascinated by Frankenstein's monster because we catch glimpses of ourselves behind his bestiality, and we sympathize with Shakespeare's Macbeth because we have felt something like his hope for the future and his desire for greatness. In his poetry, Ace G. Pilkington emphasizes these bonds between the common and the extraordinary. As Scott E. Green intuitively in *Contemporary Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Poetry*, "Pilkington's poems talk about individuals and their perceptions of their universe. Then he uses his characters' perceptions as a means of describing the metaphorical truth" (139-140). [1]

Although Pilkington does not set out deliberately to write in a particular genre, [2] fantasy is ideal for his exposition of the human in the horrific and the awful in ourselves, his exploration of both present and future through the mythical past, and his examination of human beings in the context of our environment.

He seeks, in his poetry, to define humanity in a myriad of contexts, to determine mankind's place in the universe, and he does so most explicitly in "Transformations." [3] He sees the cosmos as a vast "bowl of infinity" (line 2), an intangible permanence which is the stage for eternal decay. The light of stars, though long-lasting, is exhaustible; rugged mountains are eroded into hills, then plains. Humans are sparks in a fiery stellar cycle of death and rebirth, "The decay of star and stone made flesh" (line 12).

Having plotted the place of humans in the cosmos, Pilkington surveys the limitations of human behavior. In "Medea to Jason" and "Jason's Answer," he finds humanity (dark though it may be) in the actions of this hero and his "witch-wife." In the first four lines of the former poem, Medea points out her most atrocious crime, the one that tends to blind audiences to her more human qualities: "Where is the sanity of a woman who kills your children,/ Willing our sons to death,/ Taking back my painfully given gifts,/ Like breaking the bones of love or splashing it with blood?" Pilkington emphasizes Medea's most monstrous moment before showing us just how human, just how like ourselves, she is. She is a rejected lover looking around at the ruins of what has become the most important relationship in her life: "In the pulse-beat heat of those first nights, Jason,/ I did not believe passion's wave could poison,/ Or that I would want lust's blush washed away,/ Drowned with all the tokens from our oceans of glow,/ But a shared sun cools to the moon through a window,/ Summer flowers wither in an asphodel meadow" (lines 5-10).

Although the slaughter of her children was severe to say the least, Medea's emotional response would not be out of place in many divorce proceedings. She feels betrayed and hurt by her mate, and she wants to get revenge. She feels the relationship has been one-sided; she has done everything for her husband, and what has she gotten in return? At the same time, she thinks they should both share the responsibility for her actions: "Now I will plunge in the gulf of myself,/ To purge the pledges we murdered together,/ Free of the diseased fleece that floated you, bloated me/ Into one body. As sky and sea drain each

other mutually,/ I have grown empty filling the hollow in the word 'we'" (lines 11-15). She has exhausted herself trying to help Jason: in his interest, she enabled him to obtain the golden fleece by her magic and to escape Colchis by dismembering her brother and tossing his limbs into the sea for her father to retrieve; and she engineered the murder of Pelias to avenge his usurpation of Jason's throne. Indeed, her human motives become a sort of defense of her savagery.

Jason, however, thinks of her violent and unsolicited gifts entirely differently in "Jason's Answer." Her "crimes," as he calls them, have not helped him regain his kingdom but have destroyed all his hopes of ever doing so. As a result, he must look elsewhere for a throne, taking on a new wife in the process: "I kept my passion and my promise/ Until her guilt ate everything I owned" (lines 7-8). In short, Medea is not the self-sacrificing and long-suffering spouse she proclaims herself to be; she has created her own tragedy (and much of his), and she must bear a large portion of the blame. Jason reasons, "Still, I will not let her weigh me with her wishes;/ I hold my share of shadows and of grief,/ And since no soul can suffer for another,/ She won't fly free by blaming life on me" (lines 13-16).

In this poem, Jason is a man of logic and self-interest, to be sure; he identifies his ultimate goal (to win his kingdom from the usurper Pelias), figures out what he must do to reach it, and carries through with his plan. He relies primarily upon his powers of reason and is not the great adventurer that Odysseus is. In fact, he disclaims this sort of heroism: "I am no hero to call the sun to heel—/ Paradise is not a place I know" (lines 5-6). He is simply a man who is trying to fulfill his destiny (despite the obstacles Medea creates) and who accepts responsibility for no one else's deeds but his own.

Pilkington describes Theseus in these same mortal terms in "Theseus Beyond the Labyrinth." He, too, seems nothing more than a man, a man who reluctantly fulfills an unwanted quest. Theseus has been "Drawn into the labyrinth, the trailing cord/ Twisting through twitching fingers/ Until fate unravels and flees five ways at once" (lines 1-3). Pilkington's use of the passive voice in the first line suggests that Theseus is unwilling, compelled to complete the task by some unknown force, and his twitching fingers betray fear or nervousness; he is driven by fate rather than by choice.

Nor is the abandonment of Ariadne entirely his decision (and therefore his fault): "The passages dim as memories,/ The prophecies darker still:/ Ariadne waits behind me,/ Willing the interminable betrayal/ When the quest is dead and there are too few faiths to keep" (lines 4-8). Fate and Ariadne have, he believes, set her up for rejection.

Theseus is not the only sympathetic character in this poem; there is humanity even in the Minotaur. Indeed, with the body of a man and the head of a bull, it is an illustration of the union of horror and sympathy: "The monster in the center prays for release—/ His head bounds breathless into a cobwebbed corner,/ While I stumble sullenly back to the suddenly too bright light/ Of a world held bound by the cord that ends in my hand" (lines 9-12). Theseus, a man burdened with responsibilities that seem too great to bear, pities the beast, perhaps because he recognizes that they are both helpless in the hands of fate.

Pilkington defines the human condition and the recent past through another discontented mythological hero in "The Odysseus Who

Returned": "There was no going home without the dead:/ The ghosts he raised on that fantastic shore/ Were souvenirs from his successful war./ Those faces that once screamed and burned and bled/ Spoke with him and remained inside his head" (lines 1-5). The psychologically troubled epic hero returning from the Trojan war might just as easily be an American veteran coming home from the Vietnam conflict.

Odysseus, like so many other soldiers, has been permanently altered by the acts of violence he has performed and witnessed. Indeed, he has seen both his identity and his vision of the world so transmuted that the life he left behind can no longer contain him: "Nothing could hold the shape it had before:/ His spring was nettles and his summer sour,/ So autumn was a season gone to seed,/ His winter dark dreams of a darker bed./ Penelope could not stroke him into peace/ (Since love was not the substance of his need)" (lines 6-11).

This transformation of Odysseus was driven, ironically, by his love of humanness: if he didn't cling to mortality so desperately (as he did when tempted by Circe and Calypso to become more than human), death would not affect him so greatly, and if he were not mortal and life were not so transient, he would not recognize its worth, would not feel its loss. He is finally forced to acknowledge the only real permanence in human experience: "He saw the blackbird's thrust into the grass:/ With satisfaction watched the hawk's fierce pass./ And said, 'Killing is the only act which lasts'" (lines 12-14). Although he still values mortal life, his perspective has changed; it has become a costly love, prized because of its actual and potential loss rather than for the adventure of experiencing that life. [4]

Odysseus' crew also experience a psychological transformation in "Lotus," in which Pilkington explores another contemporary problem: "The fruit we ate was not the food for us:/ It chilled our hearts and culled our memories./ Made us recall our past lives with disgust/ And stand confused upon a strand of dreams" (lines 1-4). On the surface, this is a description of one of the many misadventures of *The Odyssey*, but it is also an apt description of substance abuse. The "fruit" was consumed at first because they were tempted and curious, but while it may have produced temporary euphoria, it also dramatically altered their vision of the world and of themselves.

This drug has made them something less than human, something almost vegetable; they are drained of their emotions and desires until they stand insensible of their surroundings. "Old passions were a taste our tongues disdained./ As the drug we loved put us to its use./ What we consumed consumed us in its turn" (lines 7-9). It is as though they are being devoured by a parasitic plant; but the adventure doesn't end this way. They recognize their danger from the perspective of recovery: "Our satisfaction planted our distress./ What made us live became our cause to mourn./ And misery was the harvest of our bliss./ Till Odysseus took us back with him at last/ To a life which flew like seed pods from our grasp" (lines 10-14). The poem is not a glorification of the joys of life, but it does argue that even though life may not be pleasant or even long, it is, when unhampered by drugs, a conscious and deliberate exploration (and celebration) of humanness.

Another condition of the mind (or perhaps of the body) is the theme of "Diana, Actaeon, and Eros." Here, Pilkington looks at the appetite that destroys the unwary hunter: "There's always a net of sex on Actaeon's story:/ The pale moon priestess is left/ For five quick pulse beats of held breath/ At the voyeur's mercy" (lines 1-3). Actaeon is both hunter and hunted; the net he uses to capture game becomes the carnal snare which will kill him.

Actaeon's crime is one of voyeurism; he makes no attempt to interact with Diana and her nymphs emotionally or even physically but simply watches, deriving sexual satisfaction from the scene: "But the length of leg, the warmth of thigh,/ Those other nymphs (sun-splashed multiples of flesh)/ Then seem as liquid as the light,/ With dreams for boundary,/ While lust drowns coolly in glory" (lines 48)

The "net of sex" which surrounds him is one of suppression; it is not a

shared exploration of sexuality but the selfish transformation of another person into an object.

He has made Diana an object of lust, and in retaliation, she makes him an object of violence, of the hunt. "So tragedy begins—/ The antlers burgeon, the dogs rush in./ Some lecheries become mortal sins" (lines 9-11). Actaeon's actions have dehumanized him, and Diana's magic simply matches his appearance with his inner reality. [5]

If in "Diana, Actaeon and Eros" it is a goddess who punishes the sin, in "Witch's Progress" it is a witch who commits it, and Pilkington uses the supernatural to send a similar message, looking at human growth and corruption through the development of a witch's power and the destruction of her personality. She begins with something akin to innocence: "An amateur witch has an itch for grim things:/ Hard-eyed rhymes, blind cats' fur./ Bats' wings sweeping unlucky lives./ Death. chuckles rattling the moon-ridden dark/ Falling stars caught in crystal,/ A hot hatred that sparks" (lines 1-6). Her preferences show a lack of sophistication, a delight in the appearance of evil; her manipulations are small, her desire for control tremendous. [6]

"Then she grows wiser/ Beginning to use/ A single crow's feather that trails after/ Till her path is strewn/ With the bones of friends she has overflown" (lines 7-10). She has, as most people do, grown more sophisticated and less benign; she no longer cultivates this image but, with subtlety and deception, works to obtain the control she has long desired. However, she acquires this power at the expense of her humanity, becoming something inanimate, literally hardened: "At last she is master,/ Standing stone still in a whisper of space./ For power is a simple place" (lines 11-13). [7] Her obsession has transformed her world into a mere spell, the whisper of a witch: "Rain spatters cupped in an upturned palm/ Become a river draining the sky./ While a simile slipped from sullen lips/ Reshapes a world to the size of a lie" (lines 14-17). She has sought to control the world, to make it something it is not, and has shrunk her real world to the limits of her own shriveled imagination.

Similarly, in "Scientist Killed by a Unicorn in 1921," a man creates for himself, through his inflexibly logical mind, a world governed by reason and devoid of imagination: "There was a marmoreal stolidity about him./ A museum chill to his name, Doctor William Sampson./ He banished the supernatural with a clap of the hand/ On the lacquer of his desk" (lines 1-4). However, his repeated denials of the metaphysical (and the nervous dampness of his hands as he does so) make it clear that fears and uncertainties lurk somewhere below the surface of certainty he presents to the world.

His death, headlined by the poem's title, and his acceptance of the unexplainable come late (perhaps too late) in life: "He died pruning trees at the last of December/ When summer seems buried in the past forever/ And the birds have worn sound flute-thin on the wind./ In the cold orchard the horn went through him./ Coming away oddly without any blood" (lines 17-21). He has suppressed the imagination and mentally transformed an unpredictable universe into a simple, rational one; however, both eventually rise up to destroy him, and he dies in as fantastical a scene as one could desire: "He said, laughing in the collapse of all his own facts./ 'The mouth's a well of silence, the road a field of stones./' Around him the lopped stumps prickled with a fore-taste of sap./ With branching and burning, as green wood grows from ash" (lines 22-25). Pilkington seems to indicate that when we suppress our imagination or our sexuality, we are denying our humanness, that if we deny the complexity of life, we cannot fully experience it.

But this is exactly what Ariel, in "Ariel Alone," tempts Shakespeare's Prospero to do. Pilkington depicts the death of Prospero, who, by renouncing his magical powers, chose to become fully human, to accept his mortality. The poem is the plea of his former magical servant, a spirit of fire and air, for Prospero to take up again his wizard's staff and robe, to transform himself into something he is not.

Ariel, the essence of the supernatural yet almost human in his/her

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desperation and loneliness, beckons, "Come, Prosper, above the storm./ Leave the warm worm of form to turn itself under earth./ Here where the air is nearly flame/ We will take our space, your peace./ As free as sleep, beyond monsters' dreams." Ariel fears Prospero's imminent dissolution into nothingness and begs him to retreat to a place that is safe and peaceful yet as inhuman as the monsters' dreams it surpasses. [8] Death, as Odysseus learned, is a vital element of human experience; depriving Prospero of that last act would diminish and render meaningless his life struggle.

A similar theme is expressed in "The Robots' Farewell to the Master (For Isaac Asimov)," a poem which won the 1992 Readers' Choice Award for *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. Pilkington examines human death and loss through nonhuman beings, expanding the definition of humanity in the process; he also evaluates our yearning for immortality and indicates a way to achieve it without compromising our humanness.

Asimov, the "master," has assembled a rough image of himself from the elements of his imagination; he has, in his mind, transformed bits of machinery into sentient creatures. And although he must die, his inventions give him a sort of immortality, and their discovery of humanness sheds light on our own existence. Just as our experiences result in personal growth, the robots become more like their master each time they interact with him and especially when they lose him: "Machines he launched to think and grow and dream,/ We cannot stop or slow for we are his./ Though since he's gone we know what sorrow is./ We were not meant to feel, to laugh or grieve,/ But wanting and his wisdom set us free/ To learn the joy and pain of humanness" (lines 3-8). [9] The very struggles that make us human (and the impact they have on those around us) can lend us a human sort of immortality.

Asimov has attained this immortality through his imagination and his own efforts to understand humanness. As his robots put it, "Still, he lives in us and in his art./ Immortal as he writes and strives and strides/ Across our memories, impossible to dim./ Where his stories warm our minds and form our hearts" (lines 11-14). Asimov helps us to define humanity through his robots and our future through his fantasy.

It is Pilkington's task to define and explore the boundaries of humanness, and he does this by seeking our image in the mirror of myth and imagination. Ultimately, Pilkington finds that our fantasies and nightmares, as well as our conscious actions, establish who we are and determine our limitations; life, like Diana's nymphs, seems "as liquid as the light,/ With dreams for boundary."

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- "One Translation of Odysseus" in *Amazing Stories* July 1986: 49.
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- "These Are the Silences" in *Encyclia* 60 (1983):91.
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- "The Way It Was for Daedalus" in *National Storytelling Journal* Fall 1987: 30.
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- "Where We Share" in *Interim* 10.1 Spring/Summer 1991): 46.
- "Witch's Progress" in *Weird Tales* Winter 1988/89: 125. (Nominated for a "Rhysling" by the Science Fiction Poetry Association)
- "Ymir's Mirror/Eiseley's Glass" in *Riverside Quarterly* March 1988: 89.

NOTES

- 1] New York: Greenwood Press, 1989. Pilkington's published fantasy poems appear alphabetized by title in the list at the end of this article.
 - 2] Pilkington explains, "When I begin to write a poem, I don't usually think of it in terms of genre, and I don't worry about where it's going to be published until I've finished it. Even then, my fantasy poetry may wind up in a science fiction magazine or a literary journal, depending on the reactions of editors. I have, however, been reading fantasy and science fiction (some of it by Shakespeare and Homer) all my life, and I am, perhaps, slightly more likely to write in those genres than out of them" (Personal interview, 19 April 1993).
 - 3] "Transformations" is forthcoming in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*.
 - 4] In "One Translation of Odysseus," Pilkington describes the hero with the metaphor of a gunfighter, a continual wanderer who is unable to find peace or a home because of his troublesome reputation. He drifts "From town to town, scattering/ Pain like bullets and collecting/ Pain until it clings dust-thick/ To his clothes" (lines 3-6). His very presence creates discontent.
 - 5] A transformation of this kind (though substantially more severe) is the object of "A General Purpose Curse." The appearance of the cursed party would change to match the reality of his thoughts and actions: "May your face from semi-human case/ Change to match the monkey's race./ Your hands and feet turn furred and fragile./ Your limping brain grow yet less agile" (lines 1-4).
- Continued on Page 64.*

From the Monster's Point of View: When the Monsters Speak, We Listen . . . As To the Voices of Our Hearts

by Cynthia Whitney Hallett

The Minotaur and Dracula are lonely creatures.

I understand why—

And cry

For the one in a maze

And the other without sunlight.

So often in myth, legend, and literature we find monsters, evil creatures that wreak havoc within a society or culture and that usually maim and kill. In fact, so many monsters exist that each of us has personal favorites—those monsters who speak to us individually, their voices echoing, haunting some deep, hidden chamber of our most secret self. We find ourselves rereading their original stories, searching for shadows of them in the art and literature we analyze, and, when any one author would fain speak for these, our secret-sharers, we jealously read the words; and more often than not we recognize the voice and validate this the newest testament. My personal favorites are the Minotaur, a monster most man; Grendel, a man most monstrous; and the Vampire, *Dracula*, both monstrous man and manly monster.

Ironically, or not so ironically, most of these monsters are of more-or-less human shape, a phenomenon explained by *The Hobbit* expert J. R. R. Tolkien: "Their parody of human form ... becomes symbolic, explicitly, of sin, or rather this mythical element" (41). Actually, this explanation works in light of the Christian Myth. In general, in any culture, something "sinful" is something evil—evil as either an unexplainable phenomenon or, more often, as something that threatens the code, the status quo, the axioms of behavior appropriate to the social order in power. Yet, myth, legend, and lore do most often personify this evil so that it is recognizably humanoid in some respect. And since humankind is the creator of its own legend, lore, and myth, then it is humankind that re-creates itself in the image and likeness of these monsters. And it is to this inscription of self-in-monster, to this monster from/of humanity that so many artists refer. Mary Shelley's classic *Frankenstein* is exactly a novel of this type of "meta-monster-manufacturing [my term]"—a story of human creating monster in the image of human, and, in so doing, "elevating" humanity to the level of monster. It is a dual process, this monster-making; and the process implies that one must be a monster to make a monster, to recognize a monster, to hear a monster speak, to listen to these savage voices—so noble: these aboriginal Noble Savages.

Among the many classic Greek myths is the story of the Minotaur, the monstrous creature born of the bestial act of Pasiphaë, the Queen of Crete, with a sacred bull. The offspring was "a monster with a bull's head and a human body"; and he was banished by King Minos, forced to inhabit the labyrinth constructed by the master craftsman Daedalus, who ironically had been most instrumental in the conception of the Minotaur (Graves 293). This monster most man was the result of the "sinful" actions of a queen—it was she who conceived this freak; it

was her misbehavior that begot a monster who systematically feasted on all who ventured into his maze—all, that is, until the mythic hero Theseus entered and killed the beast (Ovid 183).

In his short story "The House of Asterion," Jorge Luis Borges creates a compact version of this myth from the creature's perspective. The effect is no less empathetic than one would imagine, for few who are familiar with the original myth find the Minotaur either hateful or disgusting; in fact, many infer that the one trapped in the maze never really was a beast. Borges appears to be of this latter persuasion, for his creature speaks with a voice of dignity that affirms an individuality: "Not for nothing was my mother a queen; I cannot be confused with the populace, though my modesty might so desire. The fact is that I am unique" (139). The creature continues his apostrophe, describing a desolate existence in which he has certain "distractions": "I run through the stone galleries until I fall dizzy to the floor. I crouch in the shadow of a pool or around a corner and pretend I am being followed. There are roofs from which I let myself fall until I am bloody" (139). It takes little imagination to think of life as a labyrinth and to conceive of an individual's action during his or her time in this maze as a parallel of the "distractions" described by Borges' Minotaur. And an omniscient look at the end of this Minotaur finds him waiting for his savior, some day my redeemer would come" (140); and the bull with the body of a man (or man with the head of a bull) wonders of his messiah, "Will he be a bull or a man? Will he perhaps be a bull with the face of a man? Or will he be like me?" (140). Theseus does come; and after slaying the creature wonders, "Would you believe it, Ariadne?... the Minotaur scarcely defended himself" (140). Is this monster's quandary not more the dilemma of those often called "humans"? Although none of Borges' story appears in the original myth, why is it so easy to believe that this monster was just so?

And what of Grendel: The synthesis of Teutonic legends formed in the classic Old English epic poem *Beowulf* includes the murderous deeds and subsequent deaths—at the hands of the hero—of the monster Grendel and Grendel's mother. The poet indicts Grendel as an ancestral son of the mythic fratricide, Cain; yet within the narrative of the poem both Beowulf and the poet demonstrate a certain respect for the monster rather than contempt or horror; and few who read the poem find Grendel, or his mother, a loathsome creature.

Over a thousand years after the scripting of the story of Grendel and Beowulf, John Gardner published his novel *Grendel* in 1971, and in it retells a portion of the Beowulf legend from the monster's point of view. Gardner accomplishes this by "compress[ing] the chronology of the original legend by neglecting the story of Grendel's dam, and only hinting at Beowulf's final battle with the dragon" (Morris 52). In his book about the fictions of John Gardner, *A World of Order and Light*, Gregory L. Morris offers this definition of the philosophical viewpoint of Gardner's monster: "Grendel looks at the world and sees a race of madmen and fools, a world of pattern-weavers. They live by 'lunatic theory.' By imposing ritual upon their existence, they hope to impose order" (56). In fact, the philosophy of Grendel in the Gardner fashion

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is that of the classic existentialist; Gardner states this fact explicitly in his 1977 interview with Marshall L. Harvey :

What happened in *Grendel* was that I got the idea of presenting the Beowulf monster as Jean-Paul Sartre, and everything that Grendel says Sartre in one mood or another has said, so that my love of Sartre kind of comes through as my love of the monster, though monsters are still monsters—I hope. (86)

There is much pathetic/empathetic about Gardner's Grendel; he is so misshapen that soldiers from the Hall of Hrothgar are not able to distinguish him as separate from the rot of a dying tree he is stuck, bleeding, in, "It's a growth of some kind, that's my opinion." "Some beastlike fungus..No doubt the whole tree'll be dead before mid-summer."

"Maybe we can chop the fungus out." (25)

And Grendel's loneliness is heartrending when he reifies the condition of his universe, "I understood that, finally and absolutely, I alone exist. All the rest, I saw, is merely what pushes me, or what I push against, blindly—as blindly as all that is not myself pushes back" (22). Is this not the voice and behavior of the universal species called by some "humanity"? Each member living in a world of private perception and experience? Individual, blindly-searching, bleeding hearts who cry for love and understanding—but, oh, the terms each demands!?

In addition, like the Minotaur, Grendel awaits a savior to rescue (redeem?) him from the bitter, infested world he inhabits:

Vastly far away I see the sun, black but shining, and slowly revolving around it there are spiders. I pause in my tracks, puzzled—though not stirred—by what I see. But then I am in the woods again, and the snow is falling, and everything alive is fast asleep. It is just some dream. I move on, uneasy; waiting (137)

Grendel is not to be disappointed; his anxiousness is rewarded, for soon he notes, "The sky grew light at my back. Then I saw the sail" (152). Beowulf, like Theseus, has arrived to rescue a culture from a monstrous curse and, in the doing, ironically to save the monster too. Yet, the demise of Gardner's *Grendel* is "inherent in his nature. As his rationality slips further out of control, further toward the existential absurdity, he allows his emotions to take rein, and acts upon pure and instinctive rage.... he obeys, as much as bull and goat and man, the harsh 'mechanics' of the moment and of his world" (Morris 68). The monster that is Grendel "obeys" a certain force natural to both man and animal; these shared patterns are what make [wo]men one with the animals they so love to lord over. Morris defines it thus, "Grendel ... is damned (however much our sympathies wish it otherwise) by the old blood that runs through him and that determines his monstrosity" (70). So, in the end: it is a shared bloodline; one shared by man and beast.

Gardner creates a pathetic and believable creature viewed from a perspective that sometimes provokes a poignant laughter; but, with only slight introspection, one quickly discovers that the laughter is directed not at Grendel, but at all mankind. Although none of Gardner's story appears as such in the original legend, why is it so easy to believe that this monster was just so?

And now Dracula: Although Bram Stoker offers the quintessential story of *Dracula*, the folklore of the vampire is as classic as that of the mythic Greek Minotaur and the legendary Teutonic Grendel. Like myth and legend, folklore too has its roots in some cultural truth, whether physical occurrence or moral axiom. In his recent text, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, Paul Barber

explains, "Most folklore is not presented to us as a simple account of experience but is put through a series of cognitive filters, so that a narrated event, however 'real,' may end up in later retellings with little or no resemblance to what we think of as reality" (195). As far as the notion of vampire is concerned, the folkloric existence of this type of creature is a global phenomenon with local manifestations found in almost every culture. What Barber defines it as is "how people in pre-industrial cultures look at the processes and phenomena associated with death and the dissolution of the body" (1); and he asks, "Lacking a proper grounding in physiology, pathology, and immunology, how [else] are people to account for disease and death?" (3).

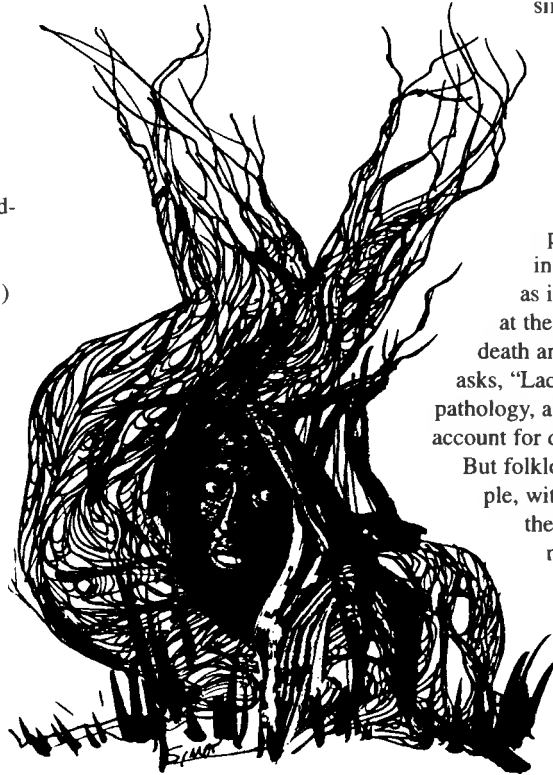
But folklore is easily translated into myth. For example, within the ceremonies of worship inherent in the Christian Myth are found two major elements that closely parallel two major characteristics of any vampire story: 1) Christ dies, is buried, and rises "from the dead"; and 2) in commemoration of the Last Supper, Roman Catholics especially ingest as communion entree that which is identified as "the Body and Blood of Christ." In addition, almost all religious myths offer a "life after death" insurance

policy, often called precisely, "everlasting life." Since this is exactly what vampires offer many of their victims, one wonders why so many people so often begrudge these creatures a simple sip of blood. In addition, if one takes stock of all the things the vampire must give up in order to obtain this desired state of "undeadness," then who could not feel some sort of pity for a creature who lives an eternal life of Lent—life without . . . water, fire, or garlic, and, most important, without sunlight.

In her popular novel *Interview with the Vampire* Anne Rice, like Borges and Gardner, offers a first-person narration, i.e., the monster's point-of-view, and, once again, a monster that evokes pathos. But, in contrast, Rice employs a "state-of-the-art" narrative technology: her vampire tells his life story during a taped interview conducted by a young boy whose innocent discourse exposes his own novice state:

"But how much tape do you have with you?" asked the vampire, turning now so the boy could see his profile. "Enough for the story of a life?" [The youth answers,] "Sure, if it's a good life. Sometimes I interview as many as three or four people a night if I'm lucky." (2)

The story that Rice's vampire tells is far removed in time from the Dracula legend associated with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and from the images found in most of the classic horror films spawned by Stoker's literary synthesis of the folklore. But the darkness, the terror, the loneliness, and the lust that is the life of a vampire remain even in the modernized version of this blood-imbibing creature. With these images in place, there remains little need to belabor the existences similarities of this creature with the Minotaur and Grendel monsters. Rice's monster is no less evocative of poignant emotion than Borges' or Gardner's. Neither does Rice's creature fail in reflecting a certain uni-



versal condition of humanity. And although none of Rice's story appears as such in the original folkloric or literary narrative, why is it so easy to believe that this monster is *just so*?

The creation of these monsters and their individual conditions does seem to reflect the inner nature of their creator, human-nature: it takes one to know one—so to speak. But as powerful and valid as this concept is, so too is the reality that no matter what monster each [wo]man creates—and we are the ones who create these as well as our individual, personally-tailored monster—we always—always—invent a method of conquering, or at least controlling, these demons. And in this tradition lies “the rub”! The human species must “impose order” says Gardner's Grendel; and order is one major method of control. If these monsters, according to Tolkien's theory, are personifications of sin and, thereby, manifestations (mutations?) of evil, then note what humanity has accomplished. The Minotaur is protected in his labyrinth and conquers all but Theseus who has found a way to mark the path through the maze. Grendel is immune to metal—all swords—but not to a certain degree of strength: Beowulf has the grip of thirty men. And the Vampire, who offers eternal life, can be done in with a wooden stake as he lies helpless in his sacred box of dirt.

Humanity seems uncomfortable with the concept that there truly exists such a thing as pure evil, so, first of all, we happily find that all fiends are “actually” misunderstood, unhappy creatures who wish to be rescued from their horrid fates, then we rescue them by killing them. By owning the means of killing these monsters, humanity can control the evil these creatures represent. By prayer and sacrifice, humanity controls its gods; by sacrificial slayings of its monsters, humanity controls its evils. By way of myth, legend, and lore, humanity imposes order on the maze, the chaos, that is life.

The fact that these creatures are usually feared but are never fully hated by those who experience them as myth, legend, and lore suggests that what each human being understands in the plights of these miscreants is that at any place, at any time, for just the right reason, any person, regardless of who or what s/he is, anyone can (will?) become any one of these monsters because the characteristics of these monsters appear less innate to the creatures themselves and more expressive of the capacity-for-monster in all of us. For there is a monster in all of us: it is to this self that these monsters speak; it is this self who validates the type of fiction that offers the voice of these creatures we hate to love; and it is this same self who listens: when the monster speaks ...

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“Transformations; Mirrors of Humanness...”

Continued from Page 61

After he becomes something worse than simian, he will also, the speaker hopes, meet the end he deserves, a death not unlike Actaeon's: “And for the creature that defeats you,/ Clutches, claws, and—at last—eats you./ Blessed be the reeking breath,/ Blessed be the ripping teeth” (lines 9-12).

6] At this point she is not far from the girl in “Magic Irony,” who also “hopes to be a witch” (line 1) yet “Worries about the harm her wishes do” (line 2) and “is helpless to do wrong” (line 8). Unfortunately, the witch of “Witch's Progress” will achieve what this girl cannot—one of those “creatures who could teach Medea tortures./ Dark bones under unkind flesh,/ With souls like blades to point the harm” (lines 4-6).

7] This theme appears again in Pilkington's “Half Sisters” (forthcoming in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*), which is also about witches; he looks at the traditional “good witch, bad witch” scenario and interprets it in a rather humanistic fashion. He concludes, in his fairy-tale rhythm and rhyme, “There were two witches who dwelt in the wood,/ Both of them evil and both of them good:/ But each of them, hiding one half of the whole,/ Died of dividing her self from her soul” (lines 13-16).

8] Ariel's plea remains unanswered, and the spirit is still alone at the end of the poem. In a companion poem, “Prospero's Third Thoughts” (which was written before “Ariel Alone”), we discover what Prospero's answer might have been. Prospero expresses his desire to be reunited with his fiery servant: “Were my drowned power to surge from sleeping waves,/ I would return and summon his belief/ To magic's pageant, a final fantasy” (lines 3-6). However, he has made his decision and has resigned himself to death: “I wait in rags of flesh and ducal clothes/ To claim that darkness I have always owned./ So, sheathed with frost, the December rose/ Goes glittering to its bleak repose” (11-14). The former mage cannot abandon his mortality any more than Odysseus can, nor can he change the nature of the world. In another of Pilkington's *Tempest* poems, “Caliban's Name,” Caliban sends the same message from his different and darker perspective: “My self is a sea where evil blows/ With storms darker than any wizard owns,/ And even he cannot feed this glutton/ For long with songs.”

9] Whereas this poem shows the creator as scientist, Pilkington's “Where Scientists Write Poetry” looks at the scientist as creator. He begins with the premise that “Scientists do not write poetry—at least not frequently—” (line 1), depicting them at first as coldly logical computing beings, but by the end he finds both philosophy and human warmth in their work: “What they write is the spiral of life/ Lifting itself from the sea and wheeling through seasons,/ Arranging itself into infinite caparisons but pulsing/ Always underneath with the heat from that first explosion,/ Concatenation and debris of galaxies, like light squaring/ Itself beyond entropy, where scientists write poetry” (lines 9-14).



Essays on Dark Fantasy

Another Perspective on Arthur Machen: Comments on Arthur Machen and Montgomery Evans: Letters of a Literary Friendship, 1923-1947

by Sam Moskowitz

Arthur Machen has gathered about him a self-renewing cult that has sustained interest in him, beginning with Vincent Starrett's essay "Arthur Machen: Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin" which first appeared in "Reedy's Mirror" in 1917, which publication was then at the forefront of literary criticism, published by William Marion Reedy out of St. Louis. It attracted immediate attention and then was published as a monograph by William Hill in 1918, finally leading off *Buried Caesars*, Starrett's volume on neglected authors (Covici-McGee, 1923).

Since that essay, there has been no lack of acolytes of Arthur Machen and periodic rediscoveries and revivals that show no sign of letting up even after a period of seventy-six years. But for a while there was ill feeling between Machen and Starrett emanating from that essay. Machen had been very pleased with it and in the course of correspondence gave Starrett permission to reprint any of his uncollected works with the aim of restoring him to the attention of the literate. Starrett published two volumes of previously uncollected stories and essays: *The Shining Pyramid* (1923) and *The Glorious Mystery* (1924). At the same time Machen had made contact with Alfred Knopf and was having most of his early works reprinted in the United States.

Knopf in 1925 issued a collection with the same title, *The Shining Pyramid*. Impoverished Machen, realizing some money on his books, turned on Starrett like a viper, releasing a letter saying that he had never given Starrett permission to reprint anything.

Unfortunately, Starrett had a handwritten letter from Machen giving him carte blanche on anything he wanted to reprint. He quoted it and with his publisher mailed out his defense. In 1977 the Autolycus Press, St. Louis, published *Starrett vs. Machen*, giving the complete correspondence on the affair which reinforced Starrett's vindication.

That is where Montgomery Evans comes onto the scene. He had visited Machen shortly after Starrett had called upon the author effecting a reconciliation. He frequently visited Machen when in England. This time he had a copy of *The Shining Pyramid* (1923) with him, and in it Machen wrote, regarding Starrett:

1. It was really silly of me to say in 1918: "You may do what you like with my old stuff."
2. It was wrong of me not to recollect this saying in 1924.
3. It was very wrong of you to make two books of this "old stuff" without consulting me as to its contents.

Montgomery Evans had mounted the correspondence between him and Machen in two large notebooks, now owned by Albert Borowitz, who loaned them to Kent State University Library where they were made available to the Hassler team. They, in turn, transcribed them, "translating" them from Machen's difficult handwriting. This was supplemented by contact with surviving family members and friends of Evans.

The resulting book has been published as *Arthur Machen and Montgomery Evans: Letters of a Literary Friendship, 1923-1947*, edited by Sue Strong Hassler and Donald M. Hassler, from the Kent State University Press (195 pp., 1994, \$26.00).

There have been other collections of Machen's letters, recently *Arthur Machen: Selected Letters*, edited by Roger Dobson, Godfrey Brangham, and R.A. Gilber (Aquarian Press, 1988); but this one is distinguished by the fact that all the communications are with one person and therefore offer a sense of continuity. There are likely to be more, for the Hasslers have asserted that there are large collections of Machen letters in American libraries; and since he was a voluminous correspondent, still others are very likely to turn up.

The introduction by Donald Hassler, reprinted from the Summer, 1992, issue of *Extrapolation* (of which he is editor) is as much a paean of praise for the collector—specifically naming the science-fiction collector—as it is an accolade for Montgomery Evans and Arthur Machen.

It is the collector—in this case Montgomery Evans—who has made this collection possible. Without him the letters would have been lost or discarded and another facet of Machen's life unrevealed.

The letters in this volume carry us through from 1923 to Machen's death, December 15, 1947. What characterizes them is their forthrightness and simplicity. Machen deals with everyday affairs and makes very little pretension of being a mentor or an intellectual. He is, of course, concerned with what is happening in the publishing of his works.

He is not too proud to acknowledge contributions to his well being and comfort. Particularly after the end of the war, parcels, made up mostly of food, arrive frequently from the generosity of Montgomery Evans. In mitigation of Machen's poverty, it must be said that during that period rationing was still in effect in England and it was difficult to buy food even with money.

Alluding to poverty, in the last letters in the book which are from Machen's son Hilary, he tells Evans that his father has left him 2,000 pounds as a legacy. It is not certain what the rate of exchange between British and American money was in 1947, but it could not have been less than a two to one ratio and might have been as high as five to one. Hilary planned to use the money to take his wife and children to New Zealand and start a new life there. Delaying him was the difficulty in obtaining passage.

When the letters start in 1923, Machen is on the verge of an American revival, thanks to Vincent Starrett; but this revival conceals the fact that his creative powers have waned and that he is no longer capable of producing works of his old power, but must rely on collections of published oddments. After the reprintings and new collections are finished, in a relatively few years he is in decline and in straitened circumstances.

What is curious is that there is so much scraping of facts about Machen's life through the years and relatively little criticism of his actual work, the quality of which ostensibly is the reason for continued interest in him. This is something he holds in common with H.P. Lovecraft.

All told, though, a useful book, offering an interesting perspective on one of the masters of occult fiction.

A Pairing

Bumbejimas (Part Two) The Attraction by Ed Meskys



This is a personal reaction to horror.

I suppose I do not belong in this because I have never had a fondness for horror stories or movies. I have seen others strongly drawn to the field to the point of near obsession and have always wondered why.

About ten years ago a now-defunct company called Hourglass Productions published a series of one-hour interviews of major authors on cassette. I only have one of these tapes, the interview with Fritz Leiber. He talked about his first two novels, *Conjure Wife* and *Gather, Darkness!*, which remain among my favorite Leiber stories. Both were sold to Campbell in the early 1940s, one for *Unknown* and the other for *Astounding*. The first was a modern witchcraft story about a college professor who discovers that his wife is practicing white magic in order to protect him from black witches. He doesn't believe in her superstitious acts and makes her stop, which proves to be a dangerous move, as their antagonists are real witches practicing real black magic. The dramatic climax comes about three-fourths of the way through the book when the evil witches have put a spell on her forcing her to drown herself in the sea. He has accepted the reality of magic and uses a counterspell but is moments too late. He saves her body, but he only has the physical body with no will or personality. The rest of the story is about the recovery of her soul. While the book had a few scary moments, I did not regard it as a horror story.

The other story, *Gather, Darkness!*, is about the overthrow of a pseudo-religious tyranny by a group of rebels who used scientific techniques to create the illusion of witchcraft. The situation at the opening of the novel is one common to SF found in stories like Heinlein's "Revolt in 2100." An evil dictatorship uses scientific flummery, much like that regularly exposed in *The Skeptical Inquirer*, to make the populace believe in a false religion and be cowed into submitting to the theocracy. The rebels turn the same devices to their benefit to make the populace start to question the power of the state. Among other things they create by genetic engineering little creatures which act as messengers and which have to drink the master's blood to have enough energy for their work. Thus these creatures appear to be witches' familiars.

In the interview Leiber made the point that even when writing a science fiction story he was driven to include some of the trappings of the horror story. While it had the pseudo-witches with familiars, fake

spells, etc., there was absolutely nothing scary about the story.

In his book *Danse Macabre* the only bit of *Lord of the Rings* that Stephen King reminisces over is Frodo and Sam's encounter with Shelob. He too zeroes in on the horror aspect of a non-horror story.

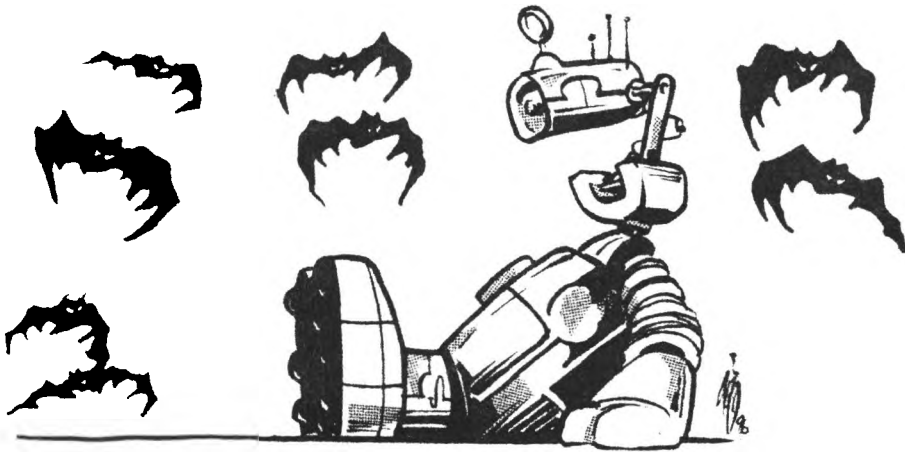
What makes a horror story, the trappings or the mood? If subjective, would something be horror if it scared only a few readers or does it have to scare most of them? Straub and King's *The Talisman* has a werewolf but to me is a fantasy adventure story with no feeling of horror. Ditto Boucher's "Compleat Werewolf." On the other hand the movies *ALIEN* and *THE THING* have the trappings of science fiction but are really horror.

As I said, I am not attracted to horror. On the other hand I have read about a dozen Stephen King novels. I accidentally got *Carrie* from the talking-book library and found the story very compelling. I just could not stop reading it. I read most of his early books and enjoyed them to varying extents despite their horror aspects. Some, like *The Dead Zone*, I did not consider to be horror at all. Others, like *The Stand*, I thought as having only bits of horror here and there. Would you call *Running Man* horror or suspense-adventure?

I do not find Lovecraft scary, only over-written. His prose is in the style of a past generation, and must be accepted as such. Today just saying that something is horrible does not make it so for the reader. I only gulped a few times while reading his stories, though I have sampled only about a quarter of his output. For instance, I gulped when in, I think, "The Lurking Fear" a character looked out of a window and fell back with his face ripped off.

I do find most so-called horror fiction not horrifying, but then when I find a scary part I do not like it. I do NOT go out and look for it. I suppose that there is something illogical about complaining that most stories are not scary, and then not liking the scary ones. I suppose that those who like horror get an adrenaline rush, like a skier or skydiver, someone on a roller coaster or a galloping horse. During his interview on "Fresh Air" (National Public Radio) Stephen King said that when he was a kid his parents expected him to always be in total control of his emotions. He loved the monster movies because he could let go and scream. Is this common to all horror devotees?

Incidentally, here and in his National Press Club talk he mentioned surviving his days of poverty on fried Cheerios and peanut butter. Were those cooked together or was he just mentioning two different staples of his diet? And, speaking of adrenaline rushes, he talked of the crazies in his audience and how he maintains a card file of bizarre correspondents. People write him saying they have experiences just like his characters, or that they ARE his characters and he is writing about them. When he is too busy to give an autograph the fan turns from adulation to abuse. It must be scary to be so in the limelight without the pleasant adrenaline rush!



Of Dissent

Across the River

"The Horror!

The Horror!"

by Fred Lerner

A few months ago I became the science fiction and fantasy reviewer for the *Wilson Library Bulletin*. I asked that the scope of the "Science Fiction Multiverse" column be redefined to exclude horror fiction. I have no interest in horror, I explained, no sympathy for the genre—and that, of course, would make me unfit to review it. I must not be the only one who feels this way. Certainly my editors at *WLB* were sympathetic to my viewpoint: they readily agreed to drop horror from my purview.

I can't think of any obvious literary reason why horror should be associated with science fiction. In *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, H.P. Lovecraft is careful to distance horror from "naively inspired idealism" and "smirking optimism." Science fiction is inherently an optimistic literature. Its essential subject-matter is that most human of activities, problem solving. Its writers have always honored the ideal of applying scientific knowledge and the scientific method to the identification and solution of problems. (There are exceptions to this, of course. *The Genocides* by Thomas Disch is surely science fiction, and it is surely not an optimistic story.)

Fantasy writers often choose to ignore science, though there are several fine fantasy stories that instead employ a twisted form of scientific law or technological achievement. (Remember "Magic, Inc." and *The Incomplete Enchanter*?) But in fantasy, too, the prevailing view of the human prospect is an optimistic one. Playing fast and loose with the laws of the universe requires a suspension of disbelief too drastic to be wasted upon a rehearsal of entropy. "Life sucks, and then you die"—we already know *that*. We invest our money, our time, and our dreams in those who can convince us that our lives have some greater meaning.

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear," Lovecraft tells us, denying that the human race has advanced in any significant way since we were scared down from the trees. To some of us at least, the strongest human emotion is hope. Where horror fiction is the literary expression of fear, science fiction and fantasy are the literary embodiment of hope, and it is that contradiction which, to me, divorces horror from the SF field.

But how does horror fiction come to be associated with science fiction and fantasy in the first place?

When we speak of the fantasy field, we are really speaking of five categories of fiction that share only one common feature: a significant degree of "cognitive estrangement" from the world we know. It seems to me that these five types of fantasy are characterized and distinguished by the nature of that cognitive estrangement.

In *scientific fantasy*, the cognitive estrangement takes the form of a setting in which the scientific laws and/or technological developments that have shaped our world have taken a noticeably different path, either because of the future evolution of science and technology ("hard

science fiction") or because of some assumed divergence from what we know to have happened ("alternate world" or "science fantasy").

In *utopian fantasy*, the setting is chosen to illustrate in idealized form the consequences of adopting some socioeconomic, philosophical, or religious ideology. The ideology in question is not necessarily one with which the author sympathizes; its adoption may be shown in a favorable or unfavorable light. (In the latter case "dystopian" is the adjective usually applied to it.)

The setting of *heroic fantasy* is chosen to provide a backdrop against which the protagonist can display qualities that would be implausible in a contemporary setting or in a historical setting recognizable to the intended audience.

Whimsical fantasy uses cognitive estrangement just for the fun of it. We know that animals do not talk, and cannot talk. We do not enquire too closely into the economic infrastructure of the River Bank and the Wild Wood—we just sit back in our easy chair and enjoy the entirely implausible but thoroughly delightful setting that Kenneth Grahame has imagined and shared with us in *The Wind in the Willows*. Whimsical fantasy may be satirical—a tradition that extends back way beyond *Gulliver's Travels*—or written just for the fun of it.

In a *weird fantasy*, the cognitive estrangement also exists to create an atmosphere removed from our daily world. *But* here the purpose is not to delight but to frighten, in Lovecraft's words, to "[excite] in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim."

It's entirely possible for a story to partake of more than one of these approaches: *Animal Farm* is both a dystopian (i.e., perverted utopian) fantasy and a whimsical fantasy.

What do these have in common with science fiction? Why are they usually regarded as having something to do with SF? Why am I discussing them here?

There was a time when *Amazing Stories* and *Weird Tales* were the only markets for fantastic fiction, the only place where those who sought the truly unusual in adventure fiction might find it. It was natural for a wide range of stories to find a home in those few magazines devoted to non-realistic fiction. As the science fiction market widened, as the SF readership grew, as the number of writers and editors and collectors and commentators associated with the field increased, they retained the habit of associating horror fiction with science fiction, despite the gulf between their opposing views of the universe.

Essays on Dark Fantasy

So why am I so unsympathetic to horror fiction? The easiest way for me to begin to explore this is to look at what I enjoy about the horror fiction that I do like.

When I was in college, I traded my small collection of Marvel Comics for a dozen Arkham House books. I've no idea whether this was a good decision from a financial point of view, but I was satisfied then and am satisfied now with the results. I've read the three basic Lovecraft collections, and several volumes of associational material, and I've also read Donald Wandrei's *The Web of Easter Island* and Manly Wade Wellman's *Who Fears the Devil?*. What I remember about these books—all of which I read twenty-five years ago and more—is the sense of the exotic that they conveyed. Whether it be a futuristic libertarian utopia, the Harvardian Ruritania of *Islandia*, or for that matter the Regency London of Georgette Heyer's novels, the portrayal of an alien environment in such detail that I can imagine myself fitting comfortably into it is one of the things that makes reading fiction such a pleasure for me. Lovecraft's monsters don't frighten me (most of them are just *sashimi* on the grand scale); but his protagonists, and the cityscapes and countrysides through which they travel, invite my company.

From what I've seen and heard of it, most contemporary horror fiction appeals to different emotions. It's hardly companionable: there's nobody there with whom I'd like to spend an evening by the fireside drinking a good single malt. (Is there such a thing as a *bad* single malt?) It's not inspirational: the essence of modern horror fiction, as I understand it, is that there are problems that simply are beyond human abilities to solve, and that we are none of us immune from them.

"From what I've seen and heard...", "as I understand it": I trust I've given ample evidence that my aversion to modern horror fiction has been acquired from a safe distance. I am not speaking from any experience. Nor am I in a hurry to acquire any.

The thing is, I get enough of modern horror in my daily work. I am a bibliographer by trade. The principal product of my endeavours is the PILOTS database, an index to the worldwide literature on post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems resulting from exposure to traumatic events. I have seen more than twelve thousand papers on this subject—I believe that I've seen more of this literature than anyone on this planet—and in those publications I've read about more real horror than anyone needs to experience vicariously. The life-long after-effects of child sexual abuse, the ingenious ways in which Pinochet's military intelligence employed police dogs, the professional education of an Iraqi torturer—after learning of such things, what can King or Koontz offer? (And if I want *real* horror, I've got on my shelves a copy of Geoffrey Lapage's *Animals Parasitic in Man*.)

I cheerfully concede that there are excellent modern horror writers. If so knowledgeable an editor as David Hartwell finds sufficient merit in the heritage of horror to assemble historical anthologies of its classic stories, I must acknowledge the strength of its pedigree. And I must admit that any form of literature that attracts admirers such as those who have contributed to this issue of NIEKAS must have some abiding value.

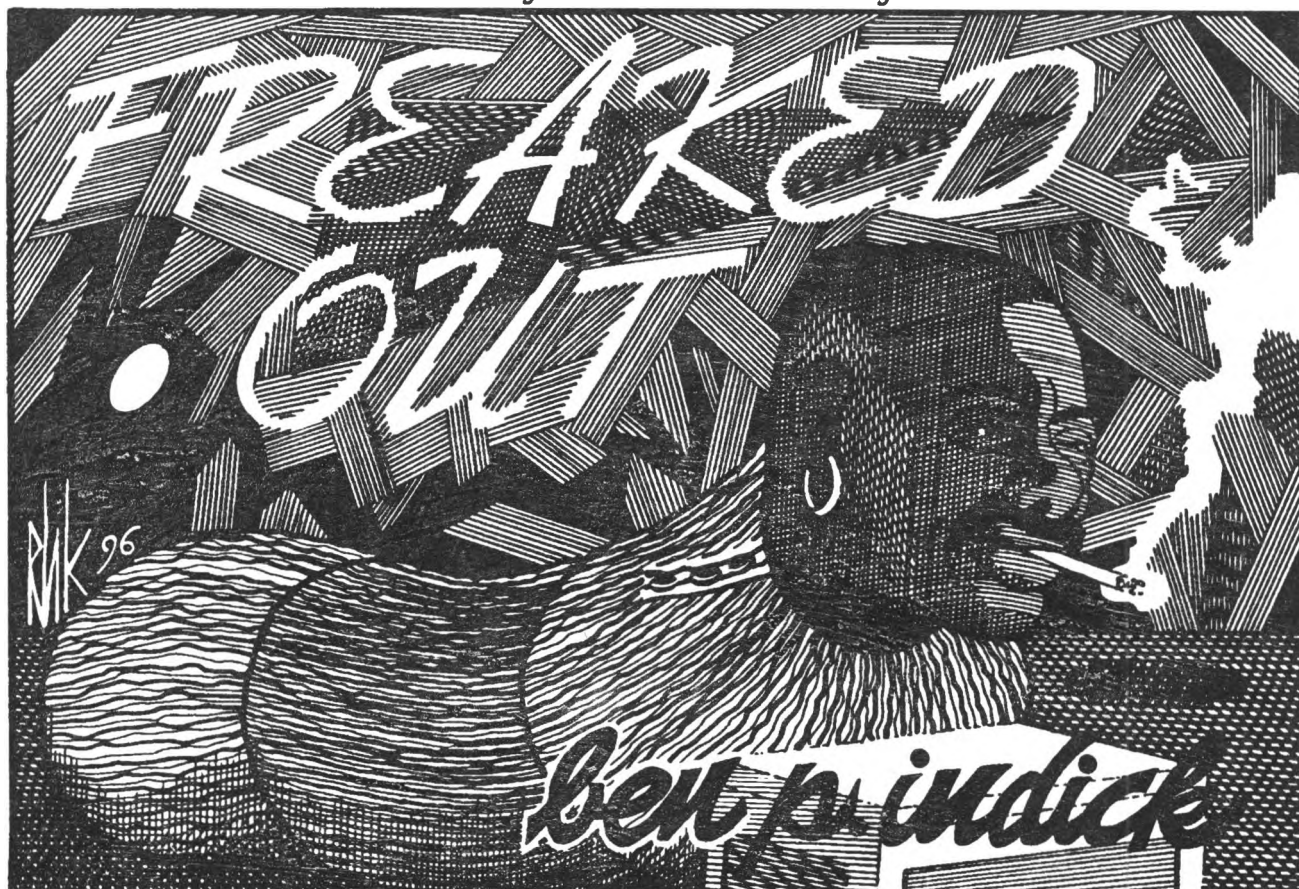
But not to me. I shall confine my horror reading to the scientific literature that I am paid to index. For pleasure I shall choose from the ample harvest of stories about people who solve the problems of life. Even when their solution is simply to find some way to endure adversity with patience and self-respect, there is a nobility there that I would much rather contemplate.

"Gridding the Vampire Filmography..."

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**"Old monsters never die.
They just meet
Abbott and Costello."**



I have always been a fan of silent and early sound films, and recently I became immersed in a few. Furthermore, the films became involved with a play I had just seen, and in turn with a book I would shortly be purchasing. The wheels of chance were really revolving!

The interrelationships began when TNT (Turner Network Television, a cable station) which fills most of its hours with movies, announced an evening much to my taste, which runs to fantasy. Turner owns huge backlogs of Hollywood films, especially from M-G-M, but his TNT is not reluctant to mix their primarily 1940-1950 fare with earlier films, even an occasional silent, such as Ramon Novarro in the still excellent *BEN HUR*. Starting one evening at 12:30 AM, they said, they would show consecutively three early 30s horror classics, each connected with Tod Browning, premier early director of horror films, and most renowned for *DRACULA*. The trio consisted of *FREAKS*, *MARK OF THE VAMPIRE*, both directed by Browning, and the sound version of *THE UNHOLY THREE*, Lon Chaney's last film, which Browning had directed in its silent form. Coming in under six hours, they would fit neatly on to one videotape, while I slept or attempted to sleep in restless anticipation. My VCR demanded that I stay up until 12:30 just to set it going, but that was a small price to pay. By chance, and it turned out to be a major adjunct to this TV event, I had just seen a little musical comedy downtown at the enterprising WPA Theatre, *Twenty Fingers, Twenty Toes*. It was based on the true story of a pair of Siamese twin young women, Daisy and Violet Hilton, who achieved some fame in the late 20s and 30s in vaudeville and films and a tearful writeup in *A. Merritt's Hearst paper supplement, The American Weekly*. WPA's *The Little Shop of Horror* had been a great success some years back. *20/20* by Michael Dansicker and Bob Nigro, alas, was hopelessly old-fashioned in its writing, with unmemorable music, but the girls, wearing a dress joining them at the waist, were adorable, doing some neat choreography in their tile song, as they counted their combined blessings, including beside the digital appendages arms, legs, breasts, and other areas. A half man/half

woman (divided vertically), apparently enlisted to give the faltering play some life, assisted the twins. As the play ended, the two were on their way, in 1932, as in true life, to Hollywood to feature in the forthcoming film *FREAKS*. A backdrop reproducing the poster of the film was revealed with eyebrow-raising pride at the final curtain.

If I had not been entirely charmed by the play, I was nevertheless delighted when TNT announced the forthcoming night of fear in which I might actually see the real girls. I have heard for years of *FREAKS*. It must have seemed like *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* to timid souls of its day. It is a fact that at a preview a woman ran screaming from the theater. Exhibitors refused to book the film, and it was pulled and not shown publicly for some thirty years. Today it is regarded as a horror classic, but is still rarely exhibited. That it would be shown on television was amazing, considering the fear with which people aware of its nature face it. When I informed a friend of its cast, he refused either to hear more or to watch the film. My wife, who won't watch horror flicks anyway, turned thumbs down on the entire tape. I held it expectantly until I could find time for it.

Then I found, in The Theatre Bookshop on Theatre Row on 42nd St., a volume reconstructing a lost Chaney 1922 silent film, *THE BLIND BARGAIN*. The book itself was a bargain, being cut to less than half its list price, thus eliminating any possible qualms to my purchasing it. It was published by that renaissance man of old movies and monsters, Forrest J. Ackerman, whose auction of fantastic books, posters, movie scripts, and other memorabilia was conducted last year at The Puck Building on Houston Street. The book is the second in a series of such reconstructions, much of the material being derived from his copious archives. (The first volume was *LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT*, another Chaney film. I have not found that volume, even at full price, but I do have Forry's fine Chaney scrapbook, *Lon of 1000 Faces*, from 1983.) The book is a compendium of delights, including, irresistibly, an article by Robert Bloch, and other items I shall get around to.

So here I was with a new book all about Lon Chaney with what

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amounted to one of his movies as well! The world could, after all, not be entirely hopeless. I already own a very fine videotape of his great *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*, tinted properly (some of the original was two camera Technicolor, which existed as early as 1922.) And long ago I had read Tad Robbins' novel *The Terrible Three*, which inspired *THE UNHOLY THREE* on the new videotape. I have several volumes of Robbins' fine weird tales, and in this convoluted tale of mine, yet another of his stories, "Spurs" was the inspiration for *FREAKS*. Before the coincidences get entirely out of hand, I shall commence with the film and the story.

Browning's success with *DRACULA* at Universal led to an M-G-M contract, and he was given free rein to outdo all prior horror films. He had, as a youngster, run away to a sideshow, and the memory of the physically twisted individuals he had known there led him to the Robbins short story. The story itself concerns a sideshow of freaks in a circus. A midget is presumptuous enough to fall in love with the beautiful bareback rider; her derision, however, vanishes quickly enough when she learns he is heir to a fortune. They marry, but she begins to mock him almost at once, puts him up on her shoulder as though he were a toy, laughing at him, and says she could carry him the length of France. Mortified, he gains his revenge, with his deadly dangerous dog as a constant threat, forces her to taste first whatever she makes for him so she cannot poison him, and rides her about with small golden spurs. At the end when she escapes briefly to an old lover, who fails to recognize her after a year, so haggard is she, the midget appears, has his dog kill the man, and rides her off. Onlookers mistakenly and ironically think he is the henpecked one, and that she is still deriding him.

Browning decided to use real freaks. In his *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King comments that this was a mistake, that "we may only feel comfortable with horror as long as we can see the zipper running up the monster's back." By "mistake" King is referring only to audience reception of the film, of course. Had Browning's freaks been zippered creations, the film would have experienced no selling difficulties; it would also be a forgotten horror film. That cruel and horrible word "freaks" is fortunately out of fashion now, inasmuch as misshapen or birth-injured individuals are (or should be) no longer treated as subjects for derision or show. In the '30s, when I was a kid, however, every sideshow had them, and they aroused our morbid curiosity. The fascination with the grotesque persists today as well; there may not be the same sideshows any longer, but there is no shortage of horror in film and fiction. Filling booth after booth back in those bygone days, however, each with its garishly illustrated banner promising views of the unbelievable and monstrous, with most imaginative labels, were midgets, hermaphrodites, hydrocephalics, Siamese twins, armless wonders—name your nightmare. Some were fakes, some were real. Browning most certainly went for real, although some may have been the accidents of fate, World War I veterans dismembered into basketcases.

The tone of the film, however, is not, despite some lingering photography, voyeuristic. Indeed, it is compassionate. It is not the freaks who are ultimately horrifying, but the callous and selfish "normal" people. According to Walt Lee's *Reference Guide To Fantastic Films*, the film, now 61 minutes long, originally ran 90 minutes. I suspected it had been cut when I saw it, as the climax is abrupt and muted, less convincing than the freaks themselves, and dramatically could have used stronger horror. However, in spite of typical 1930's dialogue and a less than satisfactory ending, this 60-year-old-film is still masterful, although not a horror story in the usual sense.

Browning uses restraint in introducing his cast and then parades them before us. The horror is in the travesties of the human form. The midget and his midget girl friend, squeaky voiced reductions of the normal shape, are easy enough (Harry Earles, who would later play a role among the Singer midgets in *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, and one of

"The Unholy Three" as well). Dwarfs, as small as he but misshapen, are here. A bearded lady. A half-man-half-woman, who gives birth. Armless adults who use their feet to feed themselves. Flame and knife swallows. And, the real Hilton sisters, pretty and well shaped girls, joined at the spine but off to the side, so that they walked not back to back but in a v-shape. The script calls for each to have a romance; the fiance of one complains he does not like his sister-in-law! Then, worse. Two "pinheads," small, pointed, hairless heads, always grinning; and, unforgettable and terrible even to consider; a man, normal from the waist up, whose body stopped at his trunk, legless, hopping about on large splayed hands like a giant frog. And a black man, head normal, with only a body; no arms, no legs, like a huge worm, crawling. Browning takes minutes to show him using his head and mouth to take a cigarette and then to light and smoke it, and we watch in chilled horror and sadness together at what this man endured as long as he lived.

Filed today one might smile indulgently and praise the clever special effects department for its zipper-concealing wizardry, but in 1932 the individuals were surely real. At the climax they are the most effective, and they are no longer pathetic nor comic.

The first truly powerful scene is the wedding of the midget and the woman, at a banquet table where all the freaks have assembled with them. It is all a joke to her until a dwarf leaps on to the table and, joined by the others, sings to her that she is "One of us, you are one of us now!" She shrieks, repelled, that she is not one of them! She is determined to poison her husband. The film omits the story's dog, but she is overheard by a dwarf when she tells her plan to her lover, the strong man. Finally, on a rainsoaked night punctuated by lightning, the circus is on the move when her wagon overturns. As she and the strong man try to gain their footing they see faces staring at them from beneath wagons and behind the trees. Except for the Hilton sisters, all the freaks are closing in on them. We see the legless man hopping beneath a wagon, through the shadows, brilliantly, terribly lit by the flashes of lightning, the paraplegic slithering through the mud, a knife in his mouth. Even the pinheads are closing in, the rain pouring off their faces where their idiot grins leer. The strong man is slain by a knife thrown by a dwarf, and as the faithless wife screams in terror, the scene fades into a sideshow scene where she is seen, now like an infamous geek, apparently legless and feathered, at the bottom of a pit into which paying customers peer horrified, as she screeches in a mindless cackle. In a postlude the midget, waited on by a normal sized butler, is now in his mansion, where some of the kindlier normal adults bring his diminutive and forgiving sweetheart for the happy ending.

A viewer wonders what the missing thirty minutes had to add. No doubt further elaboration of the freaks, and surely more for the climactic scene, to make the horror of the woman's fate even stronger. Perhaps Browning had intended her to fully occupy the role of the geek, biting off the heads of live chickens, which would explain the feathers. In any event, the power of the film and his mastery of the medium remain. It is commonly said that his career ended with the commercial debacle of this film. It is not true. *MARK OF THE VAMPIRE* was made three years later, starring Lionel Barrymore, and the same star was featured later in *THE DEVIL DOLL*, a broad adaptation of A. Merritt's novel *Burn, Witch, Burn!* The latter remains a good film but it lost the marvelous imagery and tension of the author's only tersely written novel.

MARK OF THE VAMPIRE, the second film in this extraordinary small hours of the night triple feature, features Barrymore in a variation of the Dr. Van Helsing role in *DRACULA*, while Bela Lugosi silently recreates (until the final scene) his most famous role. In fact, for much of the way, a bemused viewer wonders whether Browning was simply reprising his classic, for the general lines are similar. However, it is all a trick to trap a murderer who has attempted to conceal his deed as a vampire killing; it is far-fetched, but neatly and

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ingratiatingly accomplished. Transylvania has become, after all, mundane. Years after his tragic death, it is a treat to see a young and handsome Lugosi again, and his final scene is amusing. It is not the masterpiece its predecessor was, and although there is an extraordinarily beautiful female vampire, Carol Borland, even she is no match for the three willowy vampire wives of Dracula as they confront, in graceful and frightening choreography, Renfield, his intended victim. The closest Borland can come, and it does for an instant halt the breath, is her slow approach on a languorous outdoors evening to the immobilized heroine, who stares helplessly, even longingly up at the vampire, as Borland spreads her cloak wide and leans over her in her unspeakable act.

Lon Chaney had starred in Browning's silent version of *THE UNHOLY THREE* in 1925. Five years later, it was remade as a talkie, directed this time by Jack Conway. It is a story of three ex-cons who open a bird store, run by what appears to be a kindly old lady, Mrs. O'Grady, Chaney in drag, wig and all, but Echo, a ventriloquist, when he doffs the disguise. A midget and a strong man are his accomplices. He sells talking parrots whose chatter is actually only his ventriloquist's skill. When the new owners call subsequently to complain, he goes to their homes, ostensibly to check out the bird, actually to case the homes for robbery. Lila Lee is his very attractive pickpocket girlfriend, but she falls in love with his innocent clerk Hector. The greed and clumsiness of his co-conspirators results in murder, of which Hector is accused. In the fashion of the times, Echo confesses the truth, gallantly gives up the girl and five years of his freedom, and is seen at fadeout on the observation platform of a train, handcuffed to a policeman, but cheerfully waving goodbye to the girl. It is an amusing, silly story, an amiable climax to a great career.

The book which I had found was a remarkable and loving reconstruction of a lost film, Chaney's *A BLIND BARGAIN*, directed by William Worsley in 1922 for Samuel Goldwyn. It contains the history of the film, the choice of story, the alterations it underwent in adaptation, articles by participants in this or similar films, and a complete script for the film (which would be amended for the final shooting script). With this the author of the book, Philip J. Riley, amassed enough stills, sometimes enlarging details and occasionally repeating them, to present a coherent version of the film. The story is common enough in the genre, the brilliant but insane research surgeon (Chaney) implanting monkey glands or transfusing blood within different species, seeking near immortality; the unfortunate individual who emerged from his experiments a mute and repulsive (but good-hearted) hunchback (Chaney also); the surgeon's unhappy and helpless wife, the hero and his sweetheart. Trying to support an ailing mother, and unable to sell his novel, the hero attempts to rob the doctor. He is easily overcome, but the doctor, seeing a potential subject, removes him and his mother to his mansion. He bargains: he will cure the mother if the boy allows himself to be the subject of experimentation. There are swinging bookcase walls, hidden rooms, laboratories, an ape-man (acted without credit by Wallace Beery), and finally a happy ending, albeit not for the doctor.

It could not have been a distinguished film, aside from Chaney's remarkable double role, sometimes in the same frames, a trick certain to amaze viewers. Such a scene is illustrated in the book. The film, in spite of active promotion, including planting articles about monkey glands and rejuvenation, was not a success. However, a generous section of advertisements is fascinating to a lover of theatre. In terms of the mechanics of movie selling, there are reproductions of mats supplied to exhibitors, lobby ideas, contests, posters, etc. A page of "Musical suggestions" to accompany the film is reproduced, listing each scene as the titles would announce it, the appropriate "style" of music ("dramatic, sad, hurry" [??], flowing, etc.), titles, composers and publishers of actual recommended songs. Most names on the sheet are unfamiliar today, but Chopin and Nevin are included. Riley generously

prints several pages of photographs of movie palaces of the time, with their elaborate Moorish decor, lost today in the era of the multiplex mini-theaters.

For Great White Way theatre buffs, especial rewards may be found within several actual newspaper pages reprinted with exemplary clarity. On two typical theatre listing pages of *The New York Tribune*, December 3, 1922, we are suddenly transported through time into the presence of fabulous Broadway names, and what a feast it is! John Barrymore is doing *Hamlet*; his sister Ethel is in a Hauptman classic. Sam J. Harris is presenting an Irving Berlin *Music Box Revue*. "The Four Marx Brothers" are about to open *20th Century Revue*. Willie and Eugene Howard, beloved comics I recall from radio half a century ago, were in *The Passing Show of 1922*. George M. Cohan has two plays on, *Little Nellie Kelly* and *So This Is London*. The film, *WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER*, starring Marion Davies, then or later the paramour of William Randolph Hearst, and Douglas Fairbanks' *ROBIN HOOD* are hits. Chaliapin sings at Carnegie Hall and John McCormack at the Hippodrome. *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* is in a periodic revival. Joseph Schildkraut and Eva La Galliene star in *Liliom* and, running then and apparently forever, Jeanne Engels in *Rain*. Prices? Most are not listed, but you could get the best seats at Carnegie Hall for \$3.85, and others vary from a dollar up. 1922 was a very good year.

Among the essays in the book, the most welcome and delightful is by the favorite raconteur of fantasy conventions and the novelist cursed and blessed by his *Psycho*, the late Robert Bloch. *Lon of 1000 Faces* had merely reprinted several paragraphs from one of his essays which were relevant to Chaney. Here he offers a full essay on one of his favorite stars. He relishes detailing the nonsense of several of the star's films; thus, he mentions, which I neglected above, that Mrs. O'Grady's Bird Shop also has within it, for no apparent reason, a full-sized gorilla in a cage. (He hates the strong man and eventually does him in, of course.) He attributes the failure of *A BLIND BARGAIN* to the inanities within the script, but, because he has not seen the film, he offers a list of credibility-straining excesses in a film he has seen, Chaney's *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*. It is a hilarious catalog. Yet, Bloch, a gentle man who writes so terrifyingly, loves the film, because of the brilliance of its great star. Time has not changed this aspect, and even Andrew Lloyd Webber's fabulously successful and wonderful musical version of the film and book is no less silly and no less loveable. Bloch pinpoints the reason for the film's failure, that "the ridiculous actions and reactions of the characters supposedly playing normal roles" is a burden which "rests solely upon Chaney's shoulders, a burden neither he nor the audience can bear."

The popularity of Chaney was enormous and encompassed all the ethnic strands of the population. In one photo of him in *Lon of 1000 Faces*, dressed as Mrs. O'Grady, he is pointing with a broad smile to a poster in Yiddish, and to his name, transliterated phonetically. Those who, like myself, just manage to stagger through the *mamma loschen* (the mother tongue) can make it out in its Hebrew typeface, reading right to left, and keeping in mind that there is no CH sound, as in CHAIR, in Yiddish. The guttural CH sound, as in LOCH, is inapplicable here. The translator therefore uses a TZ sound as in WITZ. And it comes up with the Master, Quasimodo, Erik, Echo, the "man of a thousand faces," but the same name in any language, L-AH-N TZAH-NAY.

Addendum

For more information on FREAKS, I recommend David J. Skal's *The Monster Show*, subtitled *A Cultural History of Horror*. Skal is really referring to the theatre and motion pictures, and he establishes that in the first third of this century, Horror became an important thread in the American consciousness, in no small measure an aftermath of the terrors of the First World War, a position it would

maintain. He emphasizes the permanent iconic nature of Browning's DRACULA and James Whale's FRANKENSTEIN. However, he uses *Freaks* as a thread, commencing with it, then losing it for half a book as he circles off to side avenues of interest and influences. Although disconcerting, there is much material of interest here not otherwise readily found. Horace Liveright, publisher and would-be theatrical entrepreneur, who made and lost a fortune and had much to do with the genesis of the two films; Hamilton Deane, actor/producer/writer, also important; Lon Chaney; the *Theatre du Grande Guignol* of Paris; Bram Stoker, who made it big with one novel among potboilers, and his finance-conscious widow; the Brooklyn-born Tod Robbins, who wisely adopted the curt patronymic in place of his own "Clarence Aaron" and went on to write many mysteries and thrillers, a bon vivant in New York City's Greenwich Village, much married, whose writing would provide the source of Chaney's success, THE UNHOLY THREE as well as "Spurs," the source of FREAKS; and much more.

Browning had loved theatricals as a child and ran away early to a carnival, where among other acts he would be buried daily. He got into movies soon, and reached great success in his films with Chaney. Alcoholism was a problem, to such a degree that much of DRACULA was not even directed by him. However, memories of his carnival days remained and he fixed upon FREAKS, convincing Irving Thalberg at MGM to go ahead with the project despite much opposition. Skal gives some idea of what has been lost in the finished film, as well as

varying views of the director and his film. *Time* magazine referred to sideshow performers as "subhuman animals" and F. Scott Fitzgerald, then an MGM writer when he was not drinking, entering the commissary set, turned green when the Hilton Siamese-twin sisters entered, took a single seat, and one asked the other "What are you going to have?" Skal's style is influenced by his friend, the ever-bullient and knowledgeable Forrest J. Ackerman, but the information conveyed, as well as the evident enthusiasm and love, make this an excellent and useful read. (W. W. Norton and Co., NY, 1993, \$25.00).

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A Masked Tale of Consequences: A Feminist Critique of *Frankenstein* By Catherine Jewel Wilterding

On first reading the introduction to *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley in 1831, the reader may easily assume that Shelley was a self-deprecating woman who did not recognize or acknowledge the value of her work. Instances of this attitude may be detected when she talks about being reluctant to bring herself "forward in print" because she does not want to personally intrude on the work (19) and when she talks about her writing. She calls the writing she did as a child for recreation "scribbling" and implies that there is little difference in this writing and what she has done as an adult. Furthermore, she reveals that she was even more fond of "indulging in waking dreams" than in writing because she says the dreams were "at once more fantastic and agreeable than [her] writings" (20). In an apparently modest tone she says she was more an imitator of others' ideas rather than a proponent of her own ideas. Indeed, this self-criticism has been echoed by critics, such as the one who wrote, "Like almost everything else about [Mary's] life . . . *Frankenstein* is an instance of genius observed and admired but not shared" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 221-222).

Shelley's unassuming tone is pleasant to the ear and seems to reflect sentiments which would fit neatly into early nineteenth century ideas about the appropriate place for women—they should avoid the lime-light and speak in demure and reticent voices. In fact, Shelley's tone in the introduction and the relatively silent women in her novel seem to both reflect and condone these ideas, in practice and by example.

Furthermore, her acknowledgement that Percy Shelley (her husband) and Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin (her parents) influenced her writings also makes her seem like a passive receptacle for others' proddings and teachings. She says that Percy incited her to

write "not so much with the idea that I could produce anything worthy of notice, but that he might himself judge how far I possessed the promise of better things hereafter" (20). In doing this, she says Percy was only prodding her in an effort to help her prove worthy of her parentage, as both her parents were recognized writers. Shelley indicates no indignation at Percy's expressed sense of superior intellectual abilities, but rather seems to accept this idea, which would, after all, be expected if she is truly better at mimicry rather than creation. She then states that she did not immediately follow Percy's directives, but spent time travelling, caring for the children, and studying as a way of improving her mind to the level of Percy's "more cultivated mind" (20). Here again Shelley acknowledges her need to better herself to be up to the task put before her, thereby emphasizing her deficiencies.

Still maintaining her "appropriate," self-deprecating voice, she goes on to recount the events which led up to the creation of her novel. She says even writing the story was not self-motivated; it was the result of a challenge issued by Lord Byron after he, Mary, Percy, and Dr. Polidori had been reading ghost stories. Here again she removes any culpability on her part by saying that she was merely following the dictates of the challenge as did the other members of the party. Each person began the attempt to write a story which would entertain the others as the ghost stories they had read had done. However, she says that the other members of the party soon quit the enterprise because they were "annoyed by the platitude of prose" (21); in other words, they gave up the game because the language of prose was beneath their illustrious status as poets. (This can hardly apply to Polidori.) The fact that she continued to pursue the idea could indicate her

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acceptance of prose as a suitable form for her "less illustrious status." (Percy Shelley, whatever his feelings about the diction of Gothic fiction at this time, had written two Gothic novels earlier in his life but seems to have produced nothing on this occasion; Byron's fragment of thirty-four paragraphs has been published; and Polidori—the non-poet—is noted not for his original idea but for turning Byron's idea into a novel, *The Vampyre*—Lord Ruthven, in Polidori's fiction, is usually taken to be modeled on Byron.)

The continuous tone of self-deprecation in the introduction may reveal what Mary Shelley truly saw as her place within the early nineteenth century patriarchal system—a voiceless place she lived within and accepted readily. This silenced status of women's voices is revealed when Shelley says that she was often "a devout but nearly silent listener" to the many conversations between Lord Byron and Percy Shelley as they discussed "various philosophical doctrines," including the "nature of the principle of life" (22). However, the self-deprecation may, instead, be a ruse which she employs to get her voice heard by reluctant ears, which would deny her voice due to its feminine origin. I believe that Shelley creates a persona (a mask) by using the artifice of self-deprecation in the introduction, and that her novel is a veiled critique of social conditions and the consequences for women socialized into separate sphere ideology—an ideology, as noted by Johanna M. Smith, "that split off the (woman's) domestic sphere from the (man's) public world and strictly defined the 'feminine' and 'masculine' traits appropriate to each sphere" (270).

Her continual denial of attempting a public voice and her donning the mask of self-deprecation parallel that which she does in her novel. *Frankenstein* reveals much about the realities and consequences of separate sphere ideology, while posing as a horror story. Or, rather, *Frankenstein* is a horror story; however, it is actually one about people suffering and being silenced due to social constructs based on gender roles and not just a story about people suffering at the hands of a fictitious monster.

Shelley's awareness of and her desire to communicate what she perceives as the situation of women (their qualities of sympathy and self-denial, and the accompanying consequences) is readily apparent in a September 1827 letter she wrote to Frances Wright, in which she states that women are often the victims of their own generosity and that their "sensitive feelings" make them less capable than men "of battling the selfishness, hardness [and] ingratitude" which often are the payments for their "noblest efforts to benefit others" (Carson 438). Does it not then seem likely that Shelley would endeavor to carry this message, and its warning, to a wide arena of women? This notion seems especially credible if one considers that Shelley's introduction was written in 1831 (four years after the letter to Wright) and the novel was first published anonymously in 1818 (nine years before the letter). What better way is there to accomplish this feat than through donning a mask of self-deprecation in the introduction and then using male narrators in the novel to create a masculine mask—the mask of authority, which so often concealed the dangers inherent for the silenced women? Shelley's use of the male narrators performs its task of illustrating the situation of women and the inherent consequences in an intriguing manner:

Frankenstein consists of three "concentric circles" of narration: (Walton's letters, Victor Frankenstein's recital to Walton, and the monster's speech to Frankenstein), within which are embedded pockets of digression containing other miniature narratives (Frankenstein's mother's story, Elizabeth Lavenza's and Justine's stories, Felix's and Agatha's story, Safie's story), (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 224-225) Upon examination, what becomes apparent is that by embedding the women's stories within the men's tales, Shelley creates a textual representation of where women's lives were legally and socially relegated.

Furthermore, if this story of oppression was what Mary Shelley wished to present to the readers, she would have known that to do so

overtly in her own voice would leave the novel unread and herself severely criticized, much as her mother's overt writings about the need for women's equality caused Wollstonecraft to be called a "philosophical wanton and a monster" (Gilbert and Gubar 222). She also, perhaps, would have assumed this approach because "many reformers of Mary Shelley's generation adopted 'a general moral primness,' in part because the attacks on them automatically associated radicalism with sexual license" (qtd. in Carson 434-435). Therefore, Shelley uses three male voices (Walton's, Victor's, and the creature's) to tell her story. This tactic "may be seen as an extended commentary on the problem of the male expropriation of the voice of the conventionally passive female" (435), as she, in turn, assumes the mask of a self-deprecation to get her story (and the women characters' stories, in turn) heard. She employs a tactic which Devon Hodges says women writers adopt because they think that, "perhaps in adopting a male voice, the woman writer is given the opportunity to intervene from within, to become an alien presence that undermines the stability of the male voice" (157). Such seems to be the case with Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein*.

One indication of the need for Shelley to assume this mask can be seen in the reaction it received when it was published anonymously in 1818. "[F]or a while rumour had it that Percy Shelley was the author—probably because he had written the [original] Introduction. It never crossed anyone's mind that a woman might have been the author—for surely no member of the gentler sex could have written such a tale!" (Haining 2). This supposition on the part of readers and critics alike is echoed in the 1831 Introduction, when Shelley notes that she, in writing the introduction, is answering a question "frequently asked [of her]—'How I, then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?'" (19). Clearly, Shelley would have anticipated a severe critical reaction to her novel, and probably more readily to her personally, if she had published the novel with her name on the cover. Her work would have been greeted with indignation and disbelief not only because a woman had dared to venture into the literary arena where women were already marginalized, but also because such a woman could (and would) write the scenes of violence and horror contained in the novel. Shelley's personal reputation would have come under close examination, while her work would have probably been left unread except as evidence of her departure from her "proper place" within the social constructs of domesticity. However, donning the mask of an unnamed male, the maleness created by people's assumptions, allowed her words to first be encountered and savored before the critical examination began about their origin "in a woman." It appears that James Carson was correct when he states that "her unwillingness to bring herself forward [was] certainly related to specifically female anxieties of authorship . . . and an indication of the way in which the self is constructed out of unstable social and gender roles" (436).

Another indication of Shelley's masked intent is evidenced by the structure of her novel. The novel, while told through three male narrators' voices, takes the form of a letter to Mrs. Saville, in which Walton tells his sister about his adventures and then relates the events which bring him in contact with Victor Frankenstein, and eventually Victor's and the creature's own stories. Throughout these lengthy letters to his sister, Walton reveals his own assumptions about women; he recounts his travels and the wonders he has seen during an enterprise that she had feared with "evil forebodings" (Shelley 25-26); he lets her know that he is safe, confident of success, and dearly wishes for a male friend or kindred spirit to confide in; he beseeches her to continue writing him so that her letters can lift his spirits and declares his devotion to her (31), but he never inquires about her life or her personal concerns. He appears to view his circumstances to be of such magnitude that hers would surely pale in comparison; therefore, he assumes that all is well on the home front because she is there to

supply the necessary emotional support to allow for male adventures. Here Shelley shows that a woman can be silenced due to lack of curiosity and perhaps lack of concern based on the assumption that she would have nothing to say.

In using this device of letters written by a man to a woman, Shelley presents a message to all women—a message which explains the consequences of living as defined by male voices. This use of the male voice is appropriate when one acknowledges that in early nineteenth-century society, it was usually men who determined the legal limitations and social expectations that controlled and defined acceptable womanly and manly behavior and thought. In using the male narrators, Shelley subtly reveals—through the lives of the female characters—the consequences of being silenced through assumptions about gender roles (or, as is the case for several of the female characters, through death at the hands of others).

In addition to the authority the male voices give her text, Shelley uses the male narrators to help her reveal the attitudes and consequences of gender definitions imposed by the nineteenth-century patriarchal society. While the novel, on the surface, may appear to be an examination of the dangers of men stepping outside the natural bounds of creation, Shelley's novel is (perhaps more importantly) a veiled exposé on what happens to women when they stay within what has been called their "natural" sphere. As Gilbert and Gubar note, "Though it has been disguised, buried, or miniaturized, femaleness—the gender definition of mothers and daughters, orphans and beggars, monsters and false creators—is at the heart of this apparently masculine book" (232). These gender definitions are apparent in the descriptions Victor gives Walton about the Frankenstein women, a term itself which indicates the possessive nature of the family name.

The first "Frankenstein woman" to be described by Victor is Caroline Frankenstein, his mother, who "is presented as a model of femininity" (Hobbs 156), as Victor tells Walton about the portrait of his mother, depicting her as she "wept bitterly" (Shelley 39) at her father's coffin. It was, apparently, in this moment of despair that Victor's father, Alphonse, determined that he should protect Caroline. As Victor says, "he came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who committed herself to his care" (39). Two years later Alphonse married Caroline and "strove to shelter her, as a fair exotic is sheltered by the gardener, from every rougher wind, and to surround her with all that could tend to excite pleasurable emotion in her soft and benevolent mind" (39). Caroline's moment of despair was replicated for Alphonse in a painting, which hung over the family's fireplace. This painting, which forever captured Caroline's grief, also captures the moment when Alphonse saw that he must protect and save her—an attitude which typifies the gender expectations of the times: Women have extreme emotions and must be protected by men. Therefore, "[t]he painting celebrates both her martyred suffering and her husband's triumph, as though her pain were the continuing guarantee of his power" (Goodwin 101).

While Victor's explanations about the painting seem to project a great reverence for both his parents, especially his mother (Shelley 74), nothing is said about Caroline's possible reactions to a moment of intense pain in her life, when she must have felt emotionally and spiritually drained. Does Caroline's silence indicate that she, too, admired the painting because it represented the moment when she came under Alphonse's protective wing or does the silence indicate that the painting's effect on her was of no consequence to Alphonse or Victor? The latter could easily be the message in this letter to Mrs. Saville (and to women readers) who could perhaps better identify with the helpless feelings of such intense grief that Caroline would have felt at the death of her father. This was a death that left her an orphan and a beggar, which is a situation that many women readers would have identified with because it is a situation that leaves one needing a protector, a protector from social conditions that prevented female self-sufficiency

—emotionally and economically. In fact, all the female characters (Caroline, Elizabeth, Justine, and Safie) are orphaned women either literally or by disownment, who would be beggars if not for protective men. And, as events unfold in the novel, the female readers would recognize and empathize (consciously or unconsciously) with the trade-off that transpires once protection is offered—devotion and silence are traded for economic protection.

Caroline's devotion to the family is clearly illustrated when Shelley has Victor describe Caroline attending to Elizabeth when Elizabeth had scarlet fever. Victor notes that Caroline had been urged "to refrain from attending upon her" due to the danger of contamination; however, Caroline "could no longer control her anxiety" and "attended her sick bed." While Caroline's attentions "triumphed over" the illness and Elizabeth lived, Victor comments that Caroline's "imprudence" was fatal to Elizabeth's "preserver" and his mother died of scarlet fever (47). Imprudence may seem an odd term for Victor to use here since it means lacking discretion (read "lacking judgement in one's conduct or speech, with regard to maintaining silence about something"). However, it is not an odd choice on Shelley's part at all. It is an especially clever word choice, which indicates society's belief that women lack the ability to make wise decisions, especially ideas that they initiate. Victor's language reveals he believes that, while tending to Elizabeth, Caroline was unwisely disregarding the rest of the family for the sake of relieving her own fears. In choosing this word, Shelley alludes to the judgements that women receive when their actions are motivated by a sense of personal need (Caroline did tend to Elizabeth to relieve her own anxiety) rather than for the good of the whole family, which was more often (then as now) seen as the proper motivator for women's actions. While he valorizes his mother's death, he also condemns her "unwise," self-initiated (or as Victor might say self-centered) actions which deprived him of her.

Also telling is the fact that it takes Shelley only one paragraph to encapsulate Victor's entire grief and mourning period before he is off to be a student at the university of Ingolstadt (47). Couldn't Shelley have been indicating—through the brevity of text following his apparent judgment of his mother's actions—Victor's attitudes about women, as well as the attitudes commonly held about the women of Shelley's time? Victor's judgment and brief mourning period indicate that he believes that women's lives have little importance of their own—to even their closest male relatives—except when their lives directly involve the family. This implication is furthered by his noting that it takes a long time to accept the death of someone "whose very existence appeared a part of our own" (47); however, just three sentences later he states that there then comes a time when "grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity" and one must get on with matters at hand (47). Victor, through his actions and words, seems to not acknowledge his mother's worth except in regard to what and how it affects him personally. Here Shelley, by showing a devoted son so easily and readily recovered from grief, illustrates the consequences of women being defined by their roles as mothers, rather than having individual identities—once gone, quickly forgotten. The brevity of the text and the male child's voice in this segment indicate that this is one of Shelley's messages to the novel's female readers.

The next Frankenstein woman Victor describes is Elizabeth Lavenza, his intended bride. He tells Walton that his mother had always wanted a daughter, and on her rounds to visit the poor, which she saw as "more than a duty" rather a "passion," she found a girl in the care of two peasants who "appeared of a different stock" and which excited in her "wonder and admiration" (40-41). It turns out that the girl, Elizabeth, was left in the peasants' care by her father, a Milanese nobleman, after her mother's death. Elizabeth's father was, in turn, dead or in prison for his political activities. She was an orphan and Caroline took her in as her own, and then introduced Elizabeth to Victor as "a pretty present" for him. Victor mentions that he "looked

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upon Elizabeth as [his]—[his] to protect, love, and cherish,” and all the “praises bestowed upon her” were interpreted by him as admiration for one of his possessions (41). Here Shelley clearly indicates the idea of woman as property of man and this notion is carried throughout the novel in all of Victor’s references to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth’s voice, in fact, is rarely heard except in a letter to Victor when he fell ill following the animation of his creation. In this letter she tells him all the news from home and comments on her “trifling occupations” of keeping the home warm and happy (63). Most of what is learned about her is through Victor’s explanations of what Elizabeth did in her role as Caroline’s replacement as the home’s mother figure and what he expects of her in her role both as his friend (and source of emotional support) and then later as his wife. Typical comments about Elizabeth by Victor are as follows: “The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract” (43). All of Elizabeth is thereby dedicated to others; she is parceled out to fill the needs of others—she is fulfilling her socially defined place.

This maintenance of “proper place” is evidenced in Elizabeth throughout the novel, and allows Shelley to illustrate the consequences of doing so, once more. Shelley tells the reader that even when Elizabeth feels a sense of doom on her wedding night, just before she is murdered, she continues to fulfill her duties (160-161). As noted by Colleen Hobbs, Elizabeth recognizes the hollowness in her instructions to “be calm, my dear Victor; I would sacrifice my life to your peace. We surely shall be happy: quiet in our native country, and not mingle in the world.” Victor reports that Elizabeth weeps at her statement, distrusting the very solace that she gave. “But at the same time she smiled, that she might chase away the fiend that lurked in my heart.” The fiend lurks in Elizabeth’s heart as she altruistically attends to male comfort, sacrificing her own desires in order to shore up men’s emotional stability. (165). With these words issued by habit rather than from the heart or the mind, Elizabeth goes upstairs and soon meets her death at the hands of the creature. Her death is precipitated not by any action of hers, other than not voicing the uneasiness she has felt all evening, but by an act of revenge set in motion by Victor’s intellectual questing and his rejection of the creature. The male sphere of economic and intellectual activity (and its dismissal of both the creature and women—the Other) has led to Elizabeth’s death, just as her silence also facilitated her death. Here Shelley illustrates the culpability of both men and women in perpetuating the destructive consequences of the separate-sphere ideology.

The most powerful scene where the male voice reveals the destruction of women and the causes of that destruction is when Victor destroys the creature’s mate. Victor begins to contemplate the possible effects of his creating a mate for the creature. He speculates that his newest creation might “become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness.” He then reassures himself somewhat by remembering that the creature has promised to take his mate and leave “the neighborhood of man” (140). However, Shelley then reveals Victor’s greatest fear and shows his reassurance shaken. His biggest fear, it seems, is that the female creature will be “a thinking and reasoning animal, [who] might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation” (140). This fear of an uncontrollable mate coupled with the idea that the two creatures might procreate and produce “a race of devils . . . who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror” (140) causes Victor to destroy the potential mate for the creature. Here Shelley illuminates Victor’s ultimate fears—a thinking, autonomous woman who is uncontrollable and the loss of control over the actions of the Other. While Victor rationalizes his destruction of the creature’s mate as a means by which to save

mankind, Shelley covertly reveals fears which keep the patriarchal system intact. It is these fears of intelligent, self-sufficient women (and their progeny) which have kept the social codes intact and rigidly enforced by social customs and community judgments, as well as legal decrees.

Because many of Shelley’s messages in *Frankenstein* are covert ones, she has often been inappropriately criticized. Mary Jacobus, and other feminist critics, have criticized the apparent acquiescence of Shelley by pointing out that the women in *Frankenstein* “are [at best] the bearers of a traditional ideology of love, nurturance, and domesticity; at worst, passive victims” (132). However, Shelley does not seem to acquiesce as much as she seems to breathe life (and death) into these women to draw attention to their fates. The “at best” that Jacobus refers to are behaviors that fulfill societal expectations as perceived through the male narrators’ acts of ventriloquism; however, what Shelley is really revealing are situations which create passivity and silenced voices which can, indeed, stifle and even strangle the women. To be trained to need protection and then to be hailed as worthy because of this dependence creates a situation which enables women, as Shelley covertly illustrates, to disappear into the fabric of patriarchal society; and if the potential to be absorbed by society is non-existent, the woman is destroyed—much as the creature’s mate was.

Furthermore, the masked intent of Shelley is comparable to the masked intent in the creature’s promise to be with Victor on his wedding night after Victor has destroyed the mate he was creating for the creature (142). What is said by the monster is misinterpreted by Victor to mean that the creature plans to kill Victor to avenge the destruction of his potential mate, when what the creature really plans to do is kill Elizabeth so Victor may feel a similar loss. The ambiguity of the creature’s threat keeps Victor from anticipating the creature’s actions; Elizabeth dies as a result of this misinterpretation. Victor points out this effective use of ambiguous language when he says that “as if possessed by magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions, and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim” (160). This overt acknowledgment of language’s ability to be misinterpreted due to ambiguity is Shelley tipping her hand, perhaps unintentionally, about one of her covert purposes in the novel—to reveal the status of women by overtly illustrating the actions and attitudes of men. These apparently male statements really reveal the silenced status of women in a patriarchal society.

This analysis of the text is also indicated by the creature’s revelations that although he “eagerly longed to discover [himself] to the cottagers, [he] ought not to make the attempt until [he] had first become master of their language; which knowledge might enable [him] to make them overlook the deformity of [his] figure” (101). The creature feels that once he has mastered the language of the cottagers he will be able to converse with them, explain his plight and his need for understanding, and through explanation he will be able to help them see past his physical difference. So must Shelley have felt when she wrote the novel. To acquire the acceptance of the public and critics, she assumed a male voice in order to convey her ideas about the situation of women—a situation which causes women to be rejected because of physical differences from average men, just as the creature was rejected because of his physical differences. Whether the differences occur due to human intervention or through chromosomal combination, the effect was a misunderstood and silenced Other. This assertion parallels Carson’s when he states that Shelley uses “cross-gender narration” as an indication that “she locates truths in the beliefs and feelings of her audience” and that “[c]ross-gender narration lets the sympathy of her readers extend to the creator” (449), and perhaps, by extension, to the women who were also silenced by the value system in place.

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Several critics have pointed out that Shelley wanted to "change certain aspects of her culture's systems rather than do away with those systems entirely" (Smith 4); however, the change Shelley seems to call for—the dissolution of judgement systems which place worth in people based on physical differences (the creature's and women's)—parallels her mother's ideology of revolution more than one of merely reform. Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* stated that "Women must be treated as human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties; hence, instead of being taught to obey and please men with gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection, commonly "supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel," women must be educated to foster the "strength, both of mind and body" that will make them "respectable members of society." (as qtd. and summarized in Smith 5-6). So, too, seems to be the message in *Frankenstein*. However, this message has not been acknowledged by some critics.

Paul Youngquist states that "several feminist critics have noted—with disappointment—that the novel's female characters seem vapid and bland. Barbara Johnson calls them 'beautiful, gentle, selfless, boring nurturers and victims who never experience inner conflict or true desire'" (341). Youngquist goes on to claim that illustrating the female characters in such a light shows that "Shelley lacks her mother's confidence that the fate of sex can be overcome" (341); however, his observations have stopped short of inferring Shelley's point. It is by representing the women in their acquiescence to social expectations that Shelley is able to illustrate the constraints and downfalls of such passivity. And what better way to do that than to use the patronizing voice of male narrators as they tell the story of their adventurous exploits, while including details which show their judgements of the women in their lives, even when they relate events which led to the women's deaths?

Youngquist also makes the argument that Mary Shelley opposes her mother's feminist views, which "[maintain] that the value placed on physical appearance is primarily a social construct; an ideology of beauty allows women to endure and even encourage their oppression by men" (qtd. 342). Wollstonecraft based this argument on the idea that, "if individuals are rational in the required sense, then physical structure and appearance are unimportant. Just as height and weight are considered irrelevant to an individual's essential humanity, so too are the physical characteristics such as race and sex that historically have been more controversial" (qtd. in Youngquist 341-342). He says that Shelley "inverts the values of her mother's argument by reconstructing female beauty as male ugliness." This action, he concludes, indicates that Shelley did not agree with her mother's feminist views because, "[i]f such qualities were social constructs, then the monster, as a male in a male dominated social order, should be able to overcome them" (342). However, he is taking the text too simplistically. If male, then accepted; if not male, then not accepted, seems to be his point. What Youngquist misses, or ignores, is the parallel between the creature's misshapen non-man-like appearance with the non-man definition given to women at birth. His interpretation can only stand if he assumes that Shelley is really speaking in unambiguous terms; he has missed her presentation of a character who, due to lack of rational responses to his physical condition, is condemned merely due to physical appearances—much as women were/are set apart and judged (at birth and thereafter) just because they are women, and non-men.

What Shelley reveals throughout the novel is a creature with fine sensibilities (faith, love, gentleness, compassion) who is driven to murderous acts as a consequence of the violence and rejection visited on him due to his physical difference. This is a creature who inhabits a world defined by a patriarchal culture, just as women do. In fact, as Gilbert and Gubar acknowledge, "Victor Frankenstein's male monster may really be a female in disguise" (237). Consequently, the novel "communicates the monstrous burden of female difference as it is

defined by patriarchal culture" (Hodges 163). Shelley, like her mother, appeals to the rational mind to re-think and re-define social constraints, rather than just moderately revise them. "She, not unlike her husband in 'Ode to the West Wind,' sounds the clarion calling for a revolutionary understanding between women and men" (Waxman 26), while posing as a self-deprecating woman merely presenting a horror story.

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Entrapment: Four Stories

by J. Jordan Cannady



*Oh horror! horror! horror! Tongue nor heart
Cannot conceive nor name thee!*
— William Shakespeare

Horror stories have always shared common plot devices that depended upon basic human fears, entrapment, mutilation, control by an evil entity, isolation, and death. The fear of entrapment often leads towards the others. From the black tomb prison of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" to the entrapment-strewn abyss inside the micro-circuited guts of a psychotic computer in Harlan Ellison's "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," a man is held prisoner by an unseen, malevolent captor. In Stephen Crane's "Manacled" an actor tears at the real iron manacles he is locked in, all while the stage and theatre around him is transformed into a fiery conflagration. Finally, Roald Dahl's "The Wish" tells of a young boy, trapped by the conventions of adolescent superstition as he walks a deadly gauntlet of cracks that break backs, lines that break spines, and a carpet composed of red searing fire, swollen venomous black adders, and narrow margins of yellow safety zones.

1. The Razor's Edge

In the Poe story, "The Pit and the Pendulum," the narrator, con-

demned by a cowed justice for some vague crime, swoons and awakens inside a dungeon beneath the prison in the Spanish town, Toledo. Poe makes much of the swooning, and in context, the swooning becomes an act of passage or transition. In his book *Edgar Allan Poe, a Phenomenological View*, the author David Halliburton states:

Consciousness can never be wholly lost. One loses consciousness in order to recover it. Consciousness alone has true duration; unconsciousness—and the annihilation of which it is the sign—resembles a temporary loss of focus, an absence that prepares one for the return of a continuous, immortal presence. (321)

One can compare the conscious and unconscious state to the shift between light and darkness and extend the metaphor further to good and evil.

Poe's narrator explores the blackness, his arms groping and his senses heightened. Poe utilizes numerous sensory descriptions of smells, sounds, and the awareness of motion, in order that the narrator can describe the depth and extent of the place he is trapped in. The prisoner remembers

some token of the state of seeming nothingness into which my soul has lapsed, ... in silence down—down—still down—a hideous dizziness oppressed me at the mere idea of the interminableness of the descent, the limits of the limitless, and paused from the wearisomeness of their toil. (122)

After a lengthy, peril-fraught exploration, the narrator realizes that the dungeon walls do not exceed twenty-five yards. As he continues his tactile "look" at his surroundings, he ponders upon the terrible things

he has heard of this place. Once again, he swoons. Upon awakening, he finds that he has been securely strapped to a wooden frame beneath a swinging, razor-edged pendulum that is slowly, steadily, descending downward to slice him in two. Poe has left to the reader's imagination the destruction the blade will cause.

This is an elegantly crafted story that, in the time it was written, was no doubt a terrifying story. However, by twentieth-century standards, it is tame, as evidenced by the following.

II. AI, AM, and Ellison

A twentieth-century story that deals with imprisonment is Harlan Ellison's "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream." This story is narrated by one of the last human beings on Earth. The survivors are imprisoned inside the vast computer caverns that house the AI (artificial intelligence) consciousness known as AM. Ellison paints a grotesque landscape in which the humans starve for days only to be fed thick, ropy worms. They are constantly bombarded with sensory hallucinations that torment and confound them. One man, Garrister, discovers a computer-generated image of himself, hung by one foot whose sole has been fastened to the ceiling. The corpse, mutilated and drained of blood, has been put there by AM. AM was once a group of individual computers designed to serve man. Now, he is one unit, independent of humans and filled with a hatred so profound, so refined, that the only thing more fulfilling than torturing the human captives is the satisfaction of keeping them alive indefinitely. AM expresses his hatred in a cold, definitive statement:

Hate. Let me tell you how much I've come to hate you since I began to live. There are 387.44 million miles of printed circuits in wafer thin layers that fill my complex.

If the word hate was engraved on each nanoangstrom of those hundreds of million miles it would not equal one one-billionth of the hate I feel for humans at this micro-instant for you.

Hate. Hate. (174)

Harlan Ellison later explains that the reason for the computer's hatred stems from the humans having made him a sentient creature.

Horror writers have always dealt with fears like entrapment, but the language they use to express the theme has been tailored to the audience. Readers in the nineteenth-century were accustomed to elegantly phrased narratives that brought them near to, but never face to face with, horror. Those authors assumed that their reader's imagination would supply the unspoken awful details that were merely hinted at in print. Now, horror stories must compete with CNN, supermarket tabloids, and local cinemas for shock value. Today's readers can scarcely avoid graphic scenes of carnage from Baghdad to Belfast, headlines displayed neatly between Snickers bars and pocket combs vividly recounting the latest in sexual mutilations and atrocities. For a nice night out, one can take in *Silence of the Lambs*, the award-winning misogynistic movie, filled with images of flayed and cannibalized bodies, intended to be consumed between healthy bites of popcorn with extra butter. Small wonder that, in order to be competitive, Harlan Ellison must punctuate his story with images of maggot-ridden pork, ground-up babies, and eyeballs sliced by razors.

Unlike the abruptly resolved ending which Poe presents at the end of "The Pit and the Pendulum," Ellison knows that the worst part of entrapment is the absence of any hope of freedom. AM leaves the narrator with a clear, dream-capable, intelligent mind, imprisoned in a shape that cannot injure itself.

I am a great soft jelly thing. Smoothly rounded, with no mouth, with pulsing white holes filled by fog where my eyes used to be.

Rubbery appendages that were once my arms; bulks rounding down into legless humps of soft slippery matter. (179)

He then describes the pitiful creature's potential in an almost metric

fashion;

Outwardly: dumbly, I shamle about, a thing that could never have been known as human, a thing whose shape is so alien a travesty, that humanity becomes more obscene for the vague resemblance. Inwardly: alone. Here

I have no mouth. And I must scream. (179-180)

AM has successfully cut off the narrator's last venue of escape—the ability to commit suicide.

In both Poe's and Ellison's stories, man is victim of entrapment, control, and manipulation by a larger-than-life entity: an artificial brain possessed by its own artificial demons; or a killing machine, built by and controlled by the Catholic Church.

III. Chains and Crane

In Stephen Crane's short story "Manacled" and Roald Dahl's story "The Wish," the entrapment takes on a more personal character. One victim is bound by shackles of iron—shackles that he has willingly put on for the sake of theatre. In the other, a little boy wears the heaviest shackles of all: the fearful expectations of his own superstitious mind. The differences in authorial style are much less obvious in these two stories than in the other two.

Stephen Crane wrote "Manacled" after experiencing a vivid nightmare as described by R.W. Stallman in *Stephen Crane: A Biography*.

Crane had a dream that he was acting on the stage of some theatre the part of a prisoner hand-cuffed and with ankles bound together. In his dream there suddenly came the cry of fire! All the other actors ran for the theatre's exits, forgetting that he was tied up and helpless. (470)

The story has the feel of a play within a play, for at first the hero plays a convict who, having been abused and brutalized by guards, is now shackled with real manacles and leg restraints. Crane puts much emphasis on the word real as in the first line of the story, "In the first act there had been a farm scene, wherein real horses had drunk real water from real buckets, afterwards dragging a real wagon off stage L" (762).

The play itself reads like a two-bit melodrama; the dialogue is stilted and the characters are more parody than real. This makes the intrusive "Fire! Fire! Fire!" (762) all the more jarring. As the fire spreads, Crane writes an account of what occurs that seems to have an internal contradiction. To condense Crane, "a policeman came *running frantically*... He pressed a lever. He had been *standing... chatting*... alarm was a *matter of seconds*" (763). This choice of contradictory images adds to the dream-like quality of the story.

As the story comes to conclusion, the hero becomes entranced by the colors of the flames and calmed by introspection about what he might have done differently. Then, like a quick flash, he explodes into a violent frenzy, struggling to free himself until, a moment later, the flames envelop him and he finds peace. "He felt very cool, delightfully cool.. 'They've left me chained up' "(764).

IV. Cause, Effect, and Dahl

Roald Dahl's "The Wish" is perhaps the most terrifying territory yet explored in this paper. It concerns the world of young children who are at the age where ordinary laws of nature can be suspended at any time. The child in the story knows, because he has been told by an adult, that if you step on a crack you'll break your mother's back, step on a line, you'll break her spine. This anatomical axiom is on a level with Newton's third law of thermodynamics. Through it, children learn early on the principle of cause and effect. The attention to detail Dahl employs in his story captures the feel of being a child and how it is

that children look at their world.

The first four paragraphs are devoted to the young boy as he scrutinizes, ponders upon, and finally acts upon a scab on his kneecap. He then becomes distracted by a hallway carpet. This carpet is filled with dazzling colors that pull at him. The shape and size of it mesmerize him. Soon, he begins to create his own carpet mythos, the myth of the deadly carpet.

He establishes a complex set of rules and procedures for successful passage across the deadly carpet.

You see, he told himself, I know how it is. The red parts of the carpet are red-hot lumps of coal. What I must do is this: I must walk all the way along it to the front door without touching them. If I touch the red I will be burnt. As a matter of fact, I will be burnt up completely. And the black parts of the carpet ... yes, the black parts are snakes, poisonous snakes, adders mostly, and cobras, thick like tree-trunks round the middle, and if I touch one of *them*, I'll be bitten and I'll die before tea time. (34)

The boy realizes that one must know one's enemy in order to survive. Like the junior-general who has carefully mapped out the enemy terrain, he is ready. The boy advances upon and begins the perilous journey across the carpet.

He has discovered that there are patches of yellow which, of course, are perfectly safe to walk upon. It is almost a given that in situations of horror, there should be some avenue of escape, some system or gimmick which the protagonist will somehow fail to use or will use improperly which might have otherwise allowed for a happy ending.

The reader begins the dangerous journey with the boy. Feet are placed heel to toe in spots, and then stretched impossibly far apart in others. Step by wobbling step, arms akimbo for balance, a foot comes down within one centimeter of a snake. The boy quickly invokes the law, "I'm not touching you! You mustn't bite me! You know I'm not touching you!" (35).

There remains one final gigantic step to take. The boy stretches out his leg and straddles the final band of snakes. He begins to wobble, his weight shifting from side to side until, "Outside in the sunshine, far away behind the house, the mother was looking for her son" (36).

The reader knows where to begin looking for the boy. The mother will look everywhere but the right place. Perhaps, were she to look a little closer at the carpet in the hallway, the one that her boy always seemed to take so much time in crossing, she might just see a new color, an alien pattern, a somehow *familiar* cypher added into the mosaic braids of the rug. One final bit of uneasiness lies in the question, just how old must one be to always traverse the hall safely?

The external bonds of iron hold Crane in a fiery shroud while the internal bonds of a little boy's imagination drives him into the venomous embrace of a nest of vipers. Both external and internal bonds are equally strong.

V. Reinventing the Gullywhumpers

As literature has evolved from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, authors have learned to work with changing social restraints and expanding standards of acceptability in order to keep producing a good case of the gullywhumpers. Through the use of elegant, intelligent language, the nineteenth-century author allowed the reader to think and create his or her own horrors. The twentieth-century writer may need more and more to resort to the shocking imagery of young girls masturbating with crucifixes to reinforce the quaint nineteenth-century notion that Satan is evil. How much deeper could Harlan Ellison take us into the mechanical abyss of AM? Upon reading Ellison's story, his brutal explorations in sadism, dementia, graphic mutilation, and the extremes in inhuman endurance, this reader is at a loss to suggest another layer he's not yet peeled back.

From Poe to Crane, from Crane to Dahl, and then to Ellison the shift has been from a machine controlled by evil men to men controlled by an evil machine. One shudders at the prospect of what the twenty-first century author may be forced to use to get a reader's attention.

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The View from Mole End

Anne Braude

The Gothic Heroine's Lament

I flee down the corridor, chilled to the bone,
 My nightgown is flimsy, my hair is windblown,
 I'm catching pneumonia from all this damp stone;
 Oh, had I but realized, had I but known—
 Oh, had I but known, had I but known
 That no one else heard the mysterious groan!

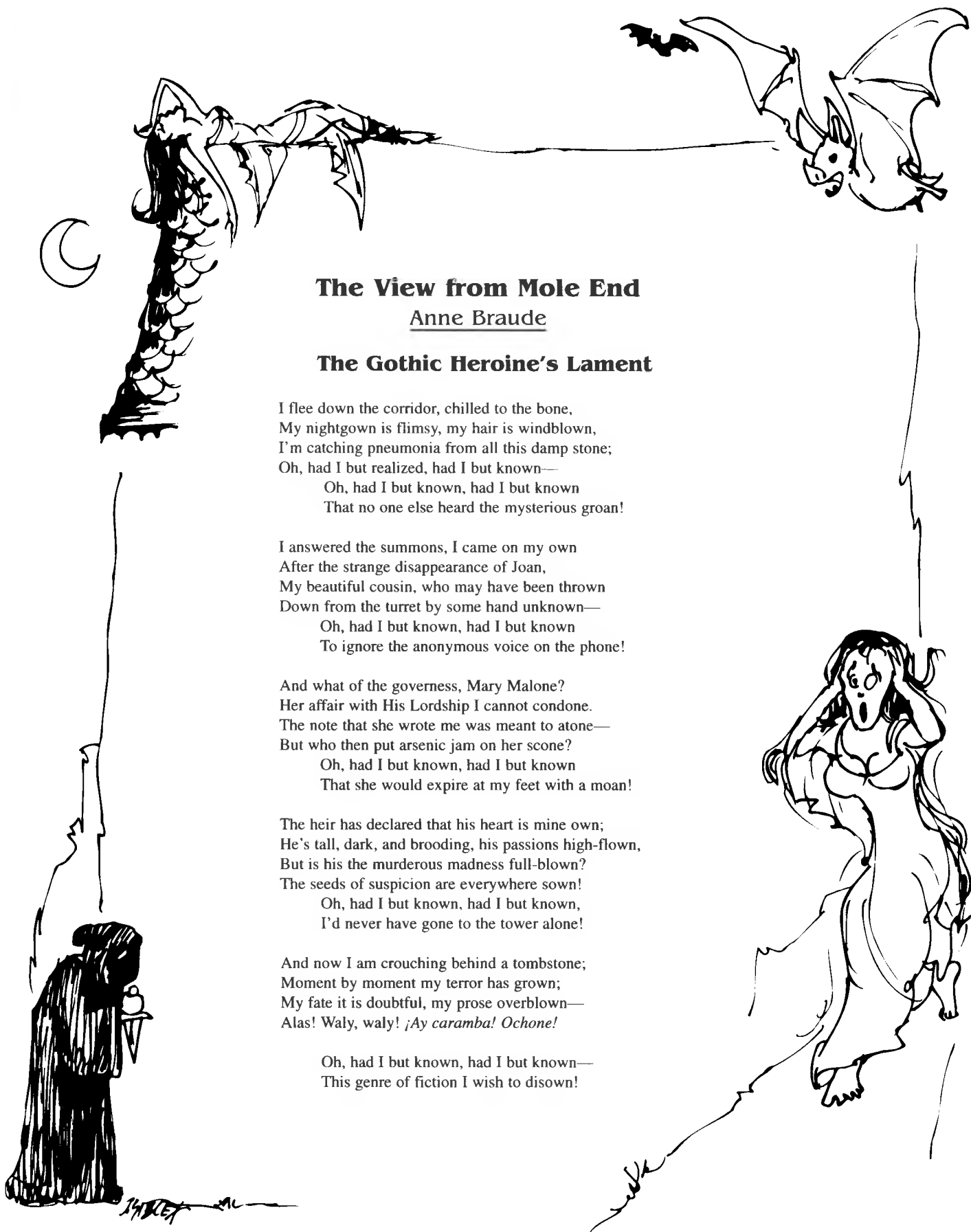
I answered the summons, I came on my own
 After the strange disappearance of Joan,
 My beautiful cousin, who may have been thrown
 Down from the turret by some hand unknown—
 Oh, had I but known, had I but known
 To ignore the anonymous voice on the phone!

And what of the governess, Mary Malone?
 Her affair with His Lordship I cannot condone.
 The note that she wrote me was meant to atone—
 But who then put arsenic jam on her scone?
 Oh, had I but known, had I but known
 That she would expire at my feet with a moan!

The heir has declared that his heart is mine own;
 He's tall, dark, and brooding, his passions high-flown,
 But is his the murderous madness full-blown?
 The seeds of suspicion are everywhere sown!
 Oh, had I but known, had I but known,
 I'd never have gone to the tower alone!

And now I am crouching behind a tombstone;
 Moment by moment my terror has grown;
 My fate it is doubtful, my prose overblown—
 Alas! Waly, waly! ¡Ay caramba! Ochone!

Oh, had I but known, had I but known—
 This genre of fiction I wish to disown!



The Black Sorcerer of the Black Castle

by Andrew J. Black-Offut

Cimon the Conerian stared up at the black castle towering into the moonless sky, its murky turrets and minarets resembling dark fingers pointing the way to the shadow gods. Cimon chuckled, the deep-throated sound of a giant of a man from a dark barbarian land. Well, he mused, soon the black magician Reh and all his daemonic guardians would go to meet those sombre gods of Atramentos—or Cimon would. He loosened the black hilt of his long sword, *Goreater*, glanced at the ring on his finger, and mounted the hill to the castle.

A small man named Kohl had told him of the place. In the Black Castle of Atramentos, Kohl had said, lay the Princess Sabela, captive of the sorcerer Reh. The keep was rendered impregnable by Reh's spells and his daemons. The princess alone knew the whereabouts of the jewels of Chthon; gems worth the ransom of King Minaceos himself. A man did not after all go about rescuing princesses without reason! Over cups of wine in a dim tavern, the two men agreed to share the treasure. Then, because one was a barbarian and such men were well-known to have codes of honour and to rely on muscle and might rather than shrewd double-dealing, Kohl told Cimon how to reach the place. He told, too, of the power of the ring he wore: while it made no magic, it negated all spells cast against the wearer.

They rose and departed, Kohl leading the way. On the dark street he said over his shoulder, "Few men would I trust behind me with the knowledge I have imparted to you, O Cimon. But 'tis well-known that ye barbarians are men of great honour, not backstabbers, and—"

That was when Cimon, reminded that Kohl was no longer necessary, stabbed him in the back. He took the ring, of course, before slinging the man into the inkiness of an alley. After walking a block, he had hurried back to take Kohl's purse.

Now, gazing up at the castle, Cimon chuckled. Where did the poor dolt get such idiot notions of honour among barbarians? Shaking his head, Cimon set his foot on the hill on which stood the umbrageous castle.

The monster bird came winging down like a great stormcloud heavy with rain, its leathery wings flapping with the sound of thunder. It paused above his head, steadying itself on wings the size of a trireme's sail; and then it folded them to careen down at him. Its awesome cry filled the air rent by its passage: "KAMIKAZEEEEEE!"

Goreater ate.

Clapping a hand over the inch-deep scratches laying bare the sheaves of muscle in his mighty chest, Cimon looked down at the crumpled body of the bird. It writhed even in death, some awful virescent ichor bubbling from its sword-hewn neck. Then it vanished.

Amazing! Fantastic! Astounding! Analog ... Omni...

From the nearby moors came the cry of a bird. A moor-fowl, male. A moorcock. Cimon went on, paying little heed to the six-inch-long wounds in his chest; they were relatively inconsequential and would heal in a month or three. Besides, the trickling blood warmed his bare flesh.

As he drew nigher, he began to feel the strangeness of the place, the evil. Trailing tendrils of wraithy stuff like cobwebs seemed to writhe

over his visage. He blinked and shook his head, raising his hands to tear his way clear. His fingers touched nothing. There was nothing here; no cobwebs, no tendrils, no cobs, merely the eerie feel of them. He shivered. Neither man nor beast had been woman-spawned to strike fear to the big barbarian's heart. This palpable evil born of warlocks and shades, however; the shadow-world of necromancy and spectres, that otherworld of apparitions and divinations and things a man could feel but not see ... these brought a shiver to Cimon and set his teeth a-rattle in his head. He touched the ring, realising that he had fought and slain a sorcerer's daemon with naught but his own thews and sword.

But now ... now fear laid nordic fingers upon him, tightened them about his heart. Again he shivered. He began to shake. With his mouth invaded by hot water and an atrabilious taste, he turned away, whimpering, to flee.

Ah, but then, even while his knees shook and his hands were chill and wet, he realised what was taking place. He mouthed a foul barbaric oath despite the sorcerous fear attacking him. As if rooted in quicksand, he turned slowly, slowly to face the castle. Raising his left hand, he aimed the ring at those misty towers.

"**I Defy You!**" he bellowed, and thrice he repeated those words Kohl had taught him so carefully, with but a half-hour of rehearsal. And the ring seemed to come *alive*, to glow and shimmer and pour strength down his arm.

The mists vanished. The ghostwebs ceased their invisible twisting. His fear left him. And there before him stood—the black castle of Atramentos! No longer was it a shadowy thing of fear and unholy blackness; now he saw merely a towering pile of blackest basalt, gleaming liquidly even in the moonless night. The door rose before him, twice his height. A chain with links big as his thumbs was looped through the handle, secured to great spikes on either side.

Growling low in his throat, Cimon drew *Goreater* and raised his sword against darkness. He sucked in a mighty breath and, laying hold of the hilt with both hands, swung the blade far back over his shoulder to bring it whistling down with all the strength of his corded muscles. Sparks flew as he smote the chain. Shock blazed up his arms like tongues of lightning. The rebounding sword nearly took off his head.

Rattling, the chain held.

Then he noticed. It was merely looped over the spike on the left.

"Oh spit!" Sheepishly he reached up to pull it off and thread it through the handle. He placed one foot against the door and shoved. It swung in, strangely, without creaking. An odour of death, of mouldering death housing mouldering corpses, rushed out to greet him with chill embrace.

With *Goreater* ready in his hand, he entered the murkiness of the hall.

The serpent was upon him before he knew of its existence.

Its shimmering scales rose above him, its xanthic eyes gazing at him like the very fires of blackest Hades. Far behind it he could see the immense body stretching off along the corridor. He sniffed the evil odour of its breath as it hissed, felt the breath of foetid air, and hurled

himself aside as the eyes blazed up, like the coals of a stirred fire, to shoot forward at him.

Cimon moved with a swiftness greater even than the reptile's. The great head swished past. Goreater swished after it. The monster body shivered and lashed in the final torment of death when the head plopped to the floor and rolled away. It exuded a vast pool of nigrescent ichor. The last lash of the terrible tail caught Cimon just below the knees, sending him flying through the air to sprawl in a great chamber beyond the hall. He rolled, somehow clinging to Goreater.

And good it was that Cimon did.

"Black devils of LinCar!" he muttered, and got to his feet, crouching; fortunately he had been knocked only 30 or 40 feet and was unhurt but for a few cracked ribs. He straightened a broken finger with a swift jerk, glancing about. Here there was light, and even as he glanced down, the body of that megathedan reptile vanished. Cimon's perils, however, were not at an end.

Approaching him now were men who were not men, alive yet not alive—creatures dead yet not dead. (Get it?—Got it.—Good.) Full half a score of them there were, bearing the gaping wounds that had been the violent death of them. The eyes of one were popped wide and his black tongue lolled forth as it had at the moment he had been slain by the reptile in some darkling yesterday. Here a ridiculous little fellow with large furry feet, accompanied by other weirdos; dead he was and yet coming on, on. They advanced, creatures returned to ghostly life by Reh's evil spells, and Cimon saw himself mirrored in them. These were his predecessors! Would-be heroes who had come here in time past on the same mission as he. Clawed hands rose as they advanced jerkily upon him.

The first Cimon met with flashing sword to send his arm flopping away across the floor, black blood spattering forth. The fingers still clutched and flexed. The shriek ripped from the creature's throat chilled Cimon's very blood. The howl, and gore, told him, however, that dead these men might be, but alive they were, too, and killed they could. Be.

He hurled the thing aside, the scarlet stump of its arm pumping out its pseudo-life.

Then Goreater was a flashing, live thing, spattering walls and ceiling and floor with the steaming crimson wake of its terrible smiting passage. A black giant from Minatoa he ran through and through and

yanked forth his sword, feeling the dying man's claw tear his arm as he fell. A smallish fellow dressed all in gray rodent-skin Cimon seized and swung up to grip by his heels. He whirled him in an arc that downed one, two, three of the others. Then he released the little fellow and heard the dropped-melon noise as his skull burst against the wall to spew forth rank red blood and gray brainstuff. Whilst the others shrank back, checked by their awe, Cimon moved as the wolf descends upon chicks. He struck the heads from the three men he had downed.

I Certified John Norman "sentence" coming up!

Cimon's dread battle-cry ripped from his lips as he spun to the man whose arm he had lopped off: "WHEEEEEEE!" he shouted, and the undead warrior's head leapt to join his arm on the gore-slippery floor. He turned in time to dodge a great ax in the hands of a huge red-bearded Dane whose face was one hideous wound; he had been killed in some bygone time by the monster bird outside. Cimon's foot swept up to complete the destruction of that poor once-face, crushing nose and teeth and bursting eyeballs from their sockets to sail like agates in the air—and splitting open several of Cimon's toes, as he was wearing sandals. Blood bathed his legs and toes.

Four of his outré foemen remained now, and Cimon roared at them to come join their comrades in death.

They came. They were mindless *things*, restored but temporarily from the dead to serve as fighting machines for the master of this castle of horror. The cry of the maimed and the dying was in Cimon's ears and his veins, and his own battle cry joined them to spur him forward. All reason decamped.

They fell gushing their carmine juices, their souls leaping forth to meet their liberator, the ever-hungry Goreater. And Goreater ate, and drank as well, and dead men died once again. The musty halls of that darkling castle reeked and smoked with blood and gore, rang with the fearsome war cry of the big barbar from the mountains of Coneria; with the dying cries of those sent to destroy him.

And then he stood alone, nostrils flaring as he stood panting, for he had slain many and was very nearly winded. All about him lay corpses and hands and limbs and several etceteras no longer joined one to the other. His feet were planted in curdling blood and his toes smarted. Deliberately he tore loose the ripped flesh from his arm, for its flapping bothered him as he hacked the heads from those not already beheaded. In the event he failed, Reh would no longer use these men



Essays on Dark Fantasy

who should long ago have been walking with the shades in the after-world. He stood there, his own blood and theirs streaming and dripping from him, and he looked about.

"Yukh!" he exclaimed, wrinkling his nose at the sight and scent.

Then: "REH!—blackest heart on the earth's scarr'd face!—resurrector of slain men! Reh, commander of the legions of Hades! Your oversized sparrow died outside; your swollen fishing worm expired in the entry hall! And at my feet lie ten heads lonely for their decomposing bodies! What *else* would you send to meet Cimon of Coneria?!"

His voice rang down empty halls, dashed into dark empty rooms and out again, rose up the long stairway before him, shouted back at him from shroud-draped walls of black basalt. And he waited, and there was no answer. Again he filled his lungs to roar out his challenge; again he flung wide his jaws to shout.

Then, at the head of the stair, there stood Reh, Black Sorcerer of the Black Castle of Atramentos. Actually, not having been out of the castle in centuries, he was very pale.

His blue eyes blazed down at Cimon as had the dead serpent's. A slender nose arced out between them, hooked like the beak of that prodigious bird. Below the nose writhed tendrils of black moustache like the wraithy fear-tendrils that had caressed Cimon outside the warlock's lair. Tucked under the moustache was a lipless slash of a mouth, resembling nothing more than the old wounds of the dead men at Cimon's feet.

Below that, of course, Reh wore a loose-sleeved black robe, the official uniform of the Sorcerers, Fiends, and Warlocks Anagramation—the S.F.W.A.

"Cimon of Coneria, is it? And you have destroyed my guardians and penetrated into the very marrow of my keep! Well, Cimon, well-met! Join-n-n me here, mightiest of men, that I need never again fear intruders! Be the guardian of the Black Castle!"

Cimon's eyes were like the bubbling tar-pits of Nigressa as he stared back at the thaumaturge. "*Join* you, hell-creature? Live here, as guardian of this *tomb*? I love life too much to live here with *Death*! You've got to be *Kid-ding*!"

Reh's drooping moustachioes wriggled like tentacles as his mouth pretended to smile. He waved his hand, tracing invisible patterns in the air. And the air was filled with the golden light of a thousand candles; the bird-songs of lutes and the undulating skirl of pipes. A vision rose up to fill the room before Cimon's eyes: a vision of the finest of succulent viands and the richest wines served in aureate goblets; of pillows in the softest fabrics and hues. And there were women: slender girls with breasts round and cupped as goblets, eyes telling of love and desire; hips churning and yearning toward him. Aye, and there were others as well, more to the liking of a bronzed barbarian: deep-chested women with holes of navels winking in their rounded bellies and arms to crush a man in hot embrace. Their eyes were for him and him alone, their forms coppery chalices of sensuality. Cimon stared, and his great sword was forgotten in a lifeless hand as he started toward them with eyes like unto those dead-alive men he had re-slain. Drool plashed his torn chest.

"Life is well-lived here, Cimon of Coneria, and for a man such as you—life is better here than in the shallow and unpredictable world outside!"

Thus did the mage break his own spell in his weening confidence. The mists faded from Cimon's brain as if dissipated by the morning sun. Again his eyes, clear and blazing, stared up the steps at the black-robed man.

"Life? Call you this foul illusion *Life*? Call you the world of living men *shallow*? Nay, sorcerer, 'tis your necromancy that is shallow! Your world is *Death*, and by Mitra's, uh, I shall see that you join the other dead things in it."

"Cimon," Reh said, rolling up his sleeves, "**you are a pain in the neck.**"

One foot Cimon set upon the steps, and then Reh extended his arms. Wrists like clean-picked skeletons emerged from his sleeves. Blue light flickered and danced at his fingertips. In the instant that he stiffened his arms, pointing his talons at the barbarian to fry him, Cimon flung up his own hand to aim the ring. He shouted, three ringing times, "**I Defyy You!**"

Lightning leapt from Reh's hands. Down at Cimon it crackled, in sizzling streams the colour of cobalt. It flashed before his face so that he winced and closed his eyes against the searing glare. Yet he felt nothing; nothing save the power coursing down his arm from the ring, shaking him as a cobweb might shake in the wind.

He opened his eyes. All around him shimmered the blue-sizzling lightning, but it was checked, held at bay by the power of the ring. With a wild roar he hurled himself up the stairs, holding the ring before him and swinging up Goreater. His war-cry shattered the air: "**WHEEEEE!**"

"The ring!" Reh shouted, and fear tinged his voice with yellow. "You have the Ring of Spray! How did you—it negates my magic! No—get back—NO—"

Reh of Atramentos died screaming and waving his skeletal arms when Goreater bit through his skull and forehead and nose...and mouth, *and* neck and was covered to the pommel with his gore. Cimon left the fountaining body where it lay and bounded back down the stairs, slipping in blood and falling the last sixteen feet. He waded again through that noisome river of gore with its islands of headless corpses. Down the dim corridor he rushed and up another, leaving scarlet prints, until he found the huge brassbound door Kohl had described.

Goreater's first bite bit it in twain. Cimon jerked back the hinged half to descend into darkness.

And descended. He counted to ten, his limit, and folded down a finger and began again, and then repeated the act, and still again. There were, predictably, seven times seven steps. Yet somehow the air remained fresh, though growing steadily cooler and damper. He stalked forward into gloom, wishing he had brought a torch. Ah; ahead was a glow, as of a glim.

He rounded a corner into light, so sudden and bright that he squint-



ed and put up a hand before his eyes. Swiftly he swung up his dripping sword, for now he could behold the man.

He wore arms and armour, the nose-piece of his helmet making his face a sinister mask despite its pallor. First he raised a hand in command to halt, spreading two fingers, but he carried it quickly to his nose as he sneezed. No wonder, Cimon thought, briefly reflecting on the universal dampness of dungeons. Throughout history, inferior workmanship had made dungeons damp and dank. Something really should be done about the Underground Artisanry Workers; the UAW.

He raised his gory glaive and started forward.

The man's hands sprang to his rusty buckle to let belt and sword clang to the mildewy floor. "Gods be thanked! You'b cobe to rescue me! Dake her, dake the Princess Sabela! And free be—me, too, *blease!* Guard, he calls be, but unwilling warder hab I been, bearing food and water and wine and thunderbucket for the poor girl here!"

He stepped back, sniffing, and extended his arm to hold out a ring bearing one huge *key*. Sheathing his sword, Cimon took it. In the light of a hundred flickering torches, fed by some sorcerous well of air in this chthonian place, he looked into the barred cell.

She was beautiful. Her hair was liquid gold, flowing down over her shoulders, capping arms round and unnaturally white. Her bosom was to the liking of any man: *big*. It was alive and mobile with her excited breathing. Her shift, he saw with more interest than compassion, was badly torn and far too thin for the chill damp of her prison. Her gaze swept his tall figure. She sneezed.

Shaded by their lids, Cimon's eyes were still on the woman as he bent to the lock. Her nose was slightly red—but who was looking at her nose?



"A man named Kohl directed me hither, Princess. He said you alone knew the whereabouts of some treasure or other, which I of course promised to him. I came here only as a hero, to rescue you from that villainous Reh. But I have found my treasure in you..." She nodded without speaking. Her bright-eyed gaze was fixed on the lock.

"Ah!" she breathed, when the key clicked and he swung open the grille. She stood within, lovely and fair, and Cimon thought that never had he seen such a comely wench, despite the red nose. He held forth a hand; she extended hers. He went to her, seized her arms, and drew her strongly to him so that his lips could drink the nectar of hers. Her eyelids lowered as she raised her face.

"Now, Kandentos," she said, and then her mouth was beneath Cimon's.

The sky seemed to fall on his head. She twisted from his grasp as he fell forward onto the cell's floor. He was stunned but not unconscious, having been hit only by the edge of Kandentos's blade. Cimon rolled over and looked up before wasting the time necessary to rise; that had saved his life more than once. He saw the guard Kandentos, doffing his helmet and dropping it onto the sword he had used on Cimon's head. Without the nose-guard, the gaoler's nose was enlarged and red. Cimon's growl rumbled up in his throat.

Sabela fairly flung Kandentos from the cell. She whirled to slam the door and twist the key before hurling it to ring along the corridor. Clutching Kandentos's arm, she turned to Cimon, who wondered at the fresh crimson smears on her shift. Her lip curled.

"You idiot barbarian!" she snapped nasally. "You male chauvinist *haw!* You dumb atavist! Look at you—a big murdering brute all over blood and gore—and your *odour!*" She turned again to her former gaoler, who was industriously wiping Cimon's blood from the bodice of her shift. "Kandentos," she sniffed, "thanks!"

And they kissed.

"Come, Kandentos my love, let's go find the treasure." She kissed him again. "Ummm! You're not all blood and gore—ouch! Be careful of my arms; that meathead apeman bruised them!" Clutching Kandentos's arm, swinging her hips against his, she glanced back at Cimon.

"Br-r-r-a-a-ak, Barbarian!"

Watching them hurry up the corridor to the steps, Cimon sneezed.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

phrase	source	meaning
Atrabilos/ilous	Atrabilious(bile)	black
Atramentos	atramentous	black
basalt	igneous rock	black
black basalt	" "	a common redundancy
chthonian	underworldly; dark	black
Kohl	kohl: a cosmetic	black
Minaceos	minaceous	black
Minatoa	minatory	black
moonless	very dark; hence:	black
dark; darkling		black
Nigressa	nigrescent	black
Sabela	sable (heraldry)	black
sombre, shadowy, etc etc etc		black
umbrageous	shadowy; hence:	black
Kandentos	candent	white
Reh	initials of a much-copied writer of note. Dead he is, but his work lives on to line the pockets of others. Thanks, Bob! positively the end —again.	

A ZOTHIQUEAN DUOLOGY



Nihil Humanum: the Red, Dying Sun John Boardman

Science fiction likes to think of itself as being in the forefront of thought, a vehicle for the presentation of new ideas. This is often the case. However, sometimes science fiction is where old scientific theories go to die, long after they have been rejected by science. The idea of the red, dying sun is one of these.

At the beginning of the present century, the chronology of the earth

was a topic of argument between astronomers and geologists. Geologists insisted, based on analyses of stratum after stratum full of fossils, that the earth had to be hundreds of millions of years old to accommodate all that evolution and replacement of extinct species. Yet astronomers could determine no mechanisms whereby the sun could provide a steady output of energy for that great length of time. Where the sun got its energy was a highly debatable, and debated, topic among astronomers. The best that they could come up with was gravitation. Owing to the mutual gravitational attraction of its own mass, the sun was considered to be slowly contracting, as its mass fell towards its center. Since a falling body gives up energy, this energy was supposed to appear as light and heat. Yet even with this idea the energy output of the sun could not be reconciled with its present size and mass.

Then came Ejnar Hertzsprung and Henry Norris Russell, who separately proposed classifying stars on a graph which had temperature along one axis, and brightness along the other. Most stars form a line

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on such a diagram. This line extended from hot, white, bright stars at the upper left, downward to cool, red, faint stars at the lower right. Some very bright stars were above and to the right of this line, and the famous "white dwarfs" were well below it, but the "main sequence" seemed to hold the key to stellar evolution. And so it does, but since the discovery of nuclear fusion the Hertzsprung-Russell ("H-R") diagram is understood in a quite different sense.

But before this discovery, the main sequence was considered to be a sequence indeed. By analogy with a fire which dies down and cools off as its fuel is exhausted, it was assumed that stars began as hot and white, and then moved down the main sequence as they aged, until they ended as cool, red dwarf stars. The sun was thought to be half-way along this process, since its position on the main sequence of the H-R diagram is about halfway between the extremes.

This idea was still being presented in popular astronomy books when I was a boy, and particularly in those of Robert J. Baker, who had very much influence in the teaching of astronomy then. Naturally, many science fiction and fantasy writers took it up. The science fiction of the 1930s and 1940s is filled with references to the future of the sun as a red dwarf star.

Sometimes writers would set stories in the far future of the earth, with a waning red sun illuminating a desert landscape. The most evocative of these stories were the "Zothique" fantasy stories of Clark Ashton Smith, during that all-too-brief period from 1928 to 1936 before he ceased writing. Zothique was the last continent of earth, and was presumably located in its southern hemisphere, since black people live in the north, and the star Canopus is prominent in the sky. [1] The best description of the era of Zothique (rhymes with "seek") appears at the beginning of "The Dark Eidolon," which was published in *Weird Tales* in 1935:

On Zothique, the last continent of earth, the sun no longer shone with the whiteness of its prime, but was dim and tarnished as if with a vapor of blood. New stars without number had declared themselves in the heavens, and the shadows of the infinite had fallen closer. And out of the shadows, the older gods had returned to man: the gods forgotten since Hyperborea, since Mu and Poseidonis, bearing other names but the same attributes. And the elder demons had also returned, battenning on the fumes of evil sacrifice, and fostering again the primordial sorceries.

There is a lush decadence, and an obsession with death, in all the Zothique stories, which is surprising since Smith was only in his early 40s when he stopped writing, and he was destined to live to be 68. In almost all of the stories, corpses are raised to life. One of the islands off Zothique is inhabited by necromancers, and another by torturers. Some of the stories even contain necrophily, sometimes out of sheer lust, but sometimes as an expression of a love that survives death, in quite another sense than Christians would have us believe. This is a great contrast with Smith's cycle of stories about Hyperborea, the first continent. It is largely covered not with deserts but with jungles, and its fauna includes dinosaurs. The heroes and villains of Hyperborea include lusty lovers of life and its pleasures, not witches and wizards creeping around for unhallowed purposes. Of course, extinct creatures show up again on Zothique, too; the victims of King Euvoran's arrows include "the dodo and *dinornis* [2] on shores that were otherwise unpeopled."

In his introduction to a 1970 Ballantine Books collection of Smith's 17 Zothique stories, the late Lin Carter described the influence of Smith on other writers. A dying earth under an aging, red sun is the setting for A. E. van Vogt's *The Book of Ptah* (1947), for Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth* (1950, with sequels written many years later), and even Carter's own *The Giant of World's End* (1969). The aging of the sun, according to the pre-fusion speculations, appears ludicrously in Richard Shaver's preposterous "Shaver mystery" stories of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Shaver presumed that, at some distant time in

the past, earth was inhabited by a benevolent, scientifically advanced race called the "teros." But then the sun "stopped burning carbon and began to burn metals." Of course the sun has not burned (or, more precisely, fused) anything except hydrogen since it began shining, and will continue to do so until the supply gives out, at least five billion years in the future. What Shaver seemed to be getting at is the fact that lines indicating the presence of iron, calcium, and other metals are much more prominent in the spectrum of the sun than they are in the spectra of hotter, brighter, and by pre-fusion theories "younger" stars. Metal lines are even more prominent in the spectra of the red, main-sequence stars. According to Shaver, the malevolent effects of "burning metals" changed the "teros" into malevolent "deros" who are manipulating human beings for their own fell purposes. A remnant of the "teros" have taken refuge in caverns far underground, safe from the "burning metals," and from those refuges they attempt to instruct humans in ways to resist the evil "deros." As you might expect, Shaver and his imitators, who could count on selling such stories to an editor named Ray Palmer [3] who was entirely under Shaver's influence, worked the "cold war" into this, so that the evil Soviets were serving the even more evil "deros."

With a better understanding of nuclear fusion the life histories of the stars were finally straightened out. They do not evolve along the main sequence of the H-R diagram, but towards it before reaching stability, and away from it after the hydrogen at the core is used up. The sun was never a bright blue-white star like, say, Sirius, nor will it ever degenerate into a red dwarf like Barnard's Star. (This star, too faint to be seen with the unaided eye, is at 6 light years distance the second nearest stellar system to the sun.) When the hydrogen at the sun's core, capable of being fused into helium, is exhausted, the sun will begin to cool; like any cooling gas, it will expand. Its outer layers will expand and drop in temperature, but since its surface area will be so much greater, it will emit more heat. Such a star, emitting more heat at a lower temperature, becomes a red giant. The earth of that era will experience not less heat but more. It will be first parched, then scorched, and finally baked to the point where it can no longer support life. The core of the sun, on the other hand, will contract under its mutual gravitational attraction, until eventually the pressures there become so great that helium will be fused into carbon and other heavier elements. Eventually the cool outer layers will dissipate into space; several stars are known for which this process is now going on, and they are rather confusingly called "planetary nebulae" because of a fancied resemblance of that sphere of expanding, cooling gases to the disk that a planet shows to a telescope. When these gases are gone, and neither helium nor hydrogen can be any longer fused, the core of the sun will be left as a white dwarf star. Stars substantially less massive or more massive than the sun will have rather different futures. However, the red, dying sun of pre-fusion astronomy, and the science fiction that used this idea, is as obsolete as the jungles of Venus, the canals of Mars, or the "cold war" in the science fiction written under the influence of that delusion.

[1] Even in Smith's time it was known that the stars moved with respect to one another, and that Canopus, now the second brightest star in our night sky, would be unlikely to be nearby in the far future of Zothique. However, this southern star is present in the Zothique stories for setting their scene, and not for astronomy.

[2] *Dinornis* is the scientific name for the bird better known as the moa.

[3] Physically, Palmer resembles the "deros" of which Shaver wrote. You can't make this stuff up.



The Poetic Devices Found in "The Empire of the Necromancers"

by Mary Ann Brandenberger



Clark Ashton Smith was one of the leading writers of fantasy fiction in the pulp magazines of the 1930s. Critics comment that the appeal of his work is its "exotic otherworldliness" (Bleiler 875). Perhaps the most vivid of Smith's created lands is Zothique—"a latter coast / Where cities crumble in the black sea-sand / And dead gods drink the brine" (Smith 1). In this Zothiquean setting, Smith describes an earth of the distant future—the sun has grown dim, the land has become old and decadent. Altogether, Smith has created for his readers a world "outside their normal world and lets them flounder toward some uneasy familiarity with strange circumstances" (Bleiler 875). This approach by Smith is quite a contrast to the more traditional approach taken by most twentieth century writers of supernatural stories. The majority of these writers make their point by the frightful events that take place in *familiar* surroundings.

Not only does Smith present his readers with an unusual setting, he also approaches his story with a nontraditional angle to the short-story style. Many critics have noted that Smith uses many poetic qualities in his prose fiction. Donald Sidney-Fryer states:

Many of the more characteristic tales are actually poems in prose in which Smith has united the singleness of purpose and mood of the modern short story (as first established by one of Smith's literary idols, Edgar Allan Poe) together with the flexibility of the *conte* or tale; an entire short story being unified and, in part, given its powerful centralization of effect, mood, atmosphere, etc., by a more or less related system or systems of poetic imagery. (11)

By using various poetic devices, Smith understood how he could hold a story together, especially one with a predictable plot. One story from Zothique that utilizes such poetic elements to hold a simple plot together is "The Empire of the Necromancers."

This particular story describes two necromancers by the names of Mmatmuor and Sodosma who have been driven into exile for their

desecration of the respected dead of Tinarath. They make their way across the deserts to Cincor, where a plague in the distant past has destroyed the once flourishing kingdom, practicing their dark art as they travel. Once Mmatmuor and Sodosma reach the capital city of Yethlyreom, they continue to revive the corpses of men, women, and animals. With the corpses taking care of the castle grounds, fields, and mines, the two necromancers are able to rule in ease and luxury. This splendid arrangement does not last for long. At last, the youngest of the dead emperors, feeling a deep rage within him, is able to ally himself with an ancient emperor and necromancer. Together the two are able to discover the secret that will release them all from their life-in-death and will destroy their dictators. As planned, Mmatmuor and Sodosma are killed and all the corpses are able to return to the comforts of death.

Here, Smith has taken a predictable plot about the rebellion of an under class and made it enthralling and captivating, not only with a variation of setting and characters, but also, and most importantly, with the use of poetic devices. Upon the initial reading of this story, one is struck by the care and detail that Smith has given to his particular style. This attention to style is in direct contrast to the simple rebellion plot of "The Empire of the Necromancers." This particular story is enriched with such elements as alliteration, assonance, simile, comparison, oxymoron, hyperbole, sensory imagery, and specific color imagery. It is the purpose of this paper to analyze these poetic devices and to discuss them as they appear in "The Empire of the Necromancers."

At the sentence level, Smith's use of alliteration is quite noticeable. He uses this device in two manners. Alliteration is used in two words that directly follow one another, such as "shrunken seas" (45), "bright brass" (52), and "cloven corpses" (53), and also is used in words found throughout an entire sentence. This device seems to keep the lengthy sentences in focus. An example of this type of alliteration is as follows, with the alliteration capitalized:

And Illeiro shattered the image with a fragment of sTone;
and he and HeSTaiyon took from its Hollow Center a great
Sword of unrusted Steel, and a Heavy key of unTarnished
BRonze, and Tablets of BRight BRass on which were inscribed
the various things to be done, so that Cincor should be Rid
of the Dark Reign of the necromancers and the people
should win back to oblivious Death. (52)

This alliterative pattern too gives the lengthy sentence a sense of unity and lightness.

The device of assonance is also implemented. This is quite common in many of Smith's sentences throughout the story. Take, for example, the following:

They rose betimes, in the dArk crimson dAwn, from the
opulent pAlace bEds in which they hAd slEpt; for much
remained to be done. (47)

As indicated, there is assonance found in the "short e" sound—beds, slept—and the "short a"—dark, dawn, palace, had.

Simile is another poetic device found in "The Empire of the Necromancers." One example is:

And pace by pace with their laxness and tyranny, the
fire of rebellion mounted in the shadowy heart of Illeiro,



like a flame that struggles with Lethean damps.

(50; emphasis added)

Smith has compared the "fire" of rebellion found in Illeiro, which is struggling for full recognition in the deceased brain, to the flame of a lamp that is also struggling. Both are caught in dampness—one in death's dampness, the other in literal dampness. Another simile is seen in this passage:

The dead emperors and empresses stirred, *like autumn leaves in a sudden wind*, and a whisper passed among them and went forth from the palace, to be communicated at length, by devious ways, to all the dead of Cincor.

(53; emphasis added)

Here Smith has compared the dead, rustling, mummified bodies of the rulers of Cincor to the rustling leaves of autumn. Both are put into motion—by the wind and by the news of Hestaiyon.

Smith also uses straight comparisons. One example is found in the following passage:

After a while, in the gray waste, they found the remnant of another horse and rider, which the jackals had spared and the sun had dried to *the leanness of old mummies*.

(46; emphasis added)

The comparison is between the dead, withered horse and rider and mummies. The dead and the mummies belong to the same class, so this is not a metaphor.

The oxymoron or at least a quasi-oxymoron is used to unify images and plot at the paragraph level. The oxymoron reinforces the dark irony found in several paragraphs throughout the story. Several examples of oxymoron can be found in the first paragraph:

I tell the tale as men shall tell it in Zothique, the last continent, beneath a *dim sun* and *sad heavens* where the stars come out in *terrible brightness* before eventide.

(44; emphasis added)

This particular oxymoron is quite noticeable and quite ironic. One would neither expect the sun to be dim nor the heavens to be sad nor brightness to be terrible. Of course, "dim sun" may be literally stated in Zothique, and brightness *can* be terrible, as in a constantly lit cell. But the *effect* of these terms on an American reader is, at least at first, that of an oxymoron. The terms are intended to and do set up a shocking contrast. However, as one is quick to learn, these particular quasi-oxymorons befit the rest of the bleak scenery to come.

Another place in the story that utilizes this type of quasi-oxymoron is:

Dead laborers made their palace gardens to bloom again with long-perished flowers; lichens and skeletons toiled

for them in the mines, or reared superb, fantastic towers of the *dying sun*. (48; stress added)

Again, there is an oxymoron in laborers being dead and the sun dying. However, this could be said to be a form of irony. For in this particular story, contrary to normal expectations, the laborers are truly dead and in the land of Zothique the sun is truly dim, truly using up its fuel and in the process of dying. (No novae are suggested here.)

Smith uses the poetic device of hyperbole as well in this short story. One may find this with:

Then, in the ashy sand by the wayside, they drew a threefold circle; and standing together at its center, they performed the abominable rites that compel the dead to arise from *tranquil nothingness* and obey henceforward, in all things, the dark will of the necromancer. (46; stress added)

The phrase "tranquil nothingness" seems to emphasize, or over-emphasize, the emptiness or deep peacefulness of death. One may expect death to be peaceful, but is it such an empty peacefulness?

Another example of hyperbole is found with:

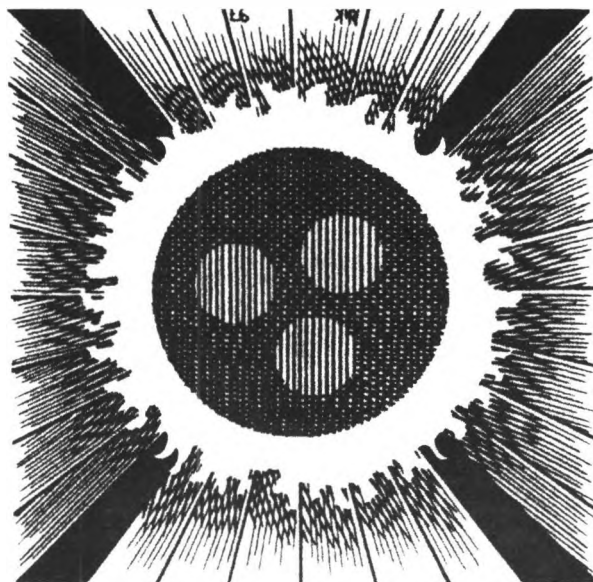
So, in *tranquil silence*, with no further need of words, Illeiro and Hestaiyon passed through the open door of the nether vault, and Illeiro locked the door behind them with its key of untarnished bronze. (54; stress added)

Again, there is an emphasis on tranquility. Perhaps *silence*—the absence of sound—and *nothingness*—the absence of everything—are analogous. But this is a hyperbole because it overstates the idea: normally, silence has to be tranquil. (The only exception probably lies in suspense stories and movies where silence is preparation for an attack.) Here, both hyperboles, functioning within their paragraphs, seem to reinforce the peace found in death and seem to justify the desire of Illeiro and Hestaiyon to return themselves and their people to the dead.

Also typical of a poet's work is the use of images that appeal to the senses. This device helps unite "The Empire of the Necromancers" generally, by establishing a consistency of tone. These sensual images are throughout the story. Smith allows one to be stimulated by sight, smell, and hearing, and these sensual devices combine for a fulfilling involvement in the story. Sight is appealed to with Smith's constant use of color—black, red, gold, amber—and their variations. The earlier quotations in this paper, for example, have had such variations of red as "flame," "dark crimson," and "fire." One of the descriptions of the mummies arouses the sense of smell with the scent of "mortuary balsams" (48). Hearing is appealed to with the sounds of the mummies and their "toneless, echo-like voices" (48) and their rustling "like autumn leaves" (53).

But the colors which appeal imaginatively to one's sense of sight are not limited to simple sensualness. Perhaps the poetic device that is most prevalent in this particular short story is the use of color or color imagery with a hint of symbolic power. As mentioned previously, "as a poet, Smith understood how he could hold a story together by a pattern of images; some of his best stories possess a chain of connected images" (Bleiler 876). In this story the connected images are those of color, and more specifically, those of the colors black and red. Smith, no doubt, was influenced by Poe in this use of color imagery. Some of Poe's most famous, and Smith's favorite, works were stories that relied heavily on the use of color—"The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Masque of the Red Death."

The use of the color black and its shade variations comes instantaneously in "The Empire of the Necromancers." One is made aware of a "black weariness of a dying race," a "dark isle of Naat," and a "gray country" (44-45). Quickly one is attuned to a global darkness—and evil. The color of black is then mixed with the color of red. As the necromancers approach their destination, the country of Yethlyreom is described as being "steeped in the darkening stagnant blood of ominous sunset" (47). The imagery of blood continues with



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the description of the necromancers and their followers entering Yethlyreom as the "blood-red twilight . . . thickened with purple" (47). And the next day, the necromancers "rose betimes in the dark crimson dawn" (47)

The end of the story continues the use of the colors red and purple. Smith uses them to describe the deaths of the necromancers:

And the necromancers gave up their unclean lives, and lay supine, without movement, adding a deeper red to the rose and a brighter hue to the sad purple of their couches. (53)

Again, the time of day is associated with blood, being described as the "blood-dark day that followed" (53). This repetitive use of the color of blood does aid in keeping the imagery and the story unified.

The mummies are also described with color

They knew no passion or desire, or delight, only the black languor of their awakening from Lethe, and a gray, ceaseless longing to return to that of interrupted slumber. (49)

This use of the color black seems to set up a contrast to the previously described and repeated vividness of red and purple. The black makes the red appear more sinister and more deadly. The two colors (black and red) work well with one another to present a dark and sinister mood.

Smith also uses variations of brightness. He utilizes words like "faded" and "shadow" to offset the use of color and to make the setting more evil. For example:

But at first he [one of the mummies] was troubled only, like the others, by a *dim* wariness and a *pale* hunger for the lost oblivion. (49; emphasis added)

Smith also uses variations of hues to heighten the effects of the colors. He uses the color of purple to increase the vividness of red when telling of the twilight (47) and to complement the blood of the dead necromancers (53). The color of obsidian is found to increase the darkness of black when revealing the color of the mummy's eyes (51). These variations of brightness and hue do connect the story's imagery, and they do so in an interesting and visually stimulating manner.

Smith allows a few other colors to be present. He uses the color gold to describe the halls of Yethlyreom (47) and to describe the pride of Illeiro (50). Smith also portrays the sun as being "ember-colored" (45) and the wine being served to the necromancers as "amber vintages" (50).

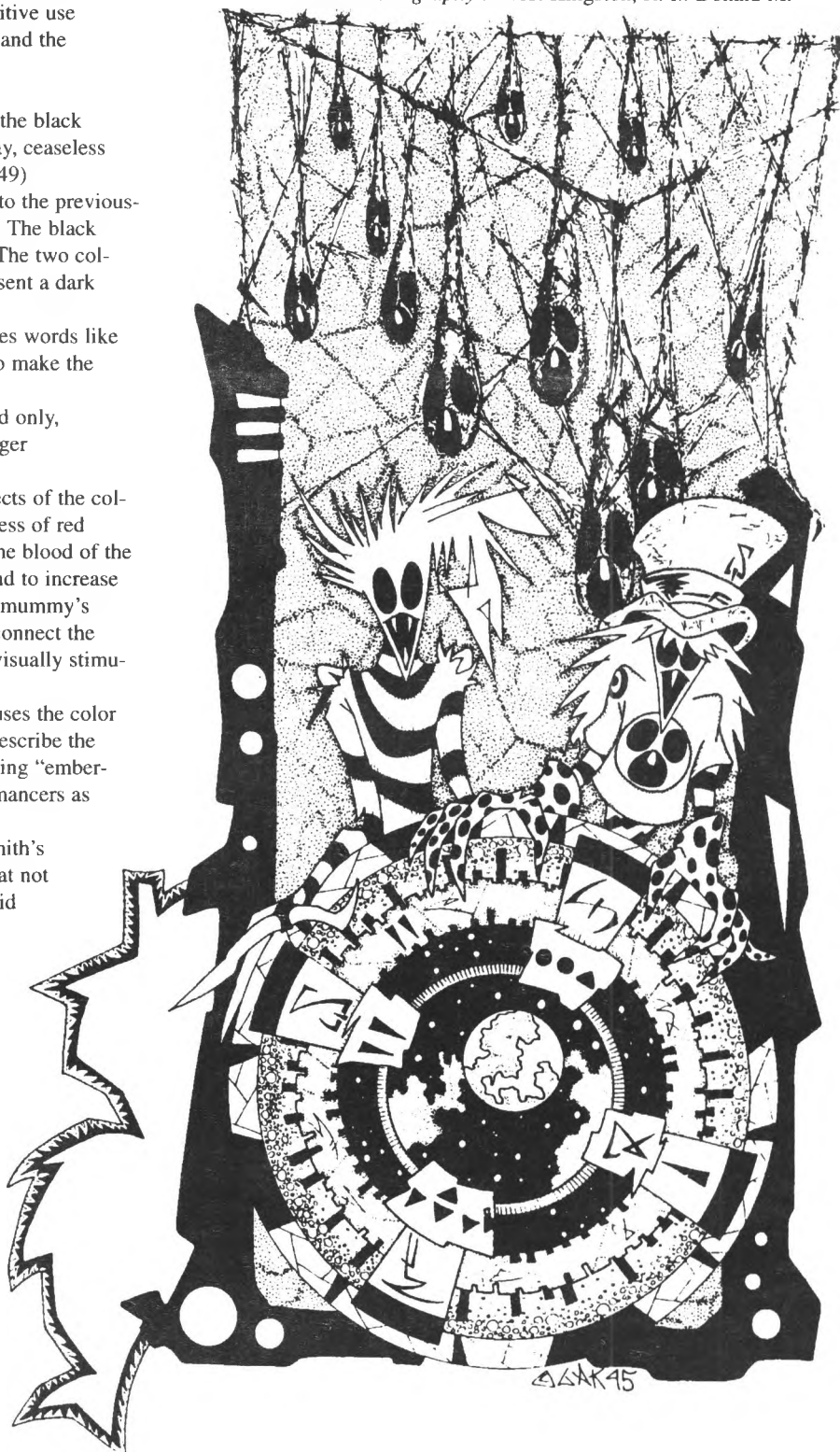
The presence of poetic devices is very strong in Smith's supernatural tale. He has arranged them in patterns that not only allow his story to be unified, but unified in a vivid and exciting manner. These devices work to complement one another at various levels—in the sentence, paragraph, and story as a whole. No doubt Smith has been criticized negatively for the mixing of the genres of fiction and poetry and their generic devices, but this mixing proves to be quite successful. In fact, Smith is to be praised for his "intensely vivid narrative, in which the borderline between poetry and prose is frequently blurred" (Cawthorn and Moorcock 95).

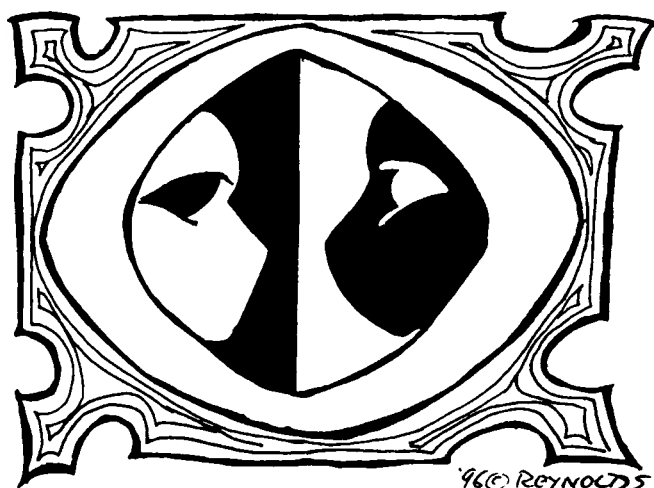
The fact is that with all his predilection for the macabre Smith never seems to become morbid about it. There is an ironic, poetic vision always at play behind the looming horrors, somewhat detached, alert, and observant. A strong sense of beauty, even in strangeness, often gives the tales a fascination they might otherwise lack; and here the poetry that Smith composed for so many years adds an element of charm that is often lacking in the fantastic story. (Bleiler 880)

"The Empire of the Necromancers" is a fascinating literary work, filled with poetic stimulation.

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Our Ladies of Light and Darkness

Female apparitions in Two Later Works of Fritz Leiber by Bruce Byfield

Fritz Reuter Leiber is best known for his sword and sorcery series featuring Fafhrd and Gray Mouser. However, his horror stories are his most sophisticated and influential works. Insisting on the sociological basis of horror, he pioneered the urban horror story in such works as "Smoke Ghost" and "The Hound." More importantly, by using horror as a means of self-exploration, he emphasized its psychological basis. Although Leiber was hardly the first to see psychology as the source of horror, few writers have insisted on it so strongly, or made the horror story such a strong expression of their personality. In fact, almost all of Leiber's horror stories, from his earliest efforts in the Forties onwards, have strong elements of autobiography or self-exploration. In particular, the stories painstakingly record Leiber's alternate fascination with and fear of women, and their role in male development. This psychological record is especially clear in two of Leiber's major later works, *Our Lady of Darkness* and "The Button Molder."

Early in Leiber's career, his self-exploration is tentative. For example, the magazine version of *Conjure Wife*, in which a college professor discovers that all women are witches, lacks most of the psychological complexity of the later book version. The difference is mainly due to the fact that, between the two versions, Leiber had written "A Literary Copernicus," an exploration of Lovecraft's works. Like most criticism by writers, "A Literary Copernicus" is as much an exploration of the writer as it is of its subject, and Leiber's thoughts about Lovecraft did much to make him a more deliberate artist.

A further boost was provided by Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* and *Watch the North Wind Rise*. Both use women as symbols in male development, and, throughout the Fifties, Leiber was heavily influenced by Graves. However, it is only in the late Fifties, as the essays of Carl Jung became generally available, that Leiber managed to fully articulate his symbols of the female. Writing essays about Jung and, increasingly, referring to Jung in his stories, Leiber was especially interested in Jung's description of the symbols of the unconscious mind, which Jung calls archetypes. Two were especially important to Leiber in his work: the Anima, the symbol of all that is female in a male mind, and the Shadow, or the hidden part of any mind. According to Jung, both must be confronted to allow the development of the Self or the archetype of personal development.

When Leiber discovered Jungian theory, the main feature of his work became a figure that might be called the Anima-Shadow. This

figure is female, a woman or a supernatural being, who terrorizes a Leiber-like protagonist with memories of his moral failings. This figure appears in stories of the early Sixties, such as "Midnight in the Mirror World" and "When the Change Winds Blow." Later, Leiber used it to express his guilt over his wife's death in "The Ghost Light" and "Black Has Its Charms." In all these works, the Anima-Shadow is a figure of horror, much like the Furies of Greek myth.

In the late Seventies, however, this figure grew more complex as it becomes associated with the Self, the archetype of the ideal personality, in *Our Lady of Darkness* and "The Button Molder." At first thought, the Shadow and the Self may seem contradictory archetypes, but, in these stories, they are not. Although *Our Lady of Darkness* assigns the Shadow and the Self to separate figures and "The Button Molder" to a single figure, in both works the two archetypes work together as aspects of the Anima. The Self urges Leiber's protagonists to confront the Shadow, and the confrontation with the Shadow drives Leiber's protagonists into a realization of the Self. Both archetypes play a role in maturation, which is emphasized by structural allusions to classic works of fantasy.

Our Lady of Darkness is a light fictionalization of Leiber's recovery from grief and alcohol in San Francisco. Although twenty years Leiber's junior, Franz Western, his protagonist, is a science fiction writer with a Germanic first name only two letters different from his own. Franz's three years of alcoholic grief for his wife Daisy parallel Leiber's mourning for his wife Jonquil, and, like Leiber's, Franz's recovery begins with an interest in the buildings that block his stargazing. In particular, both are fascinated with the Sutro TV Tower, a prominent symbol in *Our Lady of Darkness* and the subject of one of Leiber's most interesting "Moon, Stars and Stuff" columns (*Locus*, November 1983, 15). As the buildings lure them to explore the city, both Franz and Leiber explore Corona Heights and try to locate their apartment from its height. Like Leiber in the mid-Seventies, Franz lives at 811 Geary Street, and his friends are versions of Leiber's: in the novel, Donald Fryer becomes Donaldus Byers; the building manager in Leiber's apartment, Roberto Comego, Ferdinand Lutuque; and the organist Sheila Woodward, the harpsichordist Calpurnia. Only De Castries, the eccentric turn-of-the-century magician, seems completely invented.

The novel originally appeared as "The Pale Brown Thing" in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. Later, it was expanded for book publication by the addition of secondary narratives. Combined with the personal details and the use of local history, these additional narratives lead Justin Leiber in "Fritz Leiber and Eyes" to suggest that, like Jorge Luis Borges or Thomas Pynchon, his father is exploring "the pollution of reality by dream—or dream by reality... the trickery of mirrors and

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artistic representation" (16). Although Justin Leiber does not use the term, he seems to imply that his father creates a post-modern novel, one which comments upon its own structure and limitations. If so, there is justification for the idea. The novel's texts and oral narratives are diverse: they include Franz's television novelizations, the journal of *Weird Tales* writer Clark Ashton Smith, de Castries' modern grimoire *Megapolismancy*, a nurse's stories about psychiatric patients and Calpurnia's visit to his ward, urban folklore about the Invisible Nurse, Donaldus Byers' conflicting accounts of de Castries' origins, the city-directories and records that Franz researches in, and the pile of occult and horror literature on his bed. This diversity parallels the post-modernist concern with text and narrative: not only is the average reader apt to be uncertain which ones exist and which are invented, but the novel constantly poses the question of which narratives are trustworthy and rarely answers it. Even "The Pale Brown Thing" is part of the narrative maze, since Leiber suggests on *An Hour With Fritz* Leiber that the two texts should be regarded as the same story told at different times. If Franz's story is longer in *Our Lady of Darkness*, the reason is that he recalls more the second time he tells it.

Yet, although *Our Lady of Darkness* is as playful as a post-modernist novel, its complexity is neither an end in itself nor wholly a product of a sense of absurdity. Even when they seem unnecessary to the plot, the secondary narratives add to the general atmosphere of uncertainty, and Leiber's intent is actually the direct opposite of a post-modernist's. Far from enjoying the labyrinths of narrative, as Byers urges, Franz specifically rejects this perspective. He has neither the wealth nor the detachment that shields Byers from the confusion. Like Jack London, Ambrose Bierce and Clark Ashton Smith, who, in the secondary narratives, encounter some of the same forces, Franz is a fantasist. He needs to distinguish fantasy and reality so that he can mediate between them for others. His need is to lessen his reliance on the books and researches that have sustained him through his grief. The fact that one of the texts that obsesses him most contains a hidden curse indicates that Leiber does not regard the maze of narrative as a place to linger.

As in his early work "Smoke Ghost," in *Our Lady of Darkness* Leiber invents a new metaphysics for modern times. The metaphysical system is the subject of de Castries' *Megapolismancy*, an occult book written at the turn of the century that suggests that the accumulation of people, concrete and electricity in the modern city is gradually creating daemonic "paramental entities" that can be controlled by the proper symbols. On the cassette *An Hour With Fritz Leiber*, Leiber tells Randall Garrett that he invented the new form of magic because he felt that the old ones had been overused in horror. Wryly amused, he adds that what was recognizably a literary conceit in the Forties fits the spirits of the Seventies so well that "I have had people who are into witchcraft and into theosophy take that idea of mine quite seriously, and say when did I make the discovery, and so on."

However, the psychological symbolism is indicated by the title of *Our Lady of Darkness*. As the novel's epigraph indicates, the title alludes to Thomas De Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis*, a fragment originally intended as a sequel to *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. Leiber had used the same epigraph in 1962 in "A Bit of the Dark World," and de Quincey's appeal for him is easy to see. An eclectic writer whose work often borders on fantasy, de Quincey also believed that he needed opium to imagine clearly, just as Leiber once believed that he would find insight in alcohol. More importantly, as the title implies, *Suspiria de Profundis* is a series of prose poems on the subject of grief. In the section entitled "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow," de Quincey takes an approach that might be labelled pre-archetypal. Dividing grief into three stages, de Quincey writes:

I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart, and I want these abstractions presented as impersonations—

that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to the flesh. Let us call them, therefore, *Our Ladies of Sorrow*. (148-49)

The first "impersonation" is Our Lady of Tears, who "night and day raves and mourns, calling for vanished faces" (149); she represents the first emotional reaction to death. The second is Our Lady of Sighs, to whom belongs "the meekness that belongs to hopelessness" (150); she stands for the apathy of the depths of grief. The third is Our Lady of Darkness, whom the passage which Leiber chooses as an epigraph describes as

the defier of God. She is also the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. (152)

As "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" breaks off incomplete, Our Lady of Tears is instructing her sisters. One after the other, they will take charge of a mourner. To Our Lady of Darkness, she charges:

"Suffer not woman and her tenderness to sit near him in his darkness. Banish the frailties of hope—wither the relentings of love—scorch the fountains of tears: curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace—so shall he see things that ought *not* to be seen—sights that are abominable and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read older truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again *before* he dies. And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had—to *plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit*. (152-53, final emphasis added)

If the third sister visits horror upon the bereaved, it is only to force him from his grief. In Jungian terms, Our Lady of Darkness is the Shadow that must be overcome in order to put grief aside.

Complementing the allusion to "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" are briefer ones to Astraiammante, the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. The allusions are apt, not only because both Mozart's opera and Leiber's novel view music as something that partakes of both the rational and the irrational, but also because Astraiammante, who seeks both revenge on those who abandon her cause and, through the marriage of her daughter Pamina to Tamino, a unification with the forces of Light, has all the alternate Anima archetype. In the preface to W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman's adaptation of *The Magic Flute* they write that

it is the story of the relation between the Dionysian principle and the Apollonian, Night and Day, the instinctive and the rational, the unconscious and the conscious, here symbolized as female and male, respectively.

What has been a relationship of antagonism, the war between the Queen and Sarastro, is finally replaced by a relationship of mutual affection and reconciliation, through the marriage of Pamina and Tamino...though the conscious and the rational must take the responsibility for the instinctive, and hence be the "superior" partner, neither can exist without the other...though the Queen must be defeated in order that the New Age may come, her defeat completes Sarastro's task: he must now hand on the crown to Tamino and pass away like Prospero in *The Tempest*. (viii-ix)

The Queen of the Night, in short, is very much another form of Our Lady of Darkness, inflicting suffering in order to bring about change. Both sets of allusions stress redemption through suffering, and the novel should be read as an expansion upon this theme.

Before *Our Lady of Darkness* opens, Franz has long since passed from his initial reactions to Daisy's death three years earlier. He

believes that he has also passed from the depths of grief, since he has stopped drinking and returned to writing. The truth is that his recovery is less complete than he believes. Of the four Anima figures in his life, only one is human. The first thing he looks at each morning is the Sutro TV Tower, a "demigoddess" that "mediated between Franz and the universe" (3) as he wakens and orients himself. A picture of Daisy dominates his room, while on his bed is a collection of books that added up to a slender, carefree woman lying beside him on the covers—that was why he never put them on the floor; why he contented himself with half the bed; why he unconsciously arranged them in a female form with long, long legs. They were a "scholar's mistress," he decided, on the analogy of "Dutch wife," that long, slender bolster sleepers clutch to soak up sweat in tropical countries—a very secret playmate, a dashing but studious call girl, a slim, incestuous sister, eternal comrade of his writings. (4-5)

Consisting of his current reference books and pleasure reading, the Scholar's Mistress is his confidant, whom he addresses as "'my best girl'" (5). Like the TV Tower, both Daisy and the Scholar's Mistress mediate between Franz and the world. Although he has recovered enough to observe the world, he is still barely participating in it. His grief and his image of himself as an aging widower have lead him into a solitary life of reading and writing, and, although he knows several people in the apartment building, he hesitates to intrude on them, finding it easier to explore the city on his own. Together, Daisy, the TV Tower and the Scholar's Mistress represent the Anima-Shadow, binding him to the past and to routines that no longer aid him. His routines may have helped him through the worst of his grief, but, because they remind him of the past and encourage him not to involve himself with the present, they now retard his recovery from mourning. When Franz sets out to discover the mysteries of a noseless brown-robed figure he observes on Corona Heights and of the location of the apartment in which Thibault de Castries, another aging recluse and scholar, spent his last years, he is led into a direct confrontation with the Anima-Shadow.

The fourth Anima is Franz's guide to the Self. She is Calpurnia—Cal for short—the concert harpsichordist downstairs. Franz has slept with her a few times, but he has doubts about involving himself with a woman twenty years his junior. As the story opens, "he wasn't sure how far he wanted to commit himself" (10). If the other Animas keep Franz overshadowed by the past, Cal urges him to participate in life and to face his problems. Appreciating the mathematical intricacies of her music, she is also passionately devoted to it, and, as Saul's story of how she calmed a psychiatric ward suggests, she is aware of its power over the emotions. Her combination of precision and passion is an example for Franz, and, when he is tempted to mail his latest novelization without a minor descriptive detail, Cal has only to remark that such carelessness is unlike his usual perfectionism and painstaking to change his mind. Her intensity is a bit frightening, yet, comparing Cal to Daisy and the Scholar's Mistress, Franz recognizes her as benign. Cal, he reflects, is "no Lady of Darkness, but a Lady of Light and in eternal opposition to the other" (13). Obsessive herself about her music, she recognizes his obsession about de Castries and Clark Ashton Smith's journal as an interest that helps to take him out of himself. If she encourages him in the research that leads him towards the Anima-Shadow, she also arrives in time to help him confront it.

When Franz visits Corona Heights in search of the brown dancer, he sees the figure he is looking for standing in his apartment window. Conversations with Cal and other neighbors lead him to associate the figure with de Castries' book *Megapolismancy*, which he bought in the depths of his alcoholic grief and has just got around to reading. On a return visit to the Heights, he sees the same figure in his room again—but this time, it seems to reach across the distance and break his binoculars.

Shaken, he keeps an appointment with the wealthy eccentric Donaldus Byers to discuss de Castries' book and Smith's journal. From Byers, Franz learns how de Castries became the guru of the San Francisco Bohemian set in the early 1900s. [1] According to Byers, the mysterious de Castries made constant reference to a veiled, black-clad mistress. The few men who claimed to have seen her were intrigued, the few women repulsed. At times, Byers says, "It wasn't certain whether it was a real woman, or a goddess, or some sort of metaphysical entity" (103) that de Castries referred to. Possibly, for all his Satanic allure, de Castries feared women, and "she somehow stood for or embodied that fear" (104). Cultured and learned, she seemed to come and go at will. By the time that Smith knew de Castries in the Twenties, she was gone, although de Castries' reclusive life might be considered a monument to her, and she was sighted at his funeral in 1929. Alluding to both de Quincey and Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, de Castries called her "My Queen of Night, Our Lady of Darkness" (109).

Byers concludes his tale by revealing that de Castries was cremated in a brown bathrobe and buried on Corona Heights, and that the Smith journal contains a curse hidden between two glued pages that applies to Smith and "all his Heirs"—among whom, as the owner of the journal, Franz may be counted (121). Byers adds that he has believed for some time that there was truth in de Castries' work, but, convinced that he can do nothing against the paramentals, he has tried to forget his terror in self-indulgence.

The self-indulgence in Byers' life makes him a negative example for Franz. Byers hides from the world through dilettantism, Franz through readings and researches that never lead anywhere. Like Byers' elaborate sex games with his Chinese lover, Franz's researches are designed to keep him from close contact with those around him. Franz intuitively draws these parallels when Byers's lover returns from tracing the shop where Franz bought Smith's Journal and de Castries' book, bringing with her the bookseller's daughter. When he bought the books, Franz overpaid because he was worried that in his alcoholic stupor he had fondled the book-seller's daughter, and her reappearance is another reminder of his struggle out of the self-indulgence of prolonged alcoholism and grief. The fact that the bookseller's daughter now declares that she had encouraged his fumbings and was willing to endure them, so long as he paid, makes no difference to him. Her cynicism and attempt at sophistication only emphasizes the casualness of her contacts with others: just as she was willing to endure him, so she is willing to declare herself a lesbian to please Byers' lover, and, apparently, to sleep with Byers on first meeting. Watching their teasing foreplay, Franz is certain that if he stays he will follow their examples and backslide into self-indulgence by having a drink. He leaves abruptly to attend Cal's concert, only to realize that it is another escape. Giving friends a message for Cal, he resolves to solve his mysteries at once. Since Cal approves of his perfectionism, he knows that she will understand.

Back in his apartment, he learns that his apartment was de Castries' last home, and that it is the focus of the journal's curse. Unable to concentrate on his nightly chess game with the building's janitor, he goes to bed, adding the books he used to decipher the curse to his Scholar's Mistress. The arrangement of books is appropriate to a female form that represents the curse: the head is *Megapolismancy*, the chest an imaginary book by a feminist who mysteriously vanished called *Sex, Death, and Supernatural Dread*, opened to the chapter entitled "The Mammary Mystique," and the genitals—recalling a common symbol of the Female—a third imaginary book called *The Spider-Glyph in Time*. Dozing and full of forebodings, Franz reflects that de Castries' metaphysics describe all too accurately the tensions of modern life. His recovery from alcoholism seems pointless, and he is too old for Cal. Looking up, he sees the portrait of Daisy, foreshortened so that it looks noseless, like a skull or the brown-robed dancer. He

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snuggles into the Scholar's Mistress, dreaming that he is sleeping beside Daisy in her final coma. His embrace gives the Anima-Shadow power, and he awakens to find his Scholar's Mistress animated by the curse. It attacks him, the paper in the books which comprise it twisting into a female figure "very much the shape of the skeletal TV tower" (174). His memories of Daisy's death, the Tower, and the Scholar's Mistress combine into a figure composed equally of his death-wish, his desire to retain the habits of his grief, and de Castries' curse. At the moment of attack, he has unconsciously recreated de Castries' last years, placing himself alone in the same room and sharing the same occult concerns.

Franz is half-strangled when he is rescued by Cal, who left the concert early because of a premonition of his danger. Turning on the light, she banishes the dark Anima by invoking the names of modern rationalists in an updated exorcism. Despite being the logical antidote to de Castries' modern magic, her exorcism is incongruous; however, incongruity is exactly what Franz needs to shatter his mounting obsession. Cal's calm certainty instantly dispels the power of the Anima-Shadow, and Franz finally commits himself to her by fleeing the ruins of his research and collapsing in her arms. He spends the night with Cal, and as they find a new apartment, Franz makes a fresh start. Her role as symbol done, Cal warns Franz at the end of the book to be wary of the new Scholar's Mistress accumulating on their bed, because "I don't know if I could swing it again" (185). As Saul says at the end of his story about Cal, magic is a one-time event, and Franz can no longer depend on the symbolic value he has placed in Cal to aid in his development. She has taken him to the point where he must be responsible for his own well-being, no matter how uncertain the future may be.

"The Button Molder," another allusive encounter with the Anima, Shadow and Self, can be seen as Leiber's last word on his symbolism and career. First published in 1979 and only recently collected by Leiber, the story derives its title, central metaphor and atmosphere from the fifth act of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. Once renowned as a liar and fighter in his village, Peer has spent the middle acts of the play wandering and obtaining wealth. In the fifth act, he returns, old and penniless, to the scenes of his youth. Unrecognized, he hears legends about himself. Comparing himself to his legends, he recalls his failures and likens himself to an onion, with nothing at the center after all the layers have been peeled away. His opinion is confirmed when he meets the Button Molder at the crossroads. The Button Molder's job is to render down mediocre souls in order to make new ones, just as someone casting metal buttons melts flawed ones in order to reuse the metal. Obviously unable to claim that he has done great good, Peer tries to save his soul from being melted down by claiming that he is unique, then that he is a sinner. Both claims are rejected. At last, he is saved by the devotion of Solveig, the woman who has awaited him at home through the years he has been away. When Peer asks, "Where was my self, my whole self? / The self that bore God's stamp?," Solveig answers, "In my faith, in my hope and in my love" (157). The Button Molder promises to return one day, and Peer ends the play sleeping in Solveig's lap.

Ibsen had been a favorite with Leiber since his earliest correspondence with Harry Otto Fischer, when they invented an imaginary world based on *Peer Gynt* and *The Elder Edda*. [2] That Leiber should structure a story around *Peer Gynt* is therefore natural, especially since he believed that Peer's relation with Solveig anticipates the concept of the Anima. Like Solveig, the Anima in Leiber's story is a guide to the Self, as Leiber fictionalizes his move from the apartment that is the scene of *Our Lady of Darkness* and, like Peer, resolves how he will live the rest of his life. However, unlike *Peer Gynt*, Leiber's story fuses the guide to the Self with the Shadow of the Button Molder.

The story establishes its allusion quickly. On the first floor of the narrator's new building is a clothing store in which there is a man-

nequin with neither fingers nor facial features. The narrator thinks of it as female—although "perhaps a woman would think of it as male" (151). It reminds him of "the 'faceless' and unindividualized proto-human being to which the Button Molder threatens to melt down Peer Gynt" (152). A little later, he wonders idly whether the garbage trucks that waken him early in the morning have a special compartment for the Button Molder's prey. Imagining that he sees the mannequin being carried away by the trucks, he has to descend to the store and prove himself wrong.

The allusion occurs to the narrator because he has recently re-read *Gynt*. Yet he also identifies with the mannequin and those taken by the Button Molder. After a few weeks in his apartment, the narrator decides to drop his fiction and write a philosophical autobiography summarizing all that he has learned. Nearing the end of his life, he is tempted to give it a satisfactory conclusion. He does not believe in personal immortality, so all that is left is the notion of making the philosophical autobiography a monument to his life. The project goes well enough at first, but, as he sees an apparition on the roof and in his darkened apartment, it starts to falter. He needs to create a specialized vocabulary to express his insights, he rationalizes, or needs to re-read favorite writers so that he can quote them properly. But the real reason for his lack of progress is that he is afraid that his subject is too trivial, that his life is "too much like anyone else's" (163). Like Peer Gynt comparing himself to an onion, the narrator feels that to "strip away" (168) all his self-romanticism and his skill with words would reveal a miserably undeveloped Self.

Tempted to put the project aside, he finds that he cannot. He can neither progress with it nor return to fiction. He cannot even write letters, since he refuses to bore people with the details of his writer's block. He fantasizes about taking his manuscript down to the garbage trucks and listening to it being destroyed while the mannequin looks on approvingly. He knows that he would do better to abandon the project, yet continues to struggle, convinced that he could make progress if only he could finish a sentence beginning, "If you could sum up all you felt about your life and crystallize it into one master insight...." (170).

One night on the roof, he trips over a TV cable and nearly falls off the side. Wondering about unconscious suicidal impulses, he notices a violet light darting about the sky. Convinced that it is stalking him, he flees to his apartment, only to be confronted with the apparition that he has seen before, now more substantial than ever. Seeing its resemblance to the mannequin, he wonders if it is "the Button Molder, come to reduce my individuality to its possibly raw materials" (175). At that moment, he completes his unfinished sentence with "...you would have said it all and you'd be dead" (175).

With this realization, he is able to survive the encounter, and to discard the philosophical autobiography. Thinking about the apparition later, he wonders, "was she perhaps an archetype of the unconscious mind somehow made real? the Anima or the Kore or the Hag who lays men out (if those be distinct archetypes?)" (176). A doll in the panel in which the light bulb rests gives a rational explanation for the apparition, but the psychological one seems more valid, especially since the story begins by quoting Andrew Lang's definition of a ghost as "a short waking dream in the mind" (150). A few days after abandoning the autobiography, he is writing fiction again. However, he warns:

If, in future, I show little inclination to philosophize dogmatically, and if I busy myself with trivial and rather childish activities such as haunting game stores and amusement parks and other seedy and picturesque locations, if I write exceedingly fanciful, even frivolous fiction, if I pursue all sorts of quaint and curious people restlessly, if there is at times something frantic in my desire for human closeness, and if I seem occasionally to head out towards the universe,

anywhere at all in it, and dive in—
well, I imagine you'll understand. (177)

Instead of looking for a tidy conclusion, he decides, he will continue to live and explore new experiences. It is a resolution that Leiber repeats in his 1983 interview with Tom Staicar when he states that he has no intention of retiring from writing. It is also one that (so far as a remote acquaintance can tell), he did his best to live by until his death.

Our Lady of Darkness and "The Button Molder" are complex works. To wholly appreciate them, readers need to be aware of both their Jungian symbolism and of their literary allusions. Without such awareness, readers usually find that the works have a strong, but undefinable emotional effect, which may explain why they are among Leiber's most critically praised, yet least read stories. All the same, a look at their structures is worth the effort. Both stories are the result of four decades of conscious experiment with symbolism and displacement. These are the very stuff of the fantastic, and exactly the aspects that many readers and writers are reluctant to analyze. Too often, this lack of analysis has resulted in a lack of characterization or mature plot, or, more recently, of original ideas. The value that Leiber's career in general and these works in particular have is their contrast to these tendencies. In Leiber, more than any other fantasy writer, development has meant deliberate experiments with the dramatization of experience. *Our Lady of Darkness* and "The Button Molder" are outstanding examples of the end results of his experiments. Like much of his later work, they suggest why Leiber is regarded as a writer who transcends the usual boundaries of genre fiction. By taking himself seriously, Leiber forces others to take horror seriously.

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1] In a letter on 21 January, 1990, S.T. Joshi suggests that de Castries' name, at least, is derived from Benjamin de Casseres, a member of the San Francisco set of Clark Ashton Smith.

2] There is perhaps an echo of this early literary exercise in "Rime Isle," when Odin describes a member's of Fafhrd's army as a "troll" (205). In *Peer Gynt* trolls are the "epitome of egocentricity and selfish individualism", while in "Rime Isle," the feyness which Odin inspires is associated with the self-centeredness Fafhrd is outgrowing.



Between the Lines

Older Men Who Want to Run with the Wolves: Comments on *WOLF* (1994, rated R, seen 6 July 1994)

by Tamar Lindsay

In case anyone was wondering, the natural wolf does not sleep all day and prowl all night. Farley Mowat observed that wolves take frequent short naps and are likely to be active at any hour. This movie is about the demon wolf of myth and legend, symbolically expressing the passionate and mystical element of humanity as it appears in current books such as *The Fire in the Belly*, *Iron John*, and *Women Who Run with The Wolves*. The true villain is mealy-mouthed insincerity; direct confrontation is respected. The apparent audience for this movie is men over thirty, preferably over thirty-five. Will Randall (played by Jack Nicholson) demonstrates the current ideals of adult male behavior: civilized restraint in a dog-eat-dog business world, business competence, social sophistication, honesty with self and others, etc. His name, "Will," signifies that he represents the power of will, which normally obeys civilized restraints but can choose to ignore them.

The writers included other elements, such as the urban legend of the choking Doberman, and included a fantasy of their own: Will is the ideal editor, understanding about deadlines and prompt with payments. Because of this, the writers rally behind him as a united force in the marketplace, and actually have some effect.

The names of the other characters, as often happens, are also significant of their roles. Alden's behavior recalls the story of Miles Standish. Charlotte talks a lot—the reference is to the film *HUSH*, *HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE*. Laura ultimately represents an ideal, such as Petrarch's Laura did. Stewart is a pretender to the throne. Swinton is a swine. Maud (Magdalene) is a strong woman, both inde-

pendent and loyal. Will rents a room at the Mayflower Hotel, indicating both a break for independence and a subtle reference to wolfbane, which blooms in May. Even the book titles in the villain's private library are significant.

The style of the film is remarkable for its restraint. Although the werewolf make-up and behavior is traditional, there is relatively little gore onscreen by comparison with the Hammer standard, so little that some reviewers have complained. Where a traditional director would use bats, this one uses flocks of small birds. An even subtler touch is the close-up of Will's rabies shot, given with a very large hypodermic needle—for most men, as squirmy a scene as the more traditional spider web encounter. The levels of sex and bad language are similarly restrained.

Since this film is aimed at older men, the relatively few female characters have to carry more mythological weight. Charlotte represents the outspoken dark feminine. Will's loyal and competent secretary represents the more traditional supportive role of the older woman, and Laura carries the burden of several archetypal roles, including the orphan child, the maiden becoming wild woman, and, when she gives him whiskey (the water of life, *uisquebaugh*), the healer. She also represents La Belle, in one scene which alludes visually to Cocteau's *LA BELLE ET LA BETE*.

Quibble: The Wise Man in the film appears to say that werewolves can't be killed, and they are shown healing rapidly, yet one is shown killed by an ordinary lead bullet. Perhaps it's a matter of hitting the right spot, like putting the stake in the vampire's heart.



THE POWER OF PAN

Algernon Blackwood at his Peak

by Mike Ashley

These days the name of Algernon Blackwood remains closely associated with ghost stories and, because of his stories "The Willows" and "The Wendigo," with supernatural stories on a more cosmic scale—the aspect that influenced H.P. Lovecraft. But despite his two retrospective collections *Tales of the Uncanny and Supernatural* and *Tales of the Mysterious and Macabre* having been long in print, but often available at bargain-book prices, little of his other short fiction is remembered and his true contribution to supernatural fiction is still not fully appreciated. This may be because he was such a unique voice and his fiction increasingly followed more mystical paths that took him away from the tried and trusted fields of spectral fiction. People could be excused for thinking that once Blackwood had published his first three books—*The Empty House* (1906), *The Listener* (1907), and in particular *John Silence* (1908)—he published little else except "The Wendigo" which appeared in his fourth collection *The Lost Valley* (1910). Thereafter, to many, his fiction seems to fade away, and although a few of his later stories are occasionally reprinted, in particular "Running Wolf" from *The Wolves of God* (1921), there is little else of significance.

That is our loss, because it is with "The Wendigo" that Blackwood's real intensity as a writer began. During a period of astonishing white heat from 1910-1912 Blackwood produced some of the most remarkable works of supernatural fiction ever written, works that at their peak almost defy description and categorization, yet which, by and large, remain unrecognized and unreprinted.

In this essay I'd like to revisit those years and explore Blackwood at his peak and perhaps, in so doing, give proper recognition to Blackwood's unique talent.

Let's just remind ourselves of where Blackwood was around 1910. He had started writing in earnest after he returned from North America in 1899, though these early writings were written more for therapeutic reasons than for any gainful reward. [1] The stories poured out of him as if in release from the horrors of deprivation that he had suffered while in New York. Some of them appeared in *The Empty House* and it is evident that these are early works, influenced by his reading in the gothic medium, and only occasionally rising above the mundane. The best are those that reflect his personal experiences of psychic and occult research. He had, after all, joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1900 and became very learned in matters magical. It was these teachings that formed the basis for the *John Silence* stories and certainly by the time Blackwood came to write them he was mastering the story medium and finding himself capable of imbuing the stories with considerable atmosphere built upon his own experiences. To do this Blackwood required a larger canvas and these stories, like "The Willows" in *The Listener*, are longer than most typical weird fiction of the day.

"The Willows" is Blackwood's first major story. It was based upon a couple of trips that Blackwood and his friend Wilfred Wilson made by canoe down the river Danube in 1900 and in 1901. In the story the men encounter a threshold between two worlds and at that threshold, where they innocently encamp one night, they witness a multi-dimensional vortex which Blackwood describes as "...the personified elemental forces of this haunted and primeval region." [2] This is the first story in which Blackwood captures an image of Nature in the raw,

the wild world beyond our normal perception.

Little of this emerges in *John Silence*, which focuses more on the pervading evil left by man than by Nature, but it was the success of *John Silence* that enabled Blackwood to leave his job in the dried-milk business and live solely by his earnings from writing. This freedom was what he wanted. He settled in a small *pension* in the French/Swiss Jura in 1908, and when he wasn't writing, he travelled. His two most significant expeditions were to the Caucasus from May to July 1910 and to Egypt from January to March 1912. Between these he travelled throughout Europe, especially France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, but also the wilder parts of Britain. It was these travels that fuelled his fiction. Often alone in the most remote and desolate parts of the world, Blackwood drew closer to Nature. His mind opened to the forces of Nature, and his senses began to perceive the full power of Creation. These impressions and images built up within him and occasionally forced their way out on paper.

They began in a small way in *The Lost Valley*, which gave us Blackwood's second great Nature story, "The Wendigo." Although set in the vast forests of northern Canada, the story was written high in the Swiss Alps with gales battering the small frame of a mountain hut. The Wendigo of the title is a nature spirit of the North American Indians, sometimes regarded as the Call of the Wild personified, and in the story it spirits away one of a hunting party. Blackwood describes the Wendigo in terms of the primitive:

Out there, in the heart of unreclaimed wilderness, they had surely witnessed something crudely and essentially primitive. Something that had survived somehow the advance of humanity had emerged terrifically, betraying a scale of life still monstrous and immature. He envisaged it rather as a glimpse into prehistoric ages, when superstitions, gigantic and uncouth, still oppressed the hearts of men; when the forces of nature were still untamed, the Powers that may have haunted a primeval universe not yet withdrawn. [3]

Again that word, "primeval." Blackwood was looking back to the dawn of the world to a time when the forces of nature remained wild and untamed, and when powers existed which have since "withdrawn" to a dimension beyond our perception.

The chance for Blackwood's imagination to explore Nature had been enhanced by his move to Switzerland and a few other stories had started to emerge which were not typical of his previous work. The first sign of this change had come with "The Man Who Played Upon the Leaf" about a Nature-worshipper in Switzerland. Also included in *The Lost Valley*, it had appeared earlier in two weekly installments in *Country Life* in October and November 1909. The transition was even more apparent in the mood stories "The South Wind" and "Special Delivery," and in "The Sea Fit," where a storm at sea is perceived by a Nature-sensitive as a manifestation of the old gods. Though collected in *Pan's Garden*, they were all written at the same time as "The Wendigo" and "The Lost Valley" in the winter of 1909/10.

In "The Lost Valley" Blackwood makes reference to the Caucasus. A Professor Samarianz from Tiflis has interested one of twin brothers in the legends of the Caucasus, and the brother declares, "We really must go there another year...." Blackwood must have been discussing the Caucasus with someone at that time, for it was to those mountains that

Blackwood set off in 1910. The trip would have a profound influence upon him.

When Blackwood returned he had a writer's block. Nothing appeared from his pen except some routine journalism for nearly six months. So intense were the impressions he had received that he found himself incapable of expression. "I came home charged with a thousand storms of beauty and wonder, only to find that I could not write a line about it all. Stunned and bewildered by what I had seen, the mind was speechless, incapable of expressing anything..." [4]

He managed to break his writer's block with a squib of a story, "Imagination" (*Westminster Gazette*, December 17, 1910) which later appeared in *Ten Minute Stories* (1914), though it has not been reprinted since. This story is intriguing since it describes Blackwood trapped by his writer's block struggling to find a suitable image and description for those beings that inhabit the Earth who have human bodies but who enshrine the spirit of the elder world. It was these that emerged as the Centaurs, the beings described in Blackwood's novel *The Centaur*, which he eventually finished in July 1911 and which was published that November.

The Centaur is Blackwood's most accomplished novel. In it he seeks to explore those beings whose spirits belong to the Mother Earth and have done so since the dawn of the world. These are the *urmen-schen*, or psychic throwbacks. The main protagonist of the novel, Terence O'Malley, himself a nature worshipper, encounters two such beings while on board a ship bound for the Caucasus. The beings appear as humans when first seen, but a sideways glance gives the impression of something more immense, something that conveys a hugeness. Blackwood describes them as "souls in exile." [5] In effect the Earth had projected manifestations of her own consciousness. In the past these spirits had been perceived by sensitives as the mythical beasts of legend. A few survive in human form, but with an aura that projects the immensity of their forebears. O'Malley comes under the spell of these cosmic beings and follows them into the Caucasus where, tapping their power, he has a vision of the spiritual Garden of Eden, the unspoiled raw Earth.

A single reading of *The Centaur* is not sufficient to gain the insight Blackwood was seeking to convey. It is enough to understand the problems Blackwood had in endeavouring to portray the spiritual dawn of the world, seeking to describe images of perfection with an ill-equipped language. He succeeds remarkably well, but he almost certainly felt he fell short, because the need to return and describe these wonders again continues to drive his writing.

With *The Centaur* finished, Blackwood began to pour out a torrent of stories, the best of which continue to explore this theme of nature in the raw. It was these tales that found their way into *Pan's Garden*, Blackwood's most rewarding collection of stories. Some of the early attempts are strange, as if Blackwood was struggling to recharge his batteries. It may be this very lassitude that inspired "The Transfer" (*Country Life*, December 9, 1911), about a piece of waste ground that sucks the vitality from materialists who come near it. But the core of this story is more significant. Blackwood was considering how Mother Earth might take its revenge upon those who sought to exploit it. It was a theme he returned to in various ways but most significantly in "The Temptation of the Clay," a thirty-thousand word novella which has not been reprinted since *Pan's Garden*. A man returns from worldly travels to inherit a house in the Sussex hills. He loves the house, but things start to change when he takes in a young girl, whose wildness and closeness to Nature allows her to develop an affinity with the house and its grounds. It was as if the personality of the house had accepted the girl more than its owner. This exclusion comes to a head when the owner seeks to exploit the land and sell the clay in the grounds. Acting through the child the house expels the owner.

This power of the Earth over its creatures is central to the stories in *Pan's Garden*. The stories depict exactly what the title suggests: the elemental divinities of the world set loose in their playground. Where man stumbles across them he is either rejected or accepted, but he is never unaffected. This is most effectively described in "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" (*London Magazine*, March 1912), which has been included in other of Blackwood's collections but, because of its length, has never been anthologized. It tells of Mr. Bittacy who becomes entranced by the paintings of trees by his artist friend Mr. Sanderson. Bittacy perceives that Sanderson can almost make the trees come alive and this encourages Bittacy to seek to understand trees more. He lives in a cottage on the edge of the New Forest, and increasingly day by day he finds himself spiritually engulfed by the overwhelming presence of the trees. In time his spirit becomes as one with the trees, and his body becomes a shell. Once again the power of Nature has drained man of his spiritual energies.

At the same time that Blackwood was writing *The Centaur* and these stories, he was also sufficiently inspired to complete another novel, *Julius LeVallon*. So impassioned was he about this novel that he wrote to his friend, W. Graham Robertson, to tell him the news. "I really must tell you that this morning at 11.30 a.m. I finished, after two



years' work on and off, the first half of *Julius LeVallon*.... I don't care two straws if it's never published; the writing of it has been to me pure joy." [6] This was in February 1911. Evidently *Julius LeVallon* had been commenced as early as 1909, not long after *John Silence*. In *Episodes Before Thirty*, when reminiscing about a Hindu student with whom Blackwood shared his studies at Edinburgh University, Blackwood states that "I drew upon a fraction of his personality in two books, *John Silence* and *Julius LeVallon*." [7] Clearly the character of this student had remained with Blackwood after he had written the *John Silence* stories and began to re-emerge as a new personality once Blackwood had settled in Switzerland and sought to explore Nature more deeply.

This emphasizes the acute transition in Blackwood's life, for although *Julius LeVallon* was not published until 1916, Blackwood had been developing it since 1909. This further emphasizes the development his thinking was making at that time away from traditional stories to ones of more cosmic grandeur.

Julius LeVallon must rank amongst Blackwood's most underrated novels. Whilst *The Centaur* is difficult to access and requires much work by the reader, *Julius LeVallon* is a more direct narrative but is still imbued with the same awesome power that enabled Blackwood to write *The Centaur* and many of the stories in *Pan's Garden*.

Perhaps, for this reason, we can see the power and intensity rising in *Julius LeVallon* as the novel progresses. The narrator, Mason, clearly a portrayal of Blackwood, encounters LeVallon first at private school and then at University. It is in Edinburgh that Mason learns that LeVallon is another embodied spirit, one that can remember its past existences. It thus recognizes Mason as a fellow spirit from millennia in the past, and one with whom he had conducted an experiment which had failed. There had been a third in that experiment, a lady whom LeVallon determines to track down so that they can re-enact, and this time perfect, the experiment. The experiment had happened in the Hall of Vacated Bodies where LeVallon (then known as Concerighé) and the woman (called Ziaz) had guarded the bodies while the spirits had travelled "elsewhere and otherwise" to gain learning unavailable to fleshly minds. Mason, then called Silvatela, was one of these initiates. While his body was vacated Concerighé and Ziaz used the empty body as a vessel to summon the elemental forces of Fire and Wind, but Silvatela's spirit returned and the elemental forces remained unhoused. They have clung to the spirit of LeVallon to this day and he must now reconduct the experiment to free them.

The final denouement, when the three of them gather together in the Swiss mountains, is amongst Blackwood's most accomplished writing, with a gradual, sustained climax as the forces of Wind and Fire make their presence known in readiness for the experiment. Without revealing too much of the finale, here is a taste of the moment when the channels open and the elements of Fire and Wind seek their return:

And so "They" came. Yet not outwardly; nor was the terrific impact of their advent known completely to any but himself alone who sought to harbour them now within his little human

organism. Into my heart and soul poured but a fragment of their radiant, rushing presences. About us all some intelligent power as of a living wind brought in its mighty arms that ethereal fire which is not merely living, but is life itself. Material objects wavered, then disappeared, thin as transparent glass that increases light and heat. Walls, ceiling, floor were burned away, yet not consumed; the atoms composing all physical things glowed with a radiant energy they no longer could conceal. The latent heat of inanimate Nature emerged, not rebellious but triumphant. It was a deific manifestation of those natural powers which are the first essentials of human existence—heat and air. We were not alien to Nature, nor was Nature set apart from us; we shared her inexhaustible life, and the glory of the Universe in which she is a fragment. [8]

And so it begins. In *Julius LeVallon*, Blackwood came the closest to describing the primeval power of the Universe. In *The Centaur* he captured the glory of the dawn of the World, but not its power. These two books, written as we have seen, at the same time, shared these two great aspects. Between them they give us the power and the glory.

But not eternity. This remaining feature of Nature escaped Blackwood. Although he strove to include a recognition of aeons of time in these books, it is enough that they describe what they do. Blackwood required one further trip to complete the picture.

This happened when he visited Egypt in January 1912. Suddenly he became aware not just of the vastness of the desert, but of the vastness of time. There, the sand itself stood testament to a civilization that stretched back at least six thousand years, and Blackwood could experience it directly: the desert of eternity.

This overwhelming vastness gripped Blackwood. Back in Switzerland in March 1912 a new story burst out of him: "Sand." Although the manuscript of *Pan's Garden* had already been completed and submitted to Macmillan's, Blackwood urged the inclusion of this new story. "I hope my inclusion of the new story 'Sand' will cause you no inconvenience," he wrote to Frederick Macmillan. "It belongs so absolutely to the book; and though I had begun it long ago I could not finish it faithfully until I had seen and felt the Desert first hand." [9]

"Sand" completes the sequence of *The Centaur* and *Julius LeVallon* and, as we learn from Blackwood's note, was another story which had been around for some while and required the appropriate inspiration of Nature to complete. The story does have a form that reads like an early piece, and has much in common with the other works. Felix Henriot, travelling in Egypt, becomes entranced by the Desert; he even feels the Desert knows of his presence. At Helouan he meets Richard Vance, a businessman from England who shares with his aunt, Lady Statham, a passion for the desert. In their discussion they contemplate the ancient Powers of Egypt, the Powers that may have passed away but their Kas, or spirits, survive, hidden over the millennia by the shifting, smothering sand. It is Lady Statham's design to resurrect those ancient spirits. The problem is that the spirits are so vast that they cannot manifest themselves in a single body but require several in which to merge as a "group-soul." As in *Julius LeVallon*, where LeVallon requires the strength of his two companions to aid him as a channel for the elementals, so in "Sand," Statham requires two others to act as a focus for the energies. As they prepare, the vastness of the Desert becomes aware of them.



Essays on Dark Fantasy

"The Sand was stirring, the Desert was awake. Ready to mate with them in material form, brooded close the Ka of that colossal Entity that once expressed itself through the myriad life of ancient Egypt." [10]

Just as in *Julius LeVallon*, we have a preparation of the ceremony, with the Forces stirring and aware. The conclusion, where the powers of eternity begin to rise from the Desert and take form in the sand, is amongst the most dramatic of all of Blackwood's writing.

"Sand" marks the pinnacle of Blackwood's work. Yet here is a story that has never been reprinted and exists only in this one collection. Together with *The Centaur* and *Julius LeVallon*, "Sand" captures the power, the glory and the immensity of forces that have lasted for eternity and which manifest themselves through the spirit and nature of Mother Earth.

After writing these three astonishing works almost contemporaneously Blackwood must have been spiritually, emotionally and creatively drained. For a long while after Blackwood wrote nothing of equal intensity. Indeed he wallowed in *A Prisoner in Fairyland* (1913), a book that is total self-indulgence and is more a yearning for peace and goodwill in the world than an exploration of its wonder. Gradually some of the old power seeped back, most of it fuelled by his passion for Egypt. "A Desert Episode" (*Country Life*, January 10, 1914) is a precursor to *The Wave* (1916), both seeking to explore the wave of eternity that haunts the Desert, but neither of these works contain inspiration or power, only emotion.

The last impressive works were three novellas collected in *Incredible Adventures* (1914). "A Descent Into Egypt" follows the pattern of "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" by tracing the spiritual absorption of the protagonist's soul into the immensity of Egypt's past. I suspect this story reflects, to a large degree, Blackwood's own longing to be spiritually free. "The Damned" seems to be an exorcism of Blackwood's upbringing by devout evangelists. He envisages a house saturated with evangelical beliefs that can no longer cope with human kind and generates its own hell. "The Regeneration of Lord Ernie" is about a boy who lacks any psychic vitality and needs to unite with primeval fire worshippers to be restored. These stories mark the end of Blackwood's most creative period and betray Blackwood's final yearning to be united with Nature. Thereafter we find Blackwood concentrating more on books for and about children, rarely dabbling with supernatural stories and then often slight pieces. Remarkably, Blackwood would write more stories in number (though not in word-age) after "Sand" than before it, but none of these is its equal. The horrors of the War and other emotional scars left Blackwood bereft of his creative power. It had almost all been written out of him, but the intensity of that power can be seen in three of the most remarkable works of pure supernatural fiction ever written: *The Centaur*, *Julius LeVallon* and "Sand." These are the pinnacles of Blackwood's achievement. They should receive far greater recognition than they have received and should be held at least the equal of if not greater than his earlier and better remembered works.

I cannot conclude without referring to *The Bright Messenger*. This was the book that Blackwood planned at the outset when he wrote *Julius LeVallon*. It is the story of the elemental spirit trapped in a man's body from birth. Blackwood wanted to study this union in human form. Though he had planned the book as early as 1909, he took over ten years to complete it and it was not published until 1921. Compared to *Julius LeVallon* the book is an intense disappointment. It is nothing but an extended character study, with some satirizing of 1920s society, but if one is looking for the power and intensity of *Julius LeVallon*, it will not be found. One cannot rekindle old fires.

1] See *Episodes Before Thirty* (Cassell, 1923), p. 223, where Blackwood states that on his return to London, "It had become my habit and delight to spend my evenings composing yarns on my typewriter, finding more pleasure in this than in any dinner engagement, theatre or concert. Why this suddenly began I cannot say, but I guess at a venture that the accumulated horror of the years in New York was seeking expression."

2] Taken from *Tales of the Supernatural* by Algernon Blackwood (Boydell Press, 1983), p. 19.

3] *The Lost Valley* (Nash, 1910), p. 130.

4] "The Birth of an Idea," *London Mystery Magazine* #6, October/November 1950, p. 104.

5] *The Centaur* (Macmillan, 1911), p. 50.

6] Letter from Blackwood to Robertson, February 13, 1911, unpublished.

7] *Episodes Before Thirty* (Cassell, 1923), p. 53.

8] *Julius LeVallon* (Cassell, 1929 edition), p. 368.

9] Letter, Blackwood to Macmillan, March 30, 1912, held at the British Library. Unpublished.

10] *Pan's Garden* (Macmillan, 1912), p. 284.

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A Slew of Psychic Sleuths

Occult Thrillers: A Genre Old and New

by Patricia Shaw Mathews



An innocent is dead, magic is afoot, and a private investigator prowls today's streets and highways with handgun and athame, tracking down sorcerers and warlocks, serial killers and defrauders of insurance companies. As old as Sheridan Le Fanu, made famous seventy years ago by Dion Fortune, revived as regularly as "mean streets" tough-guy murders, this—the occult thriller—is the latest unclassifiable genre to pop up on the science fiction/fantasy shelves.

A murder mystery in form, horror in subject matter, and dark fantasy in its straightforward acceptance of magic as a science, the occult thriller is not a Gothic, though many of them were marketed as Gothics when Marion Zimmer Bradley started writing them. They are not strictly horror, since the ability to frighten the reader comes second to the mystery aspect, the puzzle. Nor are they the cheerful alternate-universe murder and magic puzzle stories of Heinlein's *Magic, Inc.* or Randall Garrett's famous Lord Darcy series.

Occult thrillers are set in the modern world, where, as in urban fantasy, the good magicians have to be as wary of the ignorant mundanes as the bad magicians are, for fear of being lynched, locked up, or burned at the stake. Instead of timorous governesses in creaking old mansions, they are more likely to feature a sharp, sassy private investigator who has friends with the police and deducts her magical supplies from her income taxes as a business expense.

George R.R. Martin's ambitious, fascinating look at the '60s, *Armageddon Rag*, was an occult thriller. From the murder mystery side of the house we had Kay Nolte Smith's *Mindspell*, among others. A lot of "urban fantasy," particularly Diana Paxson's *Brisingamen*, touches on the genre. Occultists, too, have tried to write it, the latest efforts being Llewellyn Publishing's "psi-fi" thrillers—excerpts from which read like entries in the "Dark & Stormy Night contest," to quote s/f writer Suzette Haden Elgin. But the best of them have always been written by fantasy writers (like Martin) who have some acquaintance with magic.

Marion Zimmer Bradley started it, back in the days when, she says, she was writing anything that would sell. She had published three outright Gothics in the late '60s, followed by *Witch Hill* in 1971 (re-issued in 1990 without a previous copyright), but I remember reading, a semi-Gothic set in darkest rural New England. Unlike many Gothic writers, Bradley showed the rudiments of a sense of humor in this one, playing games with place names that declared "We are now entering Lovecraft Country—beware!" but otherwise *Witch Hill* still followed most of the rigid Gothic conventions.

She followed *Witch Hill* in 1972 with *Dark Satanic*, still somewhat in the conventional Gothic mode, with a "rational explanation" which allowed the readers to dismiss the magic as tricks of the villains if they so desired, but with a good occultist—a "White Magician"—as the hero. Then, in 1984, she published *The Inheritor* which, while retaining a very few Gothic trappings, proved to be a clever and perceptive look at such diverse topics as the classical music scene, neo-Pagans in the '80s, San Francisco realtors, the male-female dynamics of her generation and mine, and a three-way generational conflict, with her Silent Generation heroine caught (as most of us have been) in the middle.

Vicki herself is hot tempered, stubborn (sometimes to the point of idiocy), intelligent, and very flexible when someone hasn't punched her stubborn button. Her ability to come to grips with every aspect of the supernatural that she encounters is really impressive. Henry is definitely impressed by the speed with which she is able to adjust her world view to take in demons and werewolves and such.

Mike is equally hot tempered and intelligent, not quite as stubborn, but also not quite as flexible. He also has a lot more trouble coming to grips with the supernatural aspects of Vicki's cases, so he tends to deal with them by accepting and focusing on one thing and sort of mentally sliding around the bits he has trouble coping with.

Henry is more even tempered than Vicki or Mike, though inclined to be autocratic at times by virtue of his early upbringing, and is certainly adaptable. He would have to be, to be making a living writing bodice rippers and using computers to do it. In some ways he deals with modern technology better than Vicki does. He doesn't have any trouble with the idea of using his answering machine to screen phone calls, but she does. If the phone rings and she's home, she has to answer it.

I liked all three of the main characters and enjoyed the ins and outs of their relationships with one another, and I got a very strong feeling that the author felt that way about them herself. None of them would be the easiest of people to get along with, but making the effort would be worth it.

I was particularly charmed by Mike's refusal to admit that he was jealous of Vicki's relationship (whatever it might be) with Henry and his attempt to justify using police sources to check out Henry's background as doing a favor for a friend, despite the fact that he knows Vicki will want to murder him when she finds out. When he discovers lots of holes in Henry's background, he immediately jumps to the conclusion that this indicates mob connections and that Vicki must be warned. He follows her out of town to the sheep farm of the opera-loving werewolves to warn her about what he thinks he's discovered, which paves the way for one of the funniest confrontation scenes I've ever read.

By the end of the second book Mike is dealing quite well with the concept of werewolves but apart from asking if Henry is one, he's made it perfectly clear that while he knows that Henry isn't what he considers normal, he definitely doesn't want details. However, when he runs up against something that strikes him as very wrong in *Blood Lines*, he doesn't have a problem with discussing it with Vicki. At this point she's the one who can't take the idea of a mummy wandering around Toronto killing janitors and Egyptologists seriously. And Henry's having dreams about seeing the sun and wondering if this indicates a subconscious death wish on his part (since seeing it would be fatal to him) doesn't make life any easier for Vicki.

The four books make up a marvelously entertaining little series, and I'm torn between being pleased that the author finished them at a good stopping point, rather than running the series into the ground as so many authors seem to these days, and sorry that that's all there is. I guess I'll just have to settle for looking forward to her next book and wait to see what she's going to do next. Since, of her other four books, three of them are more in the classic fantasy tradition, rather than being set in the here and now as these four were, I'm not even going to try and guess what her next book will be like. I'll just look forward to it and hope it comes along soon.



WOMEN WHO RUN WITH THE WEREWOLVES

The Evolution of the Postfeminist Gothic Heroine

by Anne Braude

A few of you out there may be able to remember, as I do, the Gothic romances that cluttered the paperback racks back in the sixties, with the standard cover of the brooding, turreted house or castle on the hill from which the beautiful heroine was fleeing in her nightgown, skirts and tresses fluttering in the wind and an expression of unutterable dread distorting her lovely features. I read quite a few of them in those days—they made a nice change from Anglo-Saxon irregular verbs—but I can't remember even one in which the heroine ever actually fled outdoors *en negligée*. One reason they were such a pleasant diversion from academic struggles was that they generally made no demand whatsoever on the intellect, the plotlines not only being as similar as the covers but not having essentially changed from when the genre first flourished, a century and a half ago, in the hands of the Minerva Press authors—the predecessors of the Ace and Lancer Gothics, except that they ran three volumes long and Georgette Heyer's more respectable heroines had to hide them under the mattress because they weren't supposed to read them. But they did. Even women of brilliance read them, though sometimes, like Jane Austen, only to make fun of them (in *Northington Abbey*). Except for Horace Walpole, 'Monk' Lewis, and Mrs. Radcliffe, most of the early nineteenth-century Gothic novelists are forgotten—those who were not anonymous to begin with—and no one reads them for pleasure any more. I have struggled through *The Monk*, *The Castle of Otranto*, and a Radcliffe for my sins (and for academic credit), and it is no mystery why: the prose is turgid, the characters, except for the occasional villain, lifeless, and the situations preposterous. Even for the nineteenth century, this was not inevitable—witness *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, which show what the Gothic setup can become in the hands of genius; but in the second half of the twentieth, at the height of its popularity, the genre collided with a new force in literature and society, feminism, and it has never been quite the same.

Feminism of course was not invented by Betty Friedan, or even by Simone de Beauvoir; but the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, and the subsequent redirection of attention to *The Second Sex*, together with the successors they spawned, brought it into the mainstream so that it penetrated the consciousness of the readers—and eventually the writers—of romantic fiction. The Gothic did not disappear, though it has never regained its dominant place in paperback sales, but like a small comet striking a large planet, it split into fragments which spun off in different directions.

Consider the traditional Gothic: it is essentially a claustrophobic form. It usually takes place within the confines of a castle or great house, often equipped with secret passages and sometimes with dungeons as well, where the heroine even if not held prisoner is confined by lack of a place to go or of funds or skills to provide for herself elsewhere. She is almost always dependent: a poor relation, a governess or companion, or a wife who is legally the property of her husband. She is in love with, sought by, and/or married to a brooding, mysterious man who may be a danger to her, as he has a dark secret to protect and may well be suspected of the murder of a previous wife. Sometimes there is another man courting her who seems more gentle, sunny-natured and safe. She must choose between them and almost invariably finds herself, in the last chapter, alone in some remote spot

with the one she has chosen—who is of course the wrong one. Fortunately Mr. Right arrives in the nick of time to save her. This young lady is not only poor, dependent, and physically weak; she is generally passive and *not* very clever—a cross between Andromeda and Pandora. What she needs is a rescuer and protector—indeed, she needs a keeper.

Does the Gothic romance qualify as Dark Fantasy? The answer is a resounding "Perhaps". The early Gothic authors reveled in supernatural effects: spectral nuns, skeletal beckonings, prophesying skulls and, in 'Monk' Lewis's masterpiece, genuine fiends abound. In Mrs. Radcliffe's books they generally get explained away as clever tricks; in Walpole and his ilk they remain authentic. The modern Gothic occasionally has a genuine ghost or curse, or a character, often but not always the heroine, with some psychic ability; but these are no longer the defining characteristics of the genre. There is some justification, however, for tracing the ancestry of the Gothic hero to the demon lover of the traditional ballad. In *Demon-Lovers and Their Victims in British Fiction* (University Press of Kentucky, 1988), Toni Reed makes this case, citing particularly "The Demon Lover" (Child 243) and "The House Carpenter"; but her emphasis is on doomed heroines and on mainstream works like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and she mentions popular romances only in passing. While delving into the supernatural-ballad roots of the demon-lover archetype, incidentally, she ignores the equally valid tradition of the demon or elf suitor foiled by his intended victim, as in "Riddles Wisely Expounded" and "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight," which could plausibly be regarded as serving as archetype for the Gothic-romance heroine, especially when she chooses the right man before the denouement. In the postfeminist Gothic the supernatural as often as not proves to be fraudulent, except in the case of the psychically gifted heroine and in the case of my main subject, the female occult detective.

What I am calling the postfeminist Gothic, resulting from the impact of popular feminist works in the 1960s and 1970s, has three main sub-divisions. First is the traditional Gothic, still alive and well in the hands of such bankable authors as Phyllis Whitney and Victoria Holt, with the mostly helpless and often wimpish heroine emerging in the end with Mr. Right's ring on her finger (or the modern equivalent). More popular, however, is what might be termed the "rationalized Gothic", in which the heroine is trapped and/or wimpish by force of circumstance, and in the course of the book proves to be strong and smart. Often her choice of suitor is based on whether or not the man is prepared to accept her as a partner, perhaps even as an equal, rather than as a waif in need of protection or an ideal to be placed on a pedestal. In novels set in the nineteenth century the sources of oppression are usually social and economic: a young heiress is married off with little to say in the matter or no chance to really get to know her suitor, as in Barbara Michaels' *Greygallows*; or an impoverished orphan is thrown upon the world with her way to make, as in the same author's *The Wizard's Daughter*, in which the young heroine is so naive that she thinks she has been hired to sing in a theatre, when she is actually performing in the cabaret of a brothel. Both heroines wind up with young men who at first perceive them as traditional Gothic-heroine types and regard them with scorn, only falling in love when

the girls display the qualities of feistiness and intelligence that indicate that they are, or are becoming, strong women.

In a Gothic with a contemporary setting, the heroine had better have a pretty good reason for not being independent. The heroine of Mary Stewart's *Nine Coaches Waiting* actually is a governess—one of the last of a dying breed—and desperately needs her job; she therefore pretends to be less than she is: as the teacher of an aristocratic French child, supposed to speak English exclusively, she conceals the fact that she is half French and completely bilingual. When she finds that she is supposed to be the scapegoat in a plot to kill her charge, she escapes with him and they flee across the French countryside, not knowing who is friend or foe. She even treats the hero as an enemy, since she can't be sure he's innocent and won't risk the boy's life, though she would trust him with her own—a decision for which he ultimately respects her. The protagonist of Michaels' *House of Many Shadows* is convalescing after a long illness; unable to support herself, she accepts her wealthy cousin's offer to live in an old house she has inherited and sort out its contents. Very often in Michaels and the early Mary Stewart, the best exemplars of this type, the heroine is not helpless or dependent at all but has put herself into the Gothic situation deliberately to seek a lost treasure concealed in the house (Elizabeth Peters' *Borrower of the Night*), to help a relative or friend (*The Crying Child*, or to solve a mystery (*Vanish with the Rose*). All the above are Michaels; in her *Ammie, Come Home*, in which the role of heroine is divided between Ruth, a fortyish widow, and her beautiful young niece Sara, Ruth has been living happily in an old house in Georgetown, with a successful government career and no sign of supernatural menace, for several years. Only when Sara comes to live with her, and they become involved in relationships which mirror events during the Revolutionary War, do the sinister manifestations begin. Both women show great courage, loyalty, and determination in the course of the subsequent terrors. Michaels' most recent, *Houses of Stone*, has an interesting triple play: a young literary scholar finds herself in a Gothic situation while researching the life of a mysterious nineteenth-century female Gothic author and discovers that the author herself was trapped in a Gothic predicament.

The second variant of the postfeminist Gothic turns the genre on its head: it is the "novel of romantic suspense," so denominated on the dust jacket, which is an outdoor action thriller owing more to Buchan than to the Brontës, generally in an exotic setting, in which the heroine is strong, clever, and resourceful from the beginning, an equal partner with the hero and often quite capable of rescuing him at need. Mary Stewart made her name with this genre—one might say she made the genre—before she turned to Arthurian fiction. *Nine Coaches Waiting*, cited above, has a foot in each of these variants. Elizabeth Peters, the alter ego of Barbara Michaels, is the primary current practitioner of this type; her heroines are often professional career women in their own right, usually involved in some form of history or archaeology; in *Borrower of the Night*, the first of a series featuring art historian Vicky Bliss, the heroine has a choice of suitors but turns them down flat for a tubby German professor resembling Peter Lorre, who offers her not deathless devotion but a good museum job with prospects for advancement. Peters has also written several novels featuring Jacqueline Kirby, fortyish college librarian turned bestselling romance novelist, who does wind up with a man—a new one in each book. It is often difficult to distinguish a good romantic-suspense novel from a straight mystery story with a female protagonist when the setting is contemporary and the heroine is placed in jeopardy—where would one put Mary Higgins Clark, for instance? A particularly interesting variant is practiced by Madeleine Brent, whose heroines have wildly unconventional childhoods subsequent to which they find themselves in typical Gothic situations to which they are more than equal; their problem is often trying to fit into conventional moneyed British society and to conform to its conventions (which create the typical Gothic hero-

ine). Cadi in *Tregaron's Daughter* has been brought up in a small Cornish village by her fisherman father. After his death a wealthy Englishman whose life she had saved takes her into his family; later she proves to be heiress, through her mysterious Italian grandmother, to a fortune and title in Venice. Lucy, the heroine of *Moonraker's Bride*, has spent most of her young life virtually running a tiny English mission in China; she is more Chinese than English in her attitude to life and shocks the stuffy English family who give her a home. Later she returns to China in the midst of the Boxer Rebellion, entrusted by the British government with a secret mission to the foreigners trapped in the British Legation in Peking. Chantal in *Stranger at Wildings* actually ran away to join the circus; when the story begins, she is a successful acrobat planning to study medicine when she can no longer fit into the Flying Gallettis' trapeze act. At the climax of the book, she takes part in a pitched battle between the circus and enraged peasants roused against them by a sinister Hungarian baron with his own motives for desiring her death. Wildest of all are the lives of Jani in *Merlin's Keep*, the daughter of a murdered maharani and her British officer husband, raised in a remote Himalayan village; and Meg, the heroine of *Golden Urchin*, child of an aristocratic Irish beauty and a titled English statesman. Kidnapped as an infant, she is abandoned in the Australian outback, where she is found and raised by a band of aborigines. As a teenager she is cast out and raised subsequently by an English couple; she winds up spending a year in an exclusive Swiss finishing school before returning to England and finding out her true identity. Late in the book she is a passenger in a yacht shipwrecked on Africa's Skeleton Coast, where only her aborigine foraging skills enable the party to survive. "Madeline Brent," it was recently revealed, is a pseudonym of the same author who, as "Peter O'Donnell" writes a series of thrillers featuring Modesty Blaise, a precursor of Emma Peel.

All these authors introduce the supernatural element in some way. In Mary Stewart it occurs in some of the later books: the heroines of *Touch Not the Cat* and *Thornhold* have psychic gifts. The supernatural is an element in most of the Barbara Michaels books, though quite often it is a fraud, to be detected and Radcliffed away at the end; it is much rarer in the Elizabeth Peters books, although *Devil-May-Care* turns on a genuine pact with the Devil made by the ancestors of some of the characters. Cadi Tregaron has valid premonitions of disaster; the fortune-teller in Chantal's circus has genuine second sight when she chooses to display it; and Meg in *Golden Urchin* never completely shakes off the magical beliefs she was taught by the aborigines, and some of her abilities, such as her extraordinarily keen (by European standards) sense of smell, appear supernatural to other characters. There is genuine magic in *Merlin's Keep*, though the title has nothing to do with it; it refers to a house named after the hawk, not the wizard. A pun may be intended although the only wizard to live there is the villain, Vernon Quayle. He has great mystical powers which he uses for evil—he resembles some of Charles Williams' villains—and powers of clairvoyance and prophecy are displayed by Tibetan lamas (one predicts the Chinese invasion). The hero is blind as the result of a voodoo curse and is magically cured by Quayle for purposes of his own. Quayle has married Eleanor, the Englishwoman who has adopted Jani as a younger sister, because she possesses mediumistic gifts which he wishes to exploit. Jani can communicate psychically with animals: at the climax of the story, when hero, heroine, and villain are all back in Tibet, Quayle is strangling Jani when she calls for help to a snow leopard, which attacks and kills him partly in response to her and partly because it is possessed by the spirit of the hero's father, who has died at the same instant back in England. *Merlin's Keep* is the most successful example I know of the incorporation of the fantasy element into the romantic suspense novel outside the fantasy genre itself. Another fine example, published since this essay was originally written, is *The Fire Rose* by Mercedes Lackey, whose novels of occult detection are discussed below.

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The most interesting permutation, and my main topic in this essay, is the novel of occult detection in which the heroine occupies what is traditionally the hero's role: she takes the lead in battling a supernatural force of evil. The heroine as a series protagonist in the Gothic type of fiction is a notable innovation, since the traditional plot ends with her marriage, after which her life is presumed to be of no further interest. There have of course been female series protagonists in detective fiction for a long time in both novels and short stories, though they are usually older women unsuitable by the standards of the time for romantic involvements: Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple, Patricia Wentworth's Miss Maud Silver (a *retired* governess!), and more recently Miss Emily Seeton, invented by the late Heron Carvic and carried on since his death by two different authors, are perhaps the best-known examples. Christie's Tommy and Tuppence Beresford and Dashiell Hammett's Nick and Nora Charles (the latter more in the films than in the book) proved that marriage, romance, and detection could be combined; and Dorothy L. Sayers brought mystery novelist Harriet Vane into her books as a collaborator in crime-solving as well as a love interest for Lord Peter Wimsey. In recent books Dorothy Gilman's Mrs. Pollifax showed that a no-longer-youthful heroine could be a romantic interest as well as a series protagonist. But the most remarkable feature of the female occult detective, in the Gothic-romance context, is that winding up with Mr. Right is not the object of the exercise; she functions just like the male hero in the tale of occult detection. If she has a lover, the relationship is more complex than the traditional one and may involve matters that need to be worked out in the course of more than one book. In fact, two of the four heroines I discuss below are romantically involved with vampires—benign ones, to be sure—and in both instances the involvement begins with a shared pursuit of the evil antagonist and only later becomes romantic or sexual.

Now that I've said all this, I must immediately contradict myself; the first heroine I will deal with, Florence Stevenson's Kitty Telefair, does not fit the model; she is a transitional figure who is still a Gothic wimp in detective's clothing. I am characterizing the heroines of two later writers, both from the science fiction/fantasy field rather than the romance genre—Mercedes Lackey's Diana Tregarde and Jennifer Taldeer, and Tanya Huff's Vicki Nelson.

Florence Stevenson is the author of a number of traditional Gothics of varying quality under her own and other names, of fairly good Regencies as "Zabrina Faire" and of two delightful Gothic parodies, *The Curse of the Concullens* (featuring a patriotic Irish vampire who only sucks English blood) and *Ophelia* (in which a cat which has inherited a fortune from her late owner is thrown down a well by the old lady's wicked nephew; it proves to be a wishing well and she comes back as a beautiful young woman to wreak revenge). I'm not sure how many books there are in the Kitty Telefair series, as all I've seen are three borrowed from a friend; they are numbers three, five, and six, and there must be at least one more since the heroine still hasn't managed to get married at the end of the sixth volume. On the one hand, Kitty is a forerunner of the true occult detective: she is a descendent of an occult clan tracing its lineage back to Atlantis, she possesses psychic abilities and some skill in using them, and she feels a moral obligation to aid friends menaced by supernatural evil. On the other hand, she is still predominantly the typical Gothic heroine: her most conspicuous quality is her stunning beauty; she is desperate to get married, though she is modern enough to be living with her lover, a descendent of another occult clan who is her co-host on a TV series called THE WITCHING HOUR and who not only prefers not to use his powers (except to mesmerize traffic cops to avoid speeding tickets) but also wants Kitty to quit getting involved in confronting evil as well; she makes a lot of mistakes, such as ignoring premonitions and nagging doubts and going into situations insufficiently prepared; and she more often than not has to be rescued by a male, either her lover

Colly or her father Rupert, a powerful adept. These books date from the early seventies, when the impact of feminism was just beginning to be felt by popular fiction. I borrowed them from Margaret Hildebrand early in our acquaintance, ten or fifteen years ago, and found them moderately enjoyable as pulp fiction goes. Upon rereading them for this essay, however, I found poor Kitty almost unbearably pathetic when compared with Lackey's and Huff's strong heroines, despite her best efforts. In *Altar of Evil* (#3) there is a highly improbable curse which turns a predatory, self-absorbed blonde beauty, who has stolen her cousin's wealthy boyfriend, into a Gorgon; both the explanation of the magic and the way the subsequent events are dealt with by local police and public defy rationality. In *The Sorcerer of the Castle* (#5), Kitty is seduced by a charming vampire/sorcerer/Satanist priest with the greatest of ease after breaking up with Colly; she manages to escape but requires rescue by him and others, who also assist in destroying the vampire. Of particular interest is Colly's explanation of his attraction to another beautiful redhead, the cause of their breakup:

"You can be so damned intimidating.... You're so self-sufficient.

Hell, no man likes to be dependent.... Every time we've been in trouble, you've had all the answers." (p. 110)

This is not only classic backlash against feminine strength, it is wildly inaccurate: Kitty is far from self-sufficient, she depends on him rather than the reverse, and she may have all the answers, but some of them prove to be the wrong ones. This is particularly true in *The Silent Watcher* (#6), involving an evil priestess of the rites of ancient Colchis, descended from Medea, who is able to possess the body of a tiger, in which form she requires a human sacrifice every October 31. She has killed her lover, who poses as the tiger's trainer, during a performance on Kitty's TV show, and taken as a replacement a rich and selfish playboy, the fiancé of a friend of Kitty's. In order to make it possible to kill her, Kitty and her occult kin summon up the ghost of the murdered lover to possess the body of the new one, since only her lover can kill her; they completely overlook fairly obvious indications by the damned spirit that he intends to stay in the body and to side with the sorceress he still desires. Kitty and her allies succeed in the end, but more by good luck than good management. Meanwhile, the major effort of destroying the Colchian cult back in Soviet Georgia has been accomplished by her father, who wanted to keep her out of the entire business. (He has also informed her, when she was his student, that her powers will never equal his in her present incarnation.)

The Kitty Telefair books are replete with Gothic trappings and filled with authentic elements of dark fantasy: curses, vampires and other evil supernatural enemies, psi powers, reincarnation, ancient Atlantean rituals, and the like. They also contain a few attempts at rationalization, such as a peculiar viral theory of curses and indications that the ancient gods were actually powerful extraterrestrials. Kitty Telefair, on the whole, is a slightly rationalized Gothic heroine in New Age trappings. In each of the books I have seen, she makes a good start as an occult detective but winds up needing not only the assistance of others—something that may befall any detective, mundane or arcane—but rescue by a stronger male figure: she is a would-be deliverer who winds up as yet another damsel in distress.

The true female occult detective, as created by Mercedes Lackey and Tanya Huff, is not infallible or invulnerable; but she is highly skilled, carefully trained, an experienced professional, and a strong character who may need allies but is always in charge in her own particularly area of expertise. The narrative technique in these books is also different: in the traditional Gothic, as in the Kitty Telefair books, the story is told by the heroine in the first person, restricting the perspective to her own experiences and limiting the depiction of how she appears to others. Both Lackey and Huff use the multiple-point-of-view technique, narrating events not only from the viewpoint of the heroine but also from those of her allies, of a large cast of minor characters (many of whom, like supernumerary Star Trek crewpersons,

appear only to suffer assorted agonizing deaths), and even of the antagonist and his or her coterie. This technique, once considered a literary flaw, has become respectable both from the practice of novelists like Mary Higgins Clark and from its use in film and television scripts. It is especially effective because these books use the inductive method of plot development, also borrowed from mystery fiction, in which a large number of widely scattered incidents are gradually brought together to reveal the whole of the plot, to the reader (who has had access to events and viewpoints not revealed to the detective) first, and eventually to the protagonist. A second element, which I have mentioned before, is that a love interest for the heroine may be present but is not essential. When she is involved with someone, it is upon terms very different from those between the traditional Gothic heroine and her hero, who rescues and then marries her, or even those between Kitty and her Colly, who feels intimidated by her strength even though he often has to act as her rescuer and wants her to assume a more passive role. We learn of two romantic involvements in the life of Diana Tregarde, the protagonist of Mercedes Lackey's *Burning Water*, *Children of the Night*, and *Jinx High*. In the first book we know that she has someone but he is offstage, mentioned in passing. In *Children of the Night*, set some years earlier than *Burning Water*, we meet rock musician Dave Kendall, her lover when they were in college, who broke up with her because she refused to give up her occult work and to devote herself to him and to his career. Later we meet André LeBrel, a two-hundred-year old French vampire pursuing the same evil psychic vampire that she is after, who becomes first her colleague, friend, and helper and eventually her lover. In *Jinx High*, set shortly after *Burning Water*, he is still in her life but once again offstage. Her more recent novel, *Sacred Ground*, possibly the first of another series, features Osage-Cherokee private detective Jennifer Taldeer, who as Kestrel-Hunts-Alone is a shaman-in-training apprenticed to her grandfather Mooncrow. In the course of the book she becomes involved with her first lover, Indian activist David Spotted Horse, whom she left in the first place because he was a male chauvinist. He proves to be the kind of MCP who can be reformed if hit over the head hard enough, however, and they get together again on a more equal basis. Here David is reluctant to make advances to her because he feels so uncomfortable about his earlier attitude; her whole family, including the shaman grandfather, are engaged in heavy-handed matchmaking; and she winds up having to seduce him. Their relationship has also been complicated by the fact that she has had to rescue him from malevolent Osage spirits. Near the climax of the book, when Jennie sets off alone to entrap a couple of professional hit men who have already killed her once (of which more later), David's sendoff is almost an exact reversal of Colly's words to Kitty quoted above:

"I'd like to keep you wrapped up safe—but you're Kestrel, and you have to fly and hunt. You wouldn't be Kestrel if you didn't do that. You wouldn't be Jennie if you didn't do your job.

Break a leg," he said and went back to Mooncrow's car. (p. 343)

Tanya Huff's Vicki Nelson, formerly an ace detective with the Toronto homicide squad, was forced into retirement by retinitis pigmentosa and is now a private investigator. She has a complex relationship with her ex-partner Mike Celluci: they are friends and colleagues but professional rivals, especially now that Vicki is a civilian, and they are off-and-on-again lovers. Mike has mixed feelings about her strength and independence: he feels threatened in exactly the same way that he would if she were another *male* cop, and he wants to beat her to the solution in the same way that Inspector Lestrade wanted to beat Sherlock Holmes. In rare moments of protectiveness, he is concerned because of her visual handicap and because she no longer has the backup that comes with being a member of the police force, not because he sees her as inherently weak. The vampire Henry Fitzroy is also attracted by her strength—in flashbacks we see that ever since his mortal days as a bastard son of Henry VIII, he has admired

independent women—and in his rivalry with Mike over her, Vicki is always in charge, more referee than trophy.

Like Kitty Telefair, Diana Tregarde is of occult descent and has supernormal powers; unlike her, Di is very, very good at what she does. She is a family-tradition white witch, taught by her grandmother, and a sorceress trained in ceremonial magic as well. In addition, she is a Guardian, one pledged to use her powers to protect the innocent and to battle supernatural evil whenever the need arises. As a benefit of her Guardianship, supernatural aid is available when she is overmatched—but she can't be sure in just what circumstances it will kick in, so she can't rely on it. Her professional qualifications also include a black belt in karate and expert marksmanship with a pistol. She earns her living writing romance novels, a convenient profession with flexible hours and a good excuse to travel. In college, she gathered about her a group of fellow students with psychic gifts, some of whom she met when she had to rescue them from difficulties said gifts created, to form what they called the Spook Squad, to go after paranormal threats and fake-psychic scams alike. In *Burning Water*, she has been summoned to Dallas by former Squad member Mark Valdez, now a homicide detective. He suspects that a series of increasingly ghastly mutilation murders has occult overtones and has arranged for his department to hire Di as a forensic consultant on occult crime. What the reader already knows is that behind the killings is a friend of Mark's who has become the avatar of an ancient Aztec god who possessed him during a trip to Mexico; and the killings are intended to raise power to bring the god back into the world and restore the Aztec empire. (One serious flaw in the book is that although Diana's inability to spot this is accounted for by her getting trapped by a supernatural mindblock during a psychic search, no one else in the area seems to be able to make the connection between corpses with the hearts ripped from their living bodies and Aztec religious rites.) Di attaches herself to the forensic team to investigate crime scenes; at other times she and Mark investigate suspects from the local occult underground and question psychic types involved in benign activities. She also protects potential victims and fends off magical attack by her enemy's servants. Lackey has written over a dozen fantasy novels set in a fictive universe containing magic, and her approach to it is technical, resembling at times the forensic sorcery in Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories. Magical combats are won by the best prepared participant, not necessarily by the most virtuous, although the short-sighted selfishness characteristic of evil may work in favor of its foes. We learn a lot in these books about the techniques of shielding, magical combat, psi investigation, and the like. Mark is not just a spear-carrying extra or a marveling Watson; he is a professional whose abilities are as necessary to the success of the investigation as Diana's. In the end, however, it is his natural mediumship, the same gift that originally got him in trouble and brought her to his rescue back in college, that plays the crucial role: he serves as a host for Quetzalcoatl, the divine antagonist of Tezcatlipoca (*Burning Water*), forcing him to free the intended final sacrifice, the wife of the avatar, with whom Mark is in love.

Children of the Night takes us back a decade or so, to the era of Watergate. Diana is living in New York City and establishing herself as a romance novelist. Also trying to make it in the Big Apple is Dave Kendall, her former lover, a struggling rock musician who as a result of a really bad drug trip is turned into a psychic vampire, along with the rest of his band. At first they live on the high of good vibes from their audience; but under the influence of a predatory, experienced psi-vamp and a Japanese soul-eater called a *gaki*, the others—and even a very reluctant Dave—get hooked on pain and fear. Di had already crossed swords with Jeffries, the master psivamp, when she offered her protection to a young Gypsy he was pursuing; after the boy is killed trying to reach her, she meets the vampire André, who protects the Gypsy tribe and is fed by them in return. She is also on the trail of the *gaki*, one of whose victims was the former lover of Keith, lover of her

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friend the young dancer Lenny. When she and Dave meet again, he asks help which she is unable to give, as his condition is now irreversible; he winds up sacrificing his own life in the final conflict with the other vampires.

As in many fantasies in which good confronts evil, the forces of light have vulnerabilities not shared by those of darkness, here, however, that does not mean that they are necessarily weaker. Lenny and Keith, with minimal psychic aptitudes, not only help with the legwork but show up with switchblades and baseball bats to battle vampires. André is caught by the enemy and almost killed by sunlight; it is in order to save him that Di offers him blood for the first time. Even her agent Morrie, hearing that she has a vampire in her living room, sends to the nearest deli for garlic bagels, garlic chicken soup, and assorted other garlicky delicacies. Diana herself, after the original fiasco with Dave when he broke up with her because of her psychic activities, had tried to give up her Guardianship, only to discover that this made her prime prey; she was almost killed in a supernatural ambush, which has left her subject to panic attacks that threaten her ability to function in battle. She is cured by André, who puts her through desensitization therapy until the panic no longer overwhelms her. The final battle, which she could not have won without the help of her allies and Dave, puts her in the hospital. The point is that she does have these allies, because she is the kind of person who makes friends and attracts loyalty and trust. And nobody complains that she is too strong, or not feminine enough; quite the contrary. Especially not André, when he suggests a more lasting relationship and she has reservations:

"André—I can't stop being a Guardian. I might not make it through this next one—or the one after that—or the one after that. I don't want to ask you to get involved with me when you could end up hurt. And I don't mean just physically."

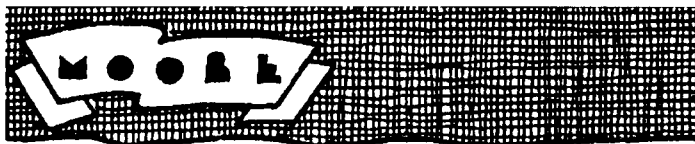
He smiled....

"How very odd....How very odd. That was *precisely* what I was going to say to you!" (p. 245)

In the third volume of the series, *Jinx High*, Diana is once again called upon by a former Spook Squad member, Larry Kestrel, now a successful architect in the Tulsa area; his teenaged son Deke is being targeted by some malign force. The reader soon learns that it is a 300-year-old sorceress who has discovered the secret of exchanging bodies with her own blood descendants; she is to all intents and purposes head cheerleader Fay Harper, who has sensed Deke's natural reservoir of psychic power and chosen him as her next spouse and victim. Di is staying with the Kestrels ostensibly as a visiting lecturer to the Jenks High School creative writing students. There is as much in this book about the complexities of teenaged romance, and the techniques and economics of the writing of popular fiction, as there is about occult combat; this added dimension makes *Jinx High* a very good book indeed. There are excellent touches of humor: Diana, chaperoning the senior prom, banging her head against the wall upon learning that the boys think she looks just like Stevie Nicks; Fay attempting to conjure evil spirits into a rock band's guitars and winding up with two demons and one mellowed-out discarnate hippie; Di and Larry calling Deke in to explain to him about the reality of psychic threat, while he is sure they're trying to tell him they're in love and his parents are divorcing; and the conclusion, after Di, Larry, and Mark Valdez have defeated Fay and her demonic allies and rescued Deke, his best friend Alan, and Monica, the girl they have been fighting over like two dogs with a bone: while the boys are still arguing over whose girl she is, she and Diana take off for home and leave Deke and Alan to walk back. In this book Diana is pretty much equal to every physical and occult challenge she encounters and needs allies primarily because there's simply too much for one person to handle, though she never does figure out that Fay is an ancient sorceress inhabiting a teenaged body; and in the end Fay's mother, in a mental hospital for believing that she is the teenaged daughter and her mother has stolen her body, is cured and

out—and, in the words of an observer, Fay all over again. Yes, indeed.

Sacred Ground is also set in the Tulsa area, but there is no direct connection with the Diana Tregarde series. Jennie Taldeer is a moderately successful private investigator: she is very good at what she does, but she is a one-woman operation, handicapped by discrimination both as a woman and as a Native American. As Kestrel-Hunts-Along, a shaman being trained by her grandfather Mooncrow, she is blocked from moving on to pipebearer, the next stage of initiation, by her insistence on being in control (though she is not aware that this is why). She is more successful in her sideline—she is too serious about it to call it a hobby—of retrieving stolen Indian remains, artifacts, and sacred objects and returning them to their proper custodians. When a bulldozer which has just turned up Indian remains on a local construction site is destroyed by a bomb, she is the natural person to call. The insurance company that carries the contractor's coverage hires her to discover if he got it under false pretenses by concealing threats from Indian activists and militant conservationists. Actually, the fraud is of a different nature; the proposed shopping mall is an economic disaster, so contractor Rod Calligan, working with a crook inside the insurance company, not only has been skimming funds but has salted the excavation with stolen grave goods and bombed the bulldozer himself. The relics have been stolen from the Taldeer ancestral burial ground and included those of her ancestor Watches-Over-The-Land, one of the greatest of the Osage shamans, whose prophetic visions, dealing as they did with our own time, were dismissed by the Osage of his own day. He therefore instructed his descendants to practice a new kind of magic, one that would not lose its force when the traditional Indian way of life passed away but would enable them to survive and flourish, like the coyote and the sparrowhawk, in the world the white men made. Accordingly Mooncrow is teaching Kestrel Warrior's Medicine as well as the healing rituals and training her in the secrets of all the Osage clans, and of other tribes as well if the knowledge is useful. In his own time, Watches-Over-The-Land had defeated a powerful Evil One and bound him to the earth near his own grave; it is his loosed spirit, and his medicine bag, that were found by Calligan and are gradually taking him over. Jennie's investigation of the Indian-activist clue leads her to her ex-lover David Spotted Horse, who despite his aggressive ethnicity puts no stock in the magical beliefs of his people and sees Jennie as a tool of the white exploiters. Meanwhile the Osage Little People, malevolent earthbound spirits who died without honor or did not receive a proper burial, are aroused by the sacrilege and have targeted anyone not protected, including David when he sneaks onto the site to investigate and, since Calligan is protected by the Evil One, his helpless wife and children. The plot is a lively, almost too complicated mix of criminal chicanery, supernatural menace and magical combat, detection, and developing relationships between Jennie and David and Jennie and Toni Calligan, whom she rescues from both the Little People and her abusive husband. Bludgeoned and drowned in a freezing river by Calligan's hit men, Jennie has an out-of-body experience with Eagle, chief medicine animal of the Osage; after seeing what the result of her death would be—the triumph of the Evil One and the devastation of the environment—she decides to return to life and to the struggle, incidentally letting go of her obsession with being in control and coming into her full power as a shaman. In the finish, Jennie engages in a car chase with pursuing killers; later David and Calligan fight to the death while simultaneously, in the spirit world, Kestrel joins with Mooncrow and Watches-Over-The-Land in a shapeshifting duel with the Evil One. Her relationship with David begins in outright antagonism, but after his confrontation with the Little People and rescue by Kestrel, he and his preconceptions are thoroughly shaken up. At this point he is the male equivalent of the damsel in distress. (I think we are going to need a term for this in the '90s—perhaps "hunk at hazard"?) He humbles himself to follow her lead and assist her with the routine work of the investigation; and under Mooncrow's tutelage



he undertakes medicine training. David and Jennie prove to be a good team, as he has connections in the Native American political-activist network and paralegal skills that she needs. He winds up as not only her lover but her assistant, studying for his own P.I. license. And he accepts her as an independent woman with gifts and strengths that he lacks.

Lackey's planned future books about Diana Tregarde are currently on hold while she works on her other series, and given her trilogy track record there ought to be at least two more Jennie Taldeer books; but what she has produced so far has set a standard for the female occult detective that is a very high mark for any possible successor to aim at. Since this article was first written, Lackey has produced *The Fire Rose*, a fantasy novel that is also an innovative gothic, though its antecedents are "Beauty and the Beast" and *The Phantom of the Opera*, with a touch of "Bluebeard," rather than Mrs. Radcliffe or the Brontës.

Rosalind Hawkins is a scholar's daughter and a scholar herself, a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago. But when her father dies leaving nothing but debts, her prospects, despite her intellectual attainments, are as bleak as those of any well-bred young woman of the upper classes in the first decade of the twentieth century without the least training in how to earn her own living. By what seems to be a miraculous coincidence, her faculty advisor has received a request tailored to her qualifications: a reclusive San Francisco rail baron wants a governess to teach his invalid son and intellectually gifted daughter and is willing to pay well for the right scholar.

Rosalind accepts and sets off for California by rail, despite misgivings that the offer is too good to be true. She is absolutely right. Jason Cameron is a childless bachelor. And while he is indeed a railroad tycoon, he is first of all a magician: a firemaster who commands salamanders. In a fit of hubristic experimentation, he has attempted a transformation completely outside his sphere of expertise—the loup-garou spell to take on wolf shape—and gotten himself stuck halfway through. Served only by the salamanders and his secretary/apprentice Paul du Mond, he is physically incapable of doing the research necessary to find a means of reversing the spell. He has cold-bloodedly chosen Rose from a list of possibles searched out by the salamanders; she has the necessary command of ancient and medieval languages and, being female and destitute, will presumably be biddable and unquestioning in return for what he offers: princely accommodations, a generous wage, and, when he no longer needs her, a place at some university where she can complete her doctorate. Cameron is a cold man despite his firemastery: he lost his mother in the great Chicago fire when he was two and he was abandoned a couple of years later, when he became ill, by his drunkard father. Fortunately he was left on the doorstep of Chicago's newly arrived firemaster, in need of an apprentice and able to recognize young Jason's magickal nature. He took the boy in and raised and educated him with care, omitting only permission to play and any trace of affection, teaching him to think of non-magickal humans as sheep to be cared for by magician shepherds—and sheared by them at need. This pattern has guided all his relationships since, even with his apprentice, Paul, whom he now regrets taking on and no longer trusts, finding him too lazy for magickal discipline, always looking for short cuts, and morally depraved. (Paul's idea of recreation, pursued among San Francisco's less reputable brothels, do not bear repeating; and unknown to Jason, he has formed an alliance with Simon Beltaire, rival firemaster and Jason's bitter enemy.)

But Cameron has failed to take into account that in hiring a female scholar, he has hired a woman with a brain who knows how to use it. Rose has always been intellectually assertive in the classroom but an outwardly conventional young woman bound by the manners of her class, which she shakes loose from in coping with her changed circumstances. This new independence enables her to confront a traveling salesman who tries to molest her on the train, leaving her with a fierce

sense of independence even though she is shaking in her boots. She is not seriously disconcerted to learn that her job is to be not tutoring gifted children but reading obscure treatises through a speaking tube to an employer whom she is never to set eyes upon. She quite enjoys being waited on hand and foot by invisible servants and having a lavish new wardrobe provided. And unlike almost every heroine in gothic fiction, she does not try to invade her employer's privacy or explore behind locked doors. Moreover, she has the sense to mistrust Paul on sight, despite his charm, good looks, and apparent chivalry towards her.

Cameron accepts Rose to be a passive transmitter of information from book to audience, rather like the poet Milton's daughters reading aloud to him in languages they have been taught to decipher but not to comprehend, while he uses magickal means to take notes. But Rose understands what she reads. She doesn't stop with the designated passages but continues studying on her own. And she asks questions. Before long she is not only asking intelligent questions about the reality of magick but suggesting that he would be better served if their relationship was less that of lord and serf and more one of lord and sworn knight. The salamanders take a liking to her, observing that she has a magickal nature sufficient to qualify her for mastery of the fire-element of air. Cameron's prized tool is becoming a person to him.

Disaster strikes when Cameron attempts a spell of reversal while Rose is away from his Pacifica mansion on a visit to San Francisco. She returns only to be summoned by his favorite salamander to a fire-master on the brink of death. By the time she has tended and revived him, coercing him into taking herbal medicines she has been given for him by his Chinese friend the local earthmaster, she is far beyond being disconcerted by either his appearance or his art. Soon she is his colleague and his apprentice, learning air mastery. Ironically, Cameron, cold and manipulative with people, has bound his salamanders to him in a pact of friendship rather than coercion, as his own master advised; Rose deals with her Sylphs in a similar manner.

The Fire Rose is mainly a fast-paced and suspenseful fantasy novel, like Lackey's other works, except for its setting, dealing with the study and practice of magick, the interplay of vivid characters, and confrontations and exciting events climaxing with the great San Francisco earthquake. It qualifies for discussion here because of the traditional gothic situation, even though it is more closely related to fairy-tale analogues than to the gothic tradition. It is also a romance, handled more realistically in terms of character than is usual. Cameron's attraction to Rose growing from exploitation through friendship and collegiality into love, is convincing in light of the way his personality has been established; and Rose's excellent brain does not turn to mush when she comes to care for him, nor does she become passive and compliant. The ending does not follow fairy-tale conventions, since they marry even though Jason has not succeeded in restoring his human form. They are even considering traveling to the far East and the South Sea Islands where, according to their earthmaster friend Master Pao, he would be considered just another funny-looking "foreign devil" by the natives. His exterior does not matter to Rose, because "the beast has a truly human heart. And in the end, that was all that mattered." (p. 433) (But what of the children? wonders this reader.)

Vicki 'Victory' Nelson, heroine of Tanya Huff's series *Blood Price*, *Blood Trail*, *Blood Lines*, and *Blood Pact*, has no occult powers at all; she is an extraordinarily strong and capable Toronto homicide detective turned private investigator after deteriorating vision forced her retirement from active duty. At the outset of *Blood Price*, in a deserted subway station, she witnesses the first of a series of horrendous mutilation murders which also turn out to be impossible crimes, because no human perpetrator could have committed them unseen. The police are baffled and the tabloid press is whipping up a frenzy of fear with "Vampire Stalks City!" headlines. One who takes this seriously is the

first victim's girlfriend, who hires Vicki to find the killer, to the annoyance of her ex-partner, friend, and lover Mike Celluci, who is in charge of the case. He is concerned at her involvement because of her disability, because she is now an outsider with no backup—and because he fears that she may beat him to the solution. Meanwhile, a real vampire, Henry Fitzroy, is also concerned. He knows he's not responsible but fears that a newly created vampire who has not yet learned to control its appetites might be the killer who has invaded his territory. Like Lackey's André LeBrel, Henry lives by sipping from donors, though his are usually unaware of what is happening and of his nature; they are not harmed by the experience but rather recompensed by the intense sexual ecstasy that is the human share of the experience. Henry was born the illegitimate son of Henry VIII, the Duke of Richmond (an authentic historical character) who became a vampire after falling in love with one (this part is not historical); one of the tragedies of vampiric relationships is that the creatures are territorial, so that after the vampire helps its lover/child through the year of transition, they are driven to separate. (The donor becomes a vampire only by willingly drinking blood reciprocally from the vampire lover; it is a process of choice, not victimization, in both Lackey's and Huff's series; this removes much of the inherent evil of the situation while retaining the eroticism.) Since he puts his centuries of existence to use by writing bestselling bodice-rippers, his work hours are flexible (albeit nocturnal); and he also sets out to find the killer, who is actually a demon summoned almost accidentally by a nerdy college student. The nerd Norman is using the demon to fulfill his longings for material possessions to impress girls and for vengeance on those who still reject him; the demon is manipulating him to make possible the release of his master, a Demon Lord, from Hell. Henry encounters Vicki when both are staking out a possible murder site; they form an effective partnership as the nightblind Vicki spends her days using her investigative skills to track down the demon's summoner, while Henry spends his nights using his occult knowledge to try to trap the demon. Meanwhile Celluci is trying to get Vicki out of the investigation, and the doorman in Henry's apartment building has been reading the papers and is sharpening a croquet stake for the tenant he's never seen in the daytime. There is a suspenseful and gory climax in which Norman has captured Vicki and her client and is in the process of sacrificing Vicki to the Demon Lord when Henry and Celluci charge to the rescue separately but simultaneously.

In *Blood Trail*, Vicki is hired by some of Henry's friends, a farm family who are being victimized by a serial killer. They can't go to the police, even though one of their members is a police constable, because they happen to be werewolves and they are being killed in beast form. One complication is that the werewolf extended family functions like a wolf pack and the alpha female instinctively reacts to Vicki as a threat to her dominance, even though as a human she knows that this is not the case. The book is a good procedural detective story with the werewolf-behavior aspect providing the major interest, along with a leavening of humor (one young male prefers assuming lupine form on long car trips because he likes to ride with his head out the window; and the youngest cub, who has become quite attached to Vicki, gives her his favorite bone as a farewell present). It is during this case that Henry and Vicki become lovers as well as friends; and Celluci, who has become suspicious of Henry's lack of traceable background and concluded he must be Mafia, discovers the vampire's true nature when he interrupts a violent confrontation between the werewolf-killers and the werewolves, Vicki, and Henry.

Having given us vampires and werewolves, in *Blood Lines* Huff introduces a mummy—an undead sorcerer-priest of ancient Egypt who escapes from a sarcophagus purchased by a Toronto museum and in addition to feeding on the life force of unprotected humans sets out to take over secular power as a prelude to restoring his dark god, beginning with the Ontario Provincial Police. He has messed with the

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minds of Celluci's superiors, derailing the detective's investigation of some of his actions; and he has targeted Henry, whose powerful life force makes him extremely appetizing—but as a devout Catholic, he is protected. (In *Blood Price*, which includes a flashback to a scene of Henry protecting a Madonna chapel from Cromwell's vandals, he is rescued by direct divine intervention, in response to his prayer, when battling the demon on Easter Sunday.) The mummy traps Vicki, and Henry and Celluci combine in a very uneasy alliance to rescue her. And it takes the three of them working together to destroy the wizard-priest and his acolytes.

While Lackey's books, in proper Aristotelian fashion, are plot-driven, with just enough characterization to interest us in the characters and involve us in their fates, Huff's books, while extremely well plotted, are primarily character-driven. While Lackey gives us such questions as: Here's a vampire; so he's a good guy; what can we do with a benevolent vampire in this situation?, Huff gives us: Here's a vampire; so he's a good guy; why is he a good guy? Why is he a vampire? How did the kind of mortal he was affect his character? How has being a vampire affected his character? What does he value? What is he afraid of? How does he relate to mortals? and sundry other fascinating issues to explore. Vicki Nelson also has more complexity than the average detective protagonist—and makes the typical Gothic heroine look like a paper doll. She is a strong woman who won't yield an inch in her relationships with men, who is struggling with a disability that has cost her a career that she loved and that she was extremely good at, as well as with trying to forge a new one without the professional support system she has always been able to count on. Despite growing up with a too-protective mother and without a father (he deserted them), she nevertheless establishes—though not without conflict—bonds with two strong males which include friendship, loyalty, and collegiality as well as sexual and romantic involvement, without allowing herself to be dominated. Mike Celluci is the least complex—or perhaps just the least explored—of the trio, being basically a tough cop, though differentiated by his brains, his flexibility, and his ability to treat Vicki as a full equal.

The most complex and fascinating of these characters is Henry Fitzroy. Unusually in an occult thriller (though not in a straight vampire novel like those of Anne Rice), the vampire is not a simple Menace of the Week; in fact, his appearance here and in Lackey's novels is the answer to a question I posed many NIEKU ago: if a vampire isn't horrifying, just what is his role in a horror novel? One of Henry's defining characteristics is his inherent dominance, which is shown to come not just from his supernatural nature but from his royal upbringing as the son of an absolute monarch. He is a civilized aristocrat of the Renaissance, when being civilized was an art form. We see him in flashbacks with lovers and friends over the centuries, trying to remain able to become emotionally invested in relationships while aware that he will outlive everyone he loves (remember that territoriality means that ongoing relationships between immortals are not sustainable). And we see him exposed: he is nearly killed battling the demon in *Blood Price*; in *Blood Lines* he becomes prey, feeling truly vulnerable as he has not been for 450 years.

In his relationship with Vicki, Henry finds for the first time in centuries a woman with whom he can be himself, who is strong enough to accept him without being overawed or frightened. Not only can he be fully open with her, he can turn to her when *he* is afraid. A side effect of the presence of the undead Egyptian wizard-priest in *Blood Lines* is that Henry starts having dreams of a solar disc. Since his kind do not normally dream, he fears that like some vampires who have lived for a long time, he has become suicidal. In his alarm he asks Vicki to stay with him during the day. Many horror writers have dealt with what it might be like to spend the night with a vampire; as far as I know Huff is the first to explore the unease modulating into terror that comes with spending the day with a vampire. The various

levels of intimacy possible between vampire and mortal, the nature of love between them, and their relationship as colleagues in a struggle with evil, all open new dimensions for a genre otherwise hedged in by conventions.

The relationship between Henry and Celluci is also a lot more interesting than the setup that has been around since Bram Stoker. Celluci first has to come to terms with the existence of a real vampire, then to adjust to said vampire being not only on the side of the angels but a better Catholic than he is himself, a successful rival for the only woman Celluci loves, and a partner without whose peculiar abilities he cannot succeed in defeating his enemy or rescuing Vicki. Ultimately they have to share her, not because neither can defeat the other but because that is the way Vicki herself wants it, and she is the one in charge.

This triangle has so much depth that it virtually qualifies as a pyramid. The same depth and shadings characterize the far-from-conventional opposition of good and evil in this series. In addition to the traditional supernatural foes—demons, sorcerers, and dark gods—we have a vampire and werewolves on the side of good (Henry first met the patriarch of the werewolf clan during World War II when, as a British Secret Service agent parachuting into occupied Holland, he joined the lycanthrope Dutch Resistance leader in taking out a bunch of Nazis) and humans whose capacity for cruelty reveals them to be the real monsters. *Blood Price* has not only the maliciously self-serving nerd Norman but a couple of drunken jocks who, under the influence of too much beer and tabloid journalism, decide that their next-door neighbor, who is never seen in the daytime, must be a vampire; they wind up impaling an emergency-room night nurse who as a person is worth ten of them. In *Blood Trail*, the original murderer of the werewolves is a religious fundamentalist who decides that they are evil and that it is God's will that they be exterminated, even though as their neighbor he is well aware that they do no harm to anyone; his role is taken over later by a relative, a venal petty criminal who knows them as humans but has no qualms about killing them in wolf form in order to make a nice profit on their pelts. And in the most horrifying sequence in *Blood Lines*, the wizard-priest arranges through his police minions to have Vicki arrested on a false charge; imprisoned under a false name to prevent rescue, she is drugged, deprived of her glasses, leaving her virtually blind, and thrown in with a gang of vicious female thugs who are told she's a cop. Her sufferings are to be a food-offering to the mummy's dark god. Despite her handicaps, she is able to survive until Celluci's knowledge of how the system works and Henry's supernatural strengths get her out.

The fourth book in the series, *Blood Pact*, raises the emotional stakes in all these relationships and continues the series with a startling development. It opens with the death of Vicki's mother. She has been a constant, benevolently nagging offstage presence, her position as private secretary to the head of the Life Sciences Department at Queen's University enabling her to make a lot of free long-distance calls. She has been leaving messages on Vicki's machine about something important she wants to say, and a fed-up Vicki has been erasing them without listening, and not calling back. Now that it is too late to resolve their relationship, she takes a guilt trip to Kingston to make funeral arrangements.

Unknown to Vicki, her mother did not die a natural death. What she has been trying to tell Vicki is that she has been diagnosed with terminal heart disease; what she herself does not know is that her boss, with the aid of a couple of graduate assistants, is conducting secret and illegal reanimation experiments and, needing a nice fresh corpse, has given Marjory Nelson a fatal injection disguised as a vitamin shot and spirited away her body to a clandestine laboratory. The zombies in this tale are scientifically produced by electrobiochemical means, so there is no new supernatural element. The horror comes from the fact that in Marjory, as to a lesser extent in the most successful of the previous

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subjects, personhood and possibly soul survive within the dead body. When the coffin is unexpectedly opened at the funeral, the disappearance is discovered and an enraged Vicki, her normal grief complicated by her guilt, sets out to find her mother's remains, aided of course by Mike and Henry. In the earlier books, Huff created human villains that were by nature more monstrous than their supernatural counterparts; here, where there are no supernatural menaces, the human villains are the most monstrous of all: Dr. Burke, the department head, sees nothing wrong with murder when the victim is under a death sentence anyway and there could be a Nobel Prize in it for her; discredited ex-medical student Donald Li is in it for the money; and Catherine, the graduate student in charge of the actual experimentation, is both the most dedicated scientist and the most appalling person, who develops a maternal affection for zombie number nine, her greatest success before Marjory, but finds it perfectly natural and normal to kill people if they get in her way or would be useful subjects. Marjory keeps trying to escape and return home; Mike and Vicki's investigation turns up nothing but dead ends; and Henry, tracing the murderous number nine back to the secret laboratory, is captured and, his true nature recognized, becomes a prospective experimental subject.

The real theme of this book is human love, which is so conspicuously lacking in the villains: not the simple romantic and sexual love that is the traditional Gothic fare but more complex permutations of familial love, friendship, and disinterested, even sacrificial love. Marjory is not trying to live on; the only reason she is trying to get back home is her unfinished business with Vicki—she wants to tell her daughter that she loves her. When Vicki and Mike trace Henry to the lab to rescue him, Marjory saves Vicki's life in a fight with number nine and is finally, with the last sparks of life in her, able to bid her daughter a loving farewell. When the ravenous and desperate Henry is released from his confinement, his humanity overwhelmed by the vampiric Hunger, Vicki is able to control him, and he is able to control himself when feeding from her. The ultimate test comes after a later battle in which Vicki is injured so critically that she cannot survive long enough to reach a hospital. Celluci demands that Henry save her in the only way possible, by transforming her into a vampire, even though he believes that this will mean that he loses her forever to his rival. Henry agrees, though he knows that vampiric territorial nature will mean that he is the one who will lose her. And Vicki, whose principal character trait is her fighting nature, also agrees. Later the trust between the two men born of their shared love for her even enables Celluci to permit the depleted Henry to feed from him ("if it includes anything but sucking blood, you can fucking well order takeout," he growls). Henry moves with Vicki to Vancouver for a year in which she recuperates and is initiated into her new nature (a process in which a number of criminals in that city come to messy and violent ends); at the end she has returned to Toronto and Mike Celluci, completely recovered (including freedom from RP), but by no means prepared to accept permanent separation from Henry, even if at present they can only communicate by fax. This development would seem to conclude the series, as any future stories about Vicki would no longer have a human protagonist—though there is a possibility of yet another new subtype, the supernatural female occult-detective, which I don't doubt Tanya Huff could make something of. Since this was first written, she has come out with *Blood Debt*, in which the three again work together; since Vicki is now a supernatural being, the book falls outside the scope of this essay. As I was reading the final proof on this issue (April, 1998), in the belief that I'd covered all possible permutations of the subject, Tanya Huff published *Summon the Keeper*, with yet another takes: the female occult detective as sitcom heroine. Claire Hansen is a Keeper—one of a line descended from Adam and Lillith, with powers they use to stop up holes between our space-time continuum and the Other Side to prevent leakages. It's an itinerant life shared only with her talking cat Austin; but she finds herself stranded unexpectedly in

Kingston, Ontario, as the acting proprietor of the Elysian Fields Guest House, which has domestic problems not amenable to quick fixes, including a decades-old Sleeping Beauty upstairs (only she's more of a Wicked Witch) and a portal to Hell in the furnace room. She has her hands full not only dealing with these hazards but renovating the building, coping with the sort of guests that a place like this might be expected to attract, fending off an nosy neighbor, and trying to track down the Other Side Librarian, a reclusive ype that just might know how to fix things permanently. She also has a couple of possible romantic interests: Dean, the man-of-all-work, who is young, gorgeous, so grounded that the occultly sensitive instinctively check out his feet for roots, and who cooks, cleans, and does dishes (I said this was a fantasy); and Jacques, a lusty French-Canadian sailor. The problem with Dean is that he's several years younger than Claire, who is embarrassed by this; the problem with Jacques is that he's been dead since 1922. Claire is a little too long-suffering for my taste, although she does have a lot on her plate: being turned into a dieffenbachia is far from the worst that happens to her. (She does get better, except for a lingering urge to photosynthesize). And you can imagine what they get in the way of trick-or-treaters on Halloween. Albeit a strong heroine, able to handle the supernatural hazards, Claire tends to be made a fool of in dealing with the mortal difficulties, despite a lot of unsolicited good advice from Austin, usually prefaced with, "First, why don't you feed the cat?" (Between them, Austin and Hell have most of the best lines.) When her even-more-powerful bratty teenaged sister shows up, things get a whole lot worse before the final solution is arrived at. *Summon the Keeper* is more or less equally balanced between humorous and thriller elements, with good plotting and interesting characterization; readers who find the Victory Nelson series too grim and gory would find this one more to their taste.

So far we have seen the postfeminist Gothic heroine, crossbred with the lady detective, develop from Gothic wimp through strong human able to cope with the supernatural into a supernatural being herself. Is there any permutation left? Yes, and fittingly it is the product of Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels, provider of most of the finer example of the traditional and rationalized Gothic and the romantic-suspense heroine. Her version of the female occult sleuth is the robustly rational English archaeologist Amelia Peabody Emerson, indefatigable explorer of pyramids and exploder of superstitions in turn-of-the-century England and Egypt alike. The series of books about Amelia (nine volumes to date) are the author's affectionate tribute to and satire on the lurid popular fiction of an earlier era, produced by the likes of Sax Rohmer and H. Rider Haggard. In the first book, *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, Amelia inherits a fortune and sets off to see the world, getting no farther than Egypt, where she does battle with an apparent reanimated mummy with designs on her lovely companion, assorted thieves and rascals, and an irascible archaeologist; she succeeds in unmasking the mummy, foiling the rascals, and marrying the archaeologist. The second book, *The Curse of the Pharaohs*, is Peters' take on the events surrounding the discovery of King Tut's tomb; here the deaths are unnatural but not supernatural, and the Emersons ferret out the murderer. In *The Deeds of the Disturber*, they are back in London, contending with visiting relatives, dark doings at the British Museum, and a sinister secret society whose nefarious rites are a blend of ancient Egyptian ritual and Aleister Crowley-type black magic. At the climax, they are trapped in a dungeon, their only choices death by rising water or rescue by their nine-year-old-son "Ramses" with his homemade gelignite. Other books feature non-occult pulp fiction themes like a Master Criminal who falls in love with Amelia (*The Mummy Case*, *Lion in the Valley*) and a lost Meröitic civilization (*The Last Camel Died at Noon*). Several of these themes are combined in the most recent volume in the series, *The Snake*, *The Crocodile and The Dog*. I don't want to give away too much of the plots, as I have with the other books, because they are really traditional detective

stories rather than thrillers, and because they are all readily available, as the others may not be. Summarization might be able to do justice to the plots, but not to the characters, the atmosphere, the humor, or the inimitable prose style of Amelia's first-person narration. While I cannot in good conscience recommend the Kitty Telefair books to anyone, and the Gothics, romantic suspense, and occult thrillers I have discussed might not interest readers not already attached to those genres, I can recommend Peters' Amelia Peabody series to anyone in search of a good entertaining read.

While the occult detective story is a fairly recent development, the occult elements it deals with are as old as our oldest legends. Interestingly, some of our oldest myths feature powerful female figures, but primarily as menaces to be defeated (Lilith and Tiamat, for example), though the Sumerian myth of Inanna, prefiguring the central Christian mythos, depicted the goddess as crucified in the Underworld from which She returned to life. Except for the odd Amazon type, Western literature since then has depicted women as either in need of rescue from supernatural evil (Andromeda through Mina Harker) or complicit with it (Eve through all tales of wicked witches). As I wrote these concluding pages, I could glance up to see television advertisements for two newly released films, INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE and MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN, proving that occult fiction has lost no whit of its popularity. The traditional female role in this sort of endeavor is epitomized by the clip from the latter film showing a scantily clad Helena Bonham Carter supine in bed beneath Robert de Niro as Frankenstein's monster, holding her down with one hand over her mouth and snarling, "Don't bother to scream." The influence of feminism, though perhaps second only to that of science fiction on the modern occult thriller, has been much slower to make itself felt. The helpless victim of the Gothic era has been transformed into the competent protagonist of the romantic suspense novel and subsequently into the supernaturally able occult defender against evil. When Vicki Nelson, newly transformed vampire learning to kill and prey to uncontrollable blood lust, got hold of a rapist or drug dealer, I wonder if she whispered in his ear "Don't bother to scream" before she tore his throat out. This isn't quite the image of feminine empowerment that Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem had in mind (I'm not so sure about Camille Paglia); but it certainly beats being a helpless screaming wimp.

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A Gothic and Dark Fantasy Checklist

by Joe R. Christopher



The term Gothic came from the Romantic shift to a love of the medieval era from the Enlightenment's classicism; thus, Gothic (as used in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) = medieval. In the modern period, after the movement away from medieval castles, in Le Fanu and others, the term Dark Fantasy is better than Gothic for a description of this type of fiction. However, Gothic is shorter and certainly makes a better adjective than Dark Fantastic, so the use of Gothic continues. The darkness, the noir quality or tone, is basic to the tradition. (Anyone familiar with the critical works on the Gothic tradition will realize how much I'm leaving out, but this is adequate as a starting point.)

As a genre, like any genre, the Gothic novel must have both an outward form which is traditional and inward content which is traditional. The Gothic novel starts with ghosts and other sensational material, at least partly supernatural, laid in medieval castles; this is the outward form. The inward content lies in the exploration of perverse psychology in the villain (the villain is normally of more importance than the hero) and the suffering of the heroine. But there are only so many medieval castles, with torture chambers in the cellars, to explore. Gradually, the Gothic novel extended its range. (There's a good book—*Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, by John Cawelti [1976]—which discusses the way popular genres gradually shift their content to fit changes in the times.) Old, sprawling mansions began to be used in place of castles—one can trace a tradition in the non-supernatural Gothic from *Jane Eyre* to *Rebecca* to the modern "Gothica" (to use Anthony Boucher's term for the paperback tradition). In the hands of Poe and some others, the Gothic novel (read "short story" in Poe's case) came to be used for symbolic purposes. (I interpret "The Fall of the House of Usher" as primarily a study of a male psyche without what Freud called the superego.) The symbolic version of the Gothic fiction is the literary end of the material, but the popular version must continue to be viable for the literary handlers to add their levels to the genre.

One may think of it as being like what the cousins who wrote mystery novels as Ellery Queen were doing: some of their novels they considered "fun and games"—just attempts at popular mysteries, with

clues and detection—while other of their detective novels had sociological statements to make. Just as an author may need to produce both kinds of books, some popular, to keep his audience, some significant, to satisfy his conscience and to attract a certain type of reader, so also a fictional genre may need a mixture of meaningful and popular works to remain a vibrant, developing kind. In the case of Gothic fiction, the significant works are more likely to be psychological explorations than sociological, but the same general truth applies.

As with any genre, there are pure examples and borderline examples. One critic—Brian Attebery—has described a genre as, in modern terms, a fuzzy set; some works are closer to the center than others, but it is rare, if not impossible, for any one work to contain all the conventions of the genre. Another, more traditional, way of saying this is that there is, in this case, a Gothic genre (in which the form and the content come together) and a Gothic mode, in which elements of the genre are commingled with a different genre. Thus, critics speak of "the pastoral," meaning a poem like one in Vergil's *Eclogues*, and of "a pastoral lyric" or "a pastoral drama," giving examples of the use of the pastoral mode; Spenser used the pastoral mode in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, thus producing a pastoral romance-epic. The second example in the basic list shows the Oriental tale in a Gothic mode. I started this checklist from the books I have read or knew about; but, before I was through, I consulted the following works:

Horror: 100 Best Books, ed. Stephen Jones and Kim Newman (1988). [This has notes by various authors on their favorite books; a number of their comments are mentioned in the checklist.]

Fantasy: The 100 Best Books, by James Cawthorn and Michael Moorcock (1988). [For reasons explained in the introduction, actually compiled by Cawthorn. Some of the choices are eccentric, hardly fantasy; but more to the point here, many of them are Gothic.]

Horror Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide, ed. Marshall B. Tymn (1981) [An academic checklist, with various specialists writing introductions and annotated listings for various periods; useful for several reasons but mainly for the large number of titles.]

"Listomania" ("THE HAUNTED LIBRARY" column), by Don D'Amassa. *Niekas: Science Fiction and Fantasy*, No. 38 (1989): 8-9. [D'Amassa provides two lists of ten books each (with a few extras), "The Ten Classic Horror Novels Everyone Should Read" and "Ten Representative Novels of Modern Horror Fiction." Eight of his classic list, and the one extra, are included here (the two not included were non-supernatural horror); most of his modern works also appear—either in the main list or mentioned in the annotations: more specifically, nine of the basic list and supplements, omitting three fantasies and one non-fantasy.]

I have some other appropriate books on my shelves, but the above are the ones I used. I should add to this, since I mention it several times, that I did a checklist of 100 fantasy titles for college collections a number of years back: "Science Fiction and Fantasy Fiction Teaching Collections," *Choice* 24:4 (December 1986): 589-600. For convenience's sake, I have cited it as "Fantasy Fiction Teaching Collection." The main checklist below has seventy book titles, but the other titles mentioned in the annotations will boost the total above one hundred; the works listed above can add many others—this is a huge field of popular literature.

One final comment: this checklist is restricted to novels and short-story sequences (with a few, perhaps eccentric, exceptions). This explains why miscellaneous story collections, such as Ray Bradbury's *Dark Carnival* (1947) and Harlan Ellison's *Deathbird Stories* (1975), do not appear. I am quite aware that S. T. Joshi has argued that the "weird tale" (his term for the genre) works best at short-story length; he may well be right, but I am doing something else here. I have also, with the partial exception of *Vathek*, restricted myself to works written in English.

Horace Walpole: *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) Of historical importance as beginning the craze for the Gothic novel; it is hard to recapture any thrills in this book today. My favorite passage is that in which a statue has a nosebleed.

William Beckford: *Vathek* (1786) Written by an Englishman in French, then translated into English. This is the first Arabian Nights-inspired novel in the English tradition; the conclusion of it is Gothic enough.

Ann Radcliffe: *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) A castle in the Apennines, etc. Radcliffe is the basic writer of the explained-away-supernatural Gothic; most of the other convention = however.

Matthew Gregory Lewis: *The Monk* (1796) A best-seller of its day, filled with sex, sadism, violence, diabolism, necrophilia, rape, incest, and matricide. The later editions were bowdlerized.

Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey* (1818) A semi-parody of the Gothic novel, showing the effect of reading such works on the sensibilities of a young woman.

Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein* (1818) Gothic science-fiction—that is, in terms of my introductory note, science fiction in a Gothic mode.

Charles Robert Maturin: *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) Some call this the greatest of the early Gothic novels.

James Hogg: *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) A rather ambiguous novel about a double, which can be taken either psychologically or supernaturally.

Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Except for one episode of ghosts walking, not supernatural (if I remember correctly)—but often on the edge of it. A Gothic love-story.

Nathaniel Hawthorne: *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) Essentially the haunted house (or haunted castle) material played lightly; some supernatural elements in the fringes.

J. Sheridan LeFanu: "Carmilla" from *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) *Uncle Silas* (1864) is usually said to be LeFanu's best novel, but it is a non-supernatural mystery. I recommend instead his novella "Carmilla," one of the best vampire stories. The reason for reading vampire fiction in sexual terms is clear from the Lesbian attraction here. *The House by*

the Churchyard (1863) is a ghost novel that Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV praises, but I have not seen it.

Robert Louis Stevenson: *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) The fiction works at several different levels; literally, another piece of Gothic science-fiction. The personality split between good and evil has become a staple of later works, particularly werewolf movies.

W. S. Gilbert: *Ruddigore; or, The Witch's Curse* (1887) A light opera, with music by Arthur Sullivan. Logically, this should not appear in this checklist; but many are the readers of the script, so I bent the rule. One of the best semi-parodies of the Gothic tradition, complete with castle and ghosts (figures from paintings). It is also the source of Anthony Boucher's pact-with-a-demon novelette "Sriberdegibit" (1943; collected in *Far and Away* [1955]).

Oscar Wilde: *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1891) Wilde takes one element out of the Gothic tradition and uses it as effectively as it has ever been done.

H.G. Wells: *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) Like *Frankenstein*, Gothic science fiction.

Bram Stoker: *Dracula* (1897) The basic vampire story—the one which set the pattern in English. There are several modern symbolic interpretations (e.g., Dracula = venereal disease), but they tend to be psychological readings of the author rather than interpretations growing from the text. What strikes me about the book is how good Stoker is at description—better than he is at narration, I think. (The epistolary mode may encourage description over narration, but it wouldn't, in other hands.) But my memory may be wrong: Jack Sullivan writes of Stoker's "spellbinding narrative power."

Henry James: *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) Usually considered the best of James's ghost stories (there is a collected volume of them)—the modern, literary, ambiguous ghost story.

Algernon Blackwood: *John Silence, Physician Extraordinary* (1908) Not a novel, but a series of novelettes with John Silence as a continuing character. Although Sheridan LeFanu had used Martin Hesselius in *In a Glass Darkly* as a psychic sleuth or occult detective, Blackwood established the model for later writers. If I remember correctly, one or two of the stories show signs of being tales recast to include Silence, but the rest are models of the type. (One of my three favorite occult detectives in short-story-sequence book form—a rather inverted example—appears in Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Mr. Quin* [1930], but he is not very Gothic; the others are in Davidson's and Wellman's books listed below. My favorite uncollected one is Anthony Boucher's "flexible detective," Fergus O'Brien.)

William Hope Hodgson: *The House on the Borderland* (1908) A semi-science-fictional treatment of the haunted house motif; here the house is attacked by hog-like creatures from a near-by pit—or at least it is in the mind of the narrator. Hodgson's *The Night Land* (1912) is laid in the future; it is more clearly science fiction, but just as Gothic. Hodgson also has some Gothic sea stories, but I must admit it is not an area that interests me. Hodgson's *Carnacki the Ghost Finder* (1913; exp. 1948) is an interesting book of psychic sleuth stories; I have read—but I don't find it in print in my sources—that the still later British edition (probably 1972) was further expanded and included some non-supernatural mysteries.

David Lindsay: *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920) Borderline Gothic, at any rate; after an introduction on earth, the action shifts to a planet around Arcturus, but there is nothing scientific about the treatment of the material—symbolic, perhaps, with a vision of pain as the driving force in the universe. (There are those who think it has to do with visionary experiences transcending this life.) The style is not highly praised.

E.H. Visiak: *Medusa* (1929) Karl Edward Wagner has said this book, which he describes as "the probable outcome of Herman Melville having written *Treasure Island* while tripping on LSD," as one of the three best Gothic novels. I haven't read it.

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Guy Endore: *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933) Perhaps the basic werewolf novel in English. The novel can be read as a study in madness, not in lycanthropy. Stephen Jones and Kim Newman say it is unequalled as a werewolf novel until the appearance of Robert Stallman's *The Book of the Beast* (1980-82), which I haven't seen.

John Dickson Carr: *The Burning Court* (1937) A witchcraft novel; the greatest of the detective novel-Gothic novel blends.

William Sloane: *To Walk the Night* (1937) Sloane is remembered for this novel, about a very odd wife, and a novel of two years later, *The Edge of Running Water*. There is debate between experts over which of these modern reworkings of traditional material is the best novel. Stephen Jones and Kim Newman report that when Harlan Ellison re-read *The Edge of Running Water*, a childhood favorite, he found it very poor.

Charles Williams: *Descent into Hell* (1937) This novel and *All Hallows' Eve* (1945) are Williams' best. They are Christian Gothics written in a rather Metaphysical style, and have received a number of Christian discussions. Although the style may discourage some, there is no reason for readers of a genre which has sometimes ended novels with Satan carrying off the villain, to be put off by the Christianity; Williams is not evangelical in approach.

C.S. Lewis: *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups* (1945) About a third of this novel is Gothic—that part involving the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments; it includes psychic projection and worship of a devil. Lewis, of course, is known as a staunch Christian; I have faulted a few aspects of this novel, in my *C.S. Lewis* (1987), for forcing its Christian message; but this volume has many things in it, not all of them religious. (Besides anti-Christians, feminists also should find this book irritating.) This volume is the third in Lewis's Ransom Trilogy; the first is *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938)—basically science fiction—and the second, *Perelandra* (1943)—basically what is called today science-fantasy; this third one might best be described as a Christian, occult, and Arthurian thriller.

Cornell Woolrich: *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1945) A detective vs. a psychic. Maxim Jakubowski names this as a basic work of horror. I must confess I was put off of Woolrich when "Jane Brown's Body" was reprinted in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* years ago: I thought Woolrich had one of the worst styles, most pulpish, overwritten styles, I had ever read. On the other hand, a friend—Francis M. Nevins, Jr.—keeps insisting in print, as high praise, that Woolrich is the twentieth-century Poe.

Mervyn Peake: *Titus Groan* (1946) The first of a series of three novels, the last not really finished before Peake's death. The other two titles are *Gormenghast* (1950) and *Titus Alone* (1959). The first two could be described as the Gothic castle presented by Charles Dickens.

Jack Williamson: *Darker Than You Think* (1948) A shorter, and perhaps better, version appeared in a magazine in 1940; this is an attempt to explain werewolves scientifically, as another species which has evolved alongside humans. The style is sometimes pulpish; the characterization sometimes wooden; but—as James Cawthorn has said—the basic idea is highly ingenious.

Jack Vance: *The Dying Earth* (1950; with the stories in the correct sequence, 1976) Like Clark Ashton Smith's *Zothique* (not collected until 1970), this is a story sequence laid in the far future, where magic, in Vance with a few touches of science, is the basis of power. There are Gothic aspects to all six of the stories, but these aspects are not as heavy as Smith's; there is a stronger element of adventure. Vance's sequels—*The Eyes of the Overworld* (1966), *Cugel's Saga* (1983), *Rhialto the Marvellous* (1984)—emphasize irony at the expense of wonder. (Related to these is Michael Shea's *A Quest for Simbilis* [1974], which is, with Vance's permission, laid on *Dying Earth*. Actually, it is a sequel to *The Eyes of the Overworld*, written before Vance wrote his own sequel.)

Fritz Leiber: *Conjure Wife* (1952) A witchcraft novel laid in a modern college campus and the faculty homes (magazine version, 1943). Leiber's two other novels in the Gothic vein are *Our Lady of Darkness* (1977) and *The Sinful Ones* (1980); the latter has a complicated bibliographic history in two different versions. There are critics who prefer *Our Lady of Darkness*—an interesting attempt at the urban supernatural—over the book listed here.

Sarban (pseud. of John W. Wall): *The Sound of His Horn* (1952) A vision of a Nazi future. (If I remember correctly, the vision itself is the only supernatural aspect—if it's not a nightmare strictly speaking—in the book.) Suzy McKee Charnas named this as one of her favorite horror novels. I need to re-read it; I found it confusing when I read it years ago.

Richard Matheson: *I Am Legend* (1954) A novel about the last regular human in a world of vampires; rather pulpish in writing, if I remember correctly, but suspenseful. Matheson's *Hell House* (1971) is a haunted-house novel. Most of Matheson's other novels tend to be more involved with clairvoyance, psychic phenomena, and the afterlife than with clearly Gothic material.

L. Ron Hubbard: *Fear* (1957) A man loses four hours out of his life, and as in a nightmare searches for them—basically a psychological study, but with Gothic imagery. Published in a magazine in 1940, this is by the author who later wrote *Dianetics* and went on to found the Church of Scientology. He was a pulp writer when *Fear* was written; it is one of his best-written works.

Shirley Jackson: *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) Psychic investigators go to a haunted house; one of them succumbs. By general consensus, the best of the haunted-house novels.

Arthur Calder-Marshall: *The Scarlet Boy* (1961) One of the best of the ghost novels (if my memory serves, for I have not re-read it since it first appeared). Perhaps not enough of the noir flavor for some; it is religious, in that way like the works of Charles Williams and Russell Kirk. Calder-Marshall, by the way, was much involved in literary circles in Britain; he was not a genre writer, and so far as I know this is his only contribution to the field.

Mark McShane: *Seance on a Wet Afternoon* (1961) The best seance book I've read. McShane believes in seances, so he considers this a realistic novel. Certainly it does not have the usual Gothic trappings, but it is very effective: I found it emotionally harrowing. (The American title, 1962, was just *Seance*, but I believe there was an American paperback which used the British title.)

Ray Bradbury: *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962) Bradbury's major contribution to Gothic fiction is his short-story collection *Dark Carnival* (1947), mostly recycled as *The October Country* (1955); but this novel also fits into the category. Bradbury published it as an adult novel; when I read it, I thought of it as a novel for teenage boys, with a few curse words tossed in. It made a good movie, although not a hugely successful one financially.

Manly Wade Wellman: *Who Fears the Devil?* (1963) A short-story sequence about John (no last name), a ballad-singer in the North Carolina mountains; essentially, he is in the psychic sleuth tradition, except that he often just happens upon the Gothic problems, not being called in. The full collection of stories is *John the Balladeer* (1988); there are several novels about John, but they are not as good as the stories.

H.P. Lovecraft: *At the Mountains of Madness* (1964) This is one of the two novels in Lovecraft's pseudo-scientific-cum-Gothic "Cthulhu Mythos"; this is laid at the South Pole (written in 1931, published in a magazine in 1936), where the scientists find the remains of a city of aliens from the stars. Probably a good collection of Lovecraft's stories is a better introduction to this author. One should avoid any stories in collaboration with August Derleth, for they tend to be mainly Derleth. Those critics who like Lovecraft's polysyllabic style think him one of the major Gothic writers of the twentieth century. (And who am I to

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complain? I like Clark Ashton Smith's style.) Lovecraft's other Gothic novel is *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1943).

Ira Levin: *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) A best-seller—witchcraft, impregnation by the devil. Levin has written several types of category fiction; he's a good commercial craftsman.

Kingsley Amis: *The Green Man* (1969) Amis, known for his rather acerbic realistic novels, shifted part way through his career to alternating between realistic fictions and his handling of popular genres—this is his ghost novel.

Gordon Honeycombe: *Neither the Sea nor the Sand* (1969) A woman's love returns her husband to life—rather like a zombie.

Clark Ashton Smith: *Zothique* (1970) Smith, a California artist, poet, and correspondent with Lovecraft, wrote the sixteen stories and one poem in this book between 1932 and 1951; this volume is edited by Lin Carter, with the works put in chronological order for the first time. These works are laid in the far future, but the tone is purely Gothic—evil magic abounds, not science. Admittedly, I read the volume while suffering from the flu in a motel in Las Cruces, New Mexico, but I think it's very good, not morally but of its type artistically.

William Peter Blatty: *The Exorcist* (1971) A very popular novel of demonic possession; Blatty claimed it was based, to some extent, on fact.

Angela Carter: *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman* (1972) A highly sexual novel (as is typical of Carter) which involves, among many other things, a castle in South America.

Robert Moraco: *Burnt Offerings* (1973) A haunted-house novel; Stephen King calls it almost as good as Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. I haven't read it.

Avram Davidson: *The Enquiries of Doctor Eszterhazy* (1975) Laid in what seems to be the Balkans, Dr. Eszterhazy's investigations are sometimes fantasies and always odd. If not dark fantasy, then this is, at times, a book of outré fantasy. It belongs to the occult-detective tradition. The enlarged, and more poorly titled, collection is *The Adventures of Doctor Eszterhazy* (1990).

Stephen King: *Salem's Lot* (1975) Some critics think this is the best of King's fiction; his version of *Dracula*, at any rate. King is "the ultimate popularizer" of the modern Gothic (quoting Don Herron, slightly out of context); most of his books have clear predecessors. Other critics—including Don D'Amassa—think *The Shining* (1977) is King's best work; Don Herron says that *The Dead Zone* (1979) is.

Anne Rice: *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) Sex and sadism again, this started Rice's career as a Gothic novelist. An interview with Rice in *Newsweek* several years ago covered such things as her pornographic novels and her defense of her style as operatic. My younger daughter—in her late 20s—reads all of Rice's Gothics.

James Farris: *All Heads Turn When the Hunt Goes By* (1977) A voodoo novel set in the American South.

Bernard Taylor: *Sweetheart, Sweetheart* (1977) A haunted-cottage novel. Charles L. Grant praises it; I haven't seen it.

Whitley Strieber: *The Wolfen* (1978) Charles de Lint praises this rationalized werewolf novel set in a police-procedural framework.

Russell Amos Kirk: *Lord of the Hollow Dark* (1979) Gary Crawford writes: "Kirk's Gothic novels *Old House of Fear* (1961), *A Creature of the Twilight* (1966), and *Lord of the Hollow Dark* (1979)...contain a coherent philosophy and vision that more closely resembles the late-eighteenth-century Gothic Romance [called the Gothic Novel in this checklist] than the more amoral and anarchic modern horror novel." In short, Kirk writes Christian Gothics.

Peter Straub: *Ghost Story* (1979) A ghost story at several levels—the ancient succubus haunts men, and she is, at the same time, a projection of one of them.

Jonathan Carroll: *The Land of Laughs* (1980) Several critics have praised this book, about a Missouri town created by a writer's

imagination; I haven't seen it.

Michael McDowell: *The Elementals* (1981) Don D'Amassa picks this title out of McDowell's productions. Douglas Winter writes of this and some other of McDowell's novels that he "has created...novels of haunted families and houses, rich with remarkable characters and settings drawn from his Southern upbringing."

F. Paul Wilson: *The Keep* (1981) A novel set during World War II; Nazis are occupying the titular fortress (= the Gothic Castle), when they accidentally release an ancient, evil spirit, which begins killing them. I haven't read it, but J.N. Williamson's account makes it sound like an interesting variant on the traditional Gothic novel. (He denies that it is ultimately a vampire novel, unlike other critical comments on it.) In Darrell Schweitzer's interview with Wilson, in *Weird Tales*, No. 305, Wilson indicates that this is part of a six-book series in the same "dark fantasy or horror universe." The other novels include *Reborn* (1990) and *Reprisal* (1992).

George R.R. Martin: *Fevre Dream* (1982) One of the better novels in the flood of vampire fiction; this one posits the vampires as a separate race, and the novel is laid in nineteenth-century America, mainly on a Mississippi riverboat. I listed Martin's *The Armageddon Rag* (1983) in my "Fantasy Fiction Teaching Collection"—a novel of the ghostly possession of a rock singer—but, since I did that listing, I have grown more and more uncomfortable about the forcing of one character's personality in the last chapter to produce the happy round-up of the good guys. However, I still think a rock group called the Nazgûl sums up the era.

Meredith Ann Pierce: *The Darkangel* (1982) The first of a series of three, the others being *A Gathering of Gargoyles* (1984) and *The Pearl of the Soul of the World* (1990). I haven't read the latter two, but I reviewed the first volume for *Mythprint* when it appeared. It's a curious book, rather like a George MacDonald fairytale laid in the future on the moon, but with a vampire.

Robert Irwin: *The Arabian Nightmare* (1983) Probably the most significant combination of The Arabian Nights and the Gothic (with other things) since Vathek. Praised by Brian Stableford.

Tanith Lee: *Red as Blood; or, Tales from the Sisters Grimm* (1983) A book of Gothic retellings of fairy tales; probably it should not be listed here, for it is not a novel or a story sequence (the latter in the strict sense), but it's an interesting book united by the type of story and the use of the Gothic mode. Her fiction in a Gothic mode also includes her "Tales from the Flat Earth" sequence, which began with *Night's Master* in 1978.

Robert Holdstock: *Mythago Wood* (1984) I am rather hesitant about calling this a Gothic novel, but Michael Moorcock has named it his favorite horror novel. The book is certainly suspenseful, but I considered it an archetypal romance when I listed it in my "Fantasy Fiction Teaching Collection." Moorcock puts it in the tradition of stories or novels by Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, John Buchan (*Witch Wood*, 1927), E.R. Benson, and M.R. James—"the 'haunted wood' fantasy"—as well as, says Moorcock, James Barrie's *Dear Brutus* (drama, 1917). *Mythago*, by the way, is accented on the second syllable; a sequel is *Lavondyss* (1988).

T.E.D. Klein: *The Ceremonies* (1984) A nicely developed variation of H.P. Lovecraft's theme of the return of the ancient (and evil) gods. Don Herron says that the novella form of this book, "The Events at Poroth Farm," is better than the novel.

Robert R. McCammon: *Usher's Passing* (1984) Don D'Amassa praises this reworking of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"; I haven't seen it.

Diana L. Paxson: *The Paradise Tree* (1987) A sequel of sorts to *Brisingamen* (1984), in which a Norse necklace caused modern complications. This might be considered an occult novel with very Gothic villains. In her acknowledgements at the first of the book, Paxson suggests her tradition (for this series of novels) is that of Dion Fortune,

Essays on Dark Fantasy

Charles Williams, and John Buchan. (I listed *Brisinghamen* in my "Fantasy Fiction Teaching Collection," but this volume was not out then.)

Barbara Hambly: *Those Who Hunt the Night* (1988) My younger daughter considers this as one of her favorite Gothics. It contains most of the vampire conventions, with a Victorian setting and a touch of feminism. One of the more interesting aspects of the vampirism in this novel is the psychological effect of the long lives. (Hambly promised me a sequel when I met her in California, at a Mythopoeic Society convention, in, I think, 1990; but I haven't seen it yet.)

Brian Stableford: *The Empire of Fear* (1988) A vampiric alternate-universe novel.

There are so many good vampire novels which have been published in recent years that it is very difficult to make a Gothic checklist which isn't overloaded with them. For no reason other than to cut down on that emphasis in the primary listings, this checklist has omitted Les Daniels' series about Don Sebastian de Villanueva, beginning with *The Black Skull* (1978); Chelsea Quin Yarbro's series about le Comte de Saint-Germain, beginning with *Hotel Transylvania*, (1978); Suzy McKee Charnas' *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980); S. P. Somtow's *Vampire Junction* (1984); Tanith Lee's series about the Scarabee family, beginning with *Dark Dance* (1992)—and a number of others. I enjoyed Margaret Carter's *Payer of Tribute* (1989), a novelette published in an obscure chapbook, which created a vampire with moth-like wings; it was not completely successful, but it was certainly of interest as the work of the author of *The Vampire in Literature: A Critical Bibliography* (1989) and other books on the vampire. Carter has written that she was trying to retell the Beauty and the Beast story, with a vampire; I suggested in a review in *Mythlore* that it should be read as a fiction about a battered wife who had no place to turn in leaving her husband and so tried to convince herself that she loved him. In a different area of popular culture, I find enjoyable *Batman and Dracula: Red Rain*, by Doug Moench, Kelley Jones, Malcolm Jones II, Les Dorscheid, and Todd Klein (1991), and its sequel *Batman: Blood-storm*, by Doug Moench, Kelley Jones, John Beatty, Les Dorscheid, and Todd Klein (1994); probably there are a large number of other "comic books" (graphic novels) that fit in here, but these are nicely done within their genre and involve enough writing in their dialogue, etc., that they may be marginally listed in a checklist of fiction.

Darrell Schweitzer: *The White Isle* (1989) A short novel, laid on an imaginary island, the isle of Iankoros, in the past. Prince Evnos Rae Karavasha rules, and practices magic; the novel runs from his birth until somewhat after (in a summary way) his death. The style is deliberately descriptive and slightly formal. Much of the novel (even allowing for a trip to a very Gothic afterlife) is laid in a castle on the island. Schweitzer says his later novels are better; probably so, but this is the only one I have read.

Mercedes Lackey: *Sacred Ground* (1994) The best occult-detective novel that I have read—a novel in contrast to the more common form of the short-story series. In this instance, the half Osage and half Cherokee Jennifer Taldeer is a private eye and occult detective, (a shaman or medicine woman, in her terms), in Tulsa, Oklahoma; the book is based on Osage beliefs, and is a nice combination of present concerns (ecology, battered women), romance (chastity is not important to the magic, unlike the Christian tradition), private-eye investigatory adventure (a sabotaged land-development, with Taldeer hired by an insurance company), and magic. Lackey had an earlier series of novels about a more straightforward occult detective, Diana Tregarde, who is a practitioner of wicca; but the combination of private investigator and occult detective in Taldeer's case works better—and the Indian details are fresher than those in the Tregarde series, where most of the materials are standard to the tradition, despite the use of Aztec

magic in *Burning Water* (1989). And, no doubt, a hundred other books should have been listed. Probably the collected volumes of the Sandman comic books, and....



Bumbejimas (Part 3): A Note From the Publisher Ed Meskys

This book is being sent to NIEKAS readers as part of their subscriptions. Despite its size it is still counting as one issue, #45. As usual we offer credit for returned copies if this is not satisfactory to the reader.

We thank Joe Christopher for guest-editing this special publication.

Todd, Anne, and I continue to try to alternate general issues of NIEKAS MAGAZINE with special single-subject issues like this book. The general issues often have a focus section on a single topic like Kipling's influence on SF&F in #44 or sports & fantasy in the next issue. Other focus sections were on *Islandia*, barbarian fantasy, and the rules of magic in fantasy, while single-subject issues were on religion is SF, dragons, Andre Norton, Arthurian fantasy, and John Myers Myers and *Silverlock*. However these general issues do have articles on other subjects and our usual columns and departments, including a letter column. The next issue is 80% in the computer, and I do hope to have it out before too long!

Besides the focus on sports, #46 will have an article by Ray Nelson on why he likes Clark Ashton Smith and another of Jon Singer's imaginative pieces filling in details of the histories of the three lost northern kingdoms of Middle-earth, as well as reviews, letters, and columns on a variety of subjects. The next single subject issue will either be on Tolkien or a revised and expanded version of our o.p. ONCE & FUTURE ARTHUR. Both are well along, and we already have on disk two articles for the next general issue after that, Darrell Schweitzer on Niven & Pourmelle's *Inferno* and Joe Christopher on Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery."

We have had to cancel #43B, ATTACK OF THE 50 EXTREMELY SF STORIES (XSF #2). A former partner had selected the 50 stories from submissions and had many illustrated when he stopped work on it several years ago. Todd and I tried to get it finished and got art for several additional stories, but then he refused to give us copies of the remaining stories that need illustrating.

He will neither give us the material nor complete the project himself. I cannot criticize him for not completing the project, for all who work on NIEKAS do so as volunteers and for your own enjoyment. When it stops being fun one has no reason to continue. All work on NIEKAS is done on a volunteer basis for no payment other than egoboo and the good feeling of finishing a project. We have copies of about 40 of the stories and 25 illustrations. While artists were asked to only send copies of their art, some given short deadlines rushed originals to him, so these are lost for ever. Also Todd and I do not have a complete list of artists involved. I have advertised in several publications for authors and artists to resubmit copies of their work. We have also accepted a few additional stories to replace lost ones. If we cannot reconstruct the chapbook we will use them as fillers in future issues of

NIEKAS. Please write for a list of what we do have on hand.

Our sincerest apologies to the artists and authors involved.

I am sure you have noted the dramatic rise in prices of books and magazines in the last few years, and have read about increasing paper and postage costs in *Locus* and *Science Fiction Chronicle* and the editorials of SF magazines. Well, this has affected NIEKAS, too. While Todd and I have never made a profit on NIEKAS, we have tried to break even. Not only are materials more expensive but issues have grown larger than our ideal 60 pages. Thus we are adding \$1 to the price of each, singly or by sub. Regular issues will be \$4.95 (more for specials), and subs will be 4 for \$19, 8 for \$37, 12 for \$50. Back issues will continue to be priced according to number of copies left on hand. Our shipping & handling will go to \$2 per order. We will forego shipping & handling charges on prepaid bookstore orders. Bookstores will continue to receive a 40% discount, wholesalers a 50% discount. Foreign subs will have a \$1.50 surcharge per issue for added postage. Finally we continue to make NIEKAS available for "The Usual"—traded fanzine, published art, article, or letter. Please make checks payable to NIEKAS and send to Ed Meskys at RR #2 Box 63, 322 Whittier Hwy, Center Harbor NH 03226-9708. E-mail address is edmund.meskys@gsel.org.

We have back issues. Please write for current prices. We also have NIEKAS T-shirts in three styles in S, M, L, & XL at \$10. Some sizes in some styles are sold out. Those we have: Vaughn Bode knight on black background; NIEKAS logo in diminishing size on white background ditto on gray background.

We found a very few copies of Robert H. Knox's LOVECRAFT PORTFOLIO which were never numbered. We only printed 500 but lost the sequence when numbering them and do not remember which numbers were used. \$10.

We have a few copies of the *Hannes Bok Sketchbook* published by the National Fantasy Fan Federation as a memorial shortly after his death in the 1960s. These are copies I had received for working on the project, which was mostly done by Bjo Trimble. They cost \$5.

I have a few copies of SOME back issues of *Tolkien Journal* from the 1960s when I was editing it. One copy of each remaining issue, about 5 or 6 total, for \$10. Complete sets are available in Xerox form from the Mythopoeic Society, c/o Glen GoodKnight, 245 S. Atlantic Blvd., Apt F., Monterey Park CA 91754-2749.



**An Update for
"Niekas Interviews Darrell Schweitzer":
Weird Tales Returns**

**(Autographs, sketches, comments
and notes HERE.)**

In the interview carried in the front of this journal, Darrell Schweitzer tells how the name *Weird Tales* that he and George H. Schweitzer (actually, Terminus Publishing Company) were leasing was withdrawn because the copyright holders of the name were offered money for the use of the name in a television series. Terminus Publishing began putting out issues of *Worlds of Fantasy and Horror*, with a similar large red W on *Worlds* as appeared on *Weird*. But the television plans fell through; the option on the name was not renewed; and so, after four issues of *Worlds of Fantasy and Horror*, Darrell became again editor of *Weird Tales*. In the previous sequence, Darrell had been editor and George Schweitzer had been publisher, as listed in the masthead, but now they are co-listed as editors, for publication is being handled by DNA Publications, P. O. Box 13, Greenfield MA 01301-0013. The first issue of the new sequence of *Weird Tales* appeared in June 1998, before this issue of *Niekas* appears.

Actually, this new issue of WT complicates the numerical sequence—in order to keep the data on subscribers more useable for the publisher. The first issue has a whole number of 313 (otherwise, it is Vol. 55, No. 1)—this whole number jumps by four from the last issue titled *Weird Tales*. Despite the fact that the issue of *World of Fantasy and Horror* were simply numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4, the publisher kept the WT whole numbers for the subscriptions and now continues them. This should give long-time fantasy historians another footnote.

In the editorial pages of this new issue, "The Eyrie", Darrell comments on the current state of horror publication. Basically he argues that the current cut-backs are due to the field defining itself too narrowly. Publishers wanted nothing but Stephen King and Dean R. Koontz clones, with an emphasis on the gross-outs (this is not exactly, but close to, Darrell's statement), and the result was boredom by the mass audience. As Darrell does in his interview here, he argues for greater variety in what horror fiction means. He promises that variety in *Weird Tales*; more specifically, we hope that this issue of *Niekas* is also part of that larger view of the field.

And in Other Late-breaking News:

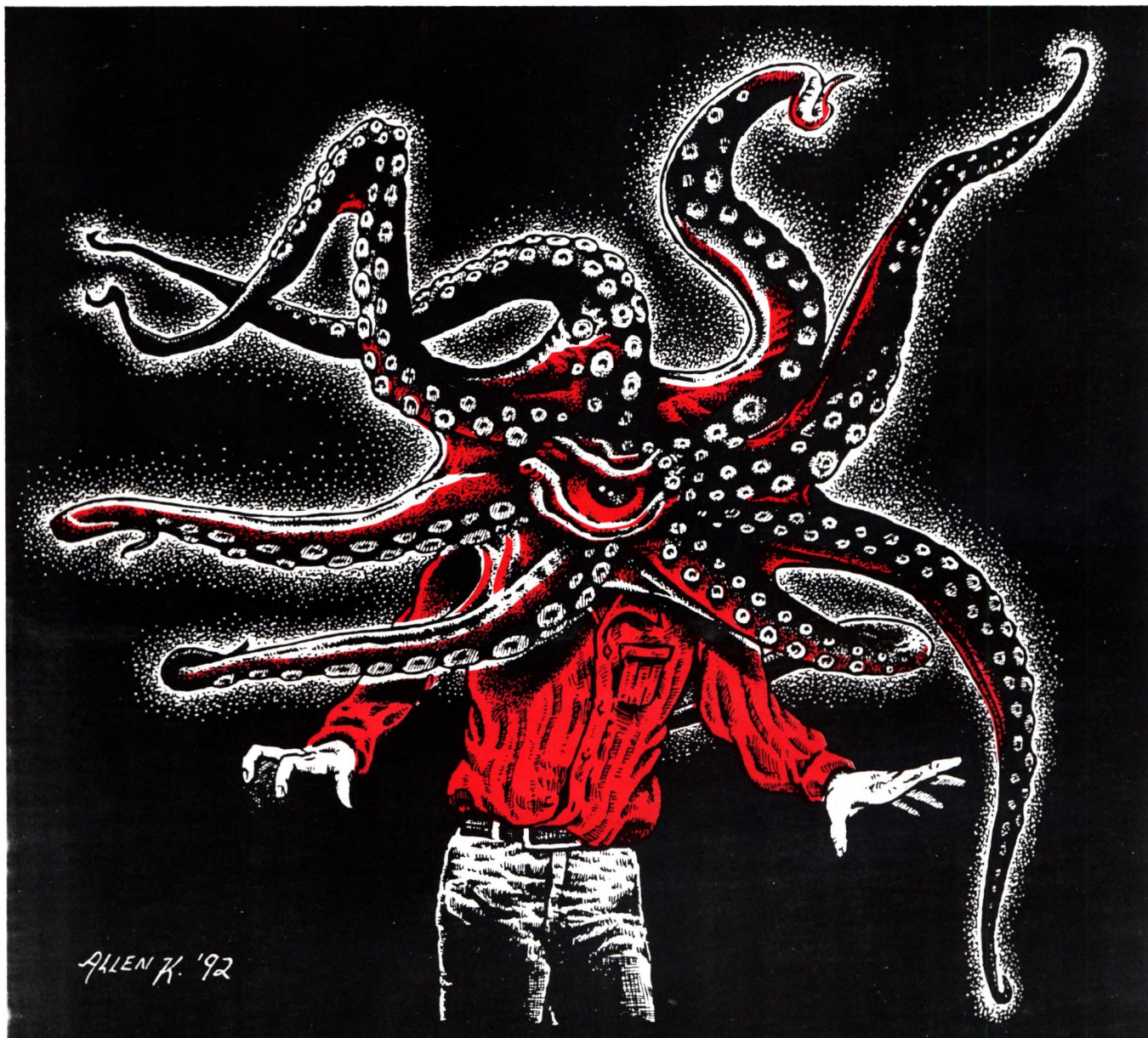
Laurell Hamilton has published a seventh novel in her Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter series (Ace, 5/98) in which the vampire leaders send a high-ranking delegation to *discuss* certain recent actions of hers.

And...

The ninth and tenth issues of *Leave it to Chance* (James Robinson and Paul Smith, Homage Comics) involve the title character, Chance Falconer with The Matinee Monsters; four B&W movie monsters conjured from LAIR OF THE MAN MONSTER for a publicity stunt. The Pharoah, the Count, the Man Monster and the Howler promptly start tearing up the magic-riddled city of Devil's Echo at the command of a Master Criminal ("They're monsters! What did you **think** they were going to do?"); can Lucas Falconer (Chance's father and occult protector of Devil's Echo) and the DEPD's Arcane Crimes Unit stop monsters immune to Multi-Faith Talismans and bullets? It's fun; read it!



THE OLDEST AND STRONGEST EMOTION OF
MANKIND IS FEAR



AND THE OLDEST AND STRONGEST KIND OF FEAR
IS FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN
— H. P. LOVECRAFT —