

Cthulhu's Empire: H. P. Lovecraft's Influence on His Contemporaries and Successors

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The work of Howard Phillips Lovecraft has had an immense and almost unprecedented influence upon much of the horror, supernatural, and science fiction that came in its wake. A writer's influence is not necessarily correlated to his or her intrinsic literary merits—the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle have also had wide influence on writers and on popular culture in general, but they remain at best competent pieces of light entertainment—but Lovecraft's influence has advanced hand in hand with his recognition as the twentieth century's exemplar of what he termed *weird fiction*, especially the “literature of the cosmic” that he made uniquely his own.

This influence was, at least during and shortly after his lifetime, intimately connected to his many personal ties with other writers, chiefly by means of his voluminous correspondence. Lovecraft was one of the most prolific letter writers in literary history, and his missives are distinguished for both their content and their frequency; he was unflinchingly kind and generous in lending advice and criticism to budding writers, and many of these correspondents retained an unflagging devotion to him even if they had never met him. The result was the formation, during his lifetime, of a distinctive “Lovecraft circle,” chiefly among some of the leading writers of the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, who seized upon elements of his evolving pseudomythology—now termed the Cthulhu Mythos—and generated elaborations upon it in the form of short stories, novellas, and full-length novels. This growing body of weird writing then took on a life of its own, with Lovecraft's relatively few tales occupying only the central core of a literary phenomenon that was much wider in scope.

Lovecraft's own career as a fiction writer began very tentatively. After writing a great many stories during his childhood, only a few of which survive, he gave up fiction writing in 1908, around the time he

dropped out of high school in Providence, Rhode Island. He spent the next several years as a recluse but emerged to the extent of joining the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA) in 1914 and the National Amateur Press Association (NAPA) in 1917. His involvement with these two groups put him in touch with numerous amateur writers, editors, and publishers who remained lifelong friends. It was in the amateur press, in 1917, that Lovecraft resumed the writing of weird fiction; and although his early contributions were not entirely well received by an amateur public that, like the wider literary community, often did not know how to appreciate nonrealistic writing, it was here that he gained his earliest colleagues and disciples.

Among the first was the young Frank Belknap Long, who was still a teenager when he joined the UAPA in 1920. Lovecraft quickly saw in Long a fellow devotee of the weird and fantastic; it was, indeed, Long who first directed Lovecraft's attention to the great Welsh fantasist Arthur Machen, whose work was then enjoying renewed attention through a series of reprints by Alfred A. Knopf. Machen emerged as the third great influence on Lovecraft's own tales, following Edgar Allan Poe, whom Lovecraft had read at the age of eight, and Lord Dunsany, the Irish fantasist whose work another amateur writer, Alice Hamlet, had brought to Lovecraft's attention in 1919.

In 1922, Lovecraft wrote a fan letter of sorts to Clark Ashton Smith, the California writer who had gained early celebrity with the publication of a scintillating book of fantastic poetry, *The Star-Treader and Other Poems* (1912). At this time, Smith had written little fiction, but the correspondence that immediately flowered between these two men, living on opposite sides of the United States, proved mutually beneficial. Smith continually asked to borrow manuscripts of Lovecraft's tales, and by 1925 he had begun to write his own. While it cannot be said that these early tales were directly influenced by Lovecraft's, Smith's inclination to write them was probably inspired in part by Lovecraft's example.

Lovecraft was one of the early writers published by *Weird Tales* when it was founded in 1923, and he was even offered the editorship of the magazine the next year, when it was in a somewhat precarious financial shape. Lovecraft, in the process of moving to New York after having married Sonia H. Greene, declined, probably wisely; the job would have required him to move to Chicago, and he would have been stranded there if the magazine had folded. Nevertheless, Lovecraft continued to contribute voluminously to the magazine and to its new editor, Farnsworth Wright.

By this time Lovecraft's own work was growing in depth and substance. In the early 1920s, he wrote a great many short tales of the macabre, but aside from such gems as "The Outsider" (*Weird Tales*, April 1926), written in 1921, and "The Rats in the Walls" (*Weird Tales*, March 1924), written in 1923, they were generally conventional and backward looking, harking back to the gothic tales of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His brief New York stay, although painful to live through—his marriage to Sonia rapidly deteriorated, and he soon found himself living alone in a situation of dire poverty—seemed to deepen and broaden his fictional outlook. "The Shunned House" (*Weird Tales*, October 1937), for example, which he wrote in 1924, is a novelette that draws upon both New England history and advanced science in its depiction of a psychic vampire that has dwelt for centuries in the cellar of an old house in Providence.

It was, however, Lovecraft's ecstatic return to Providence in April 1926 that unleashed an outpouring of fiction unprecedented in both its extent and its radical superiority to his earlier work. Over the next year and a half, he wrote many of the tales for which he would come to be known in literary history: "The Call of Cthulhu" (*Weird Tales*, February 1928), "Pickman's Model" (*Weird Tales*, October 1927), *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (published posthumously in 1943), *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (also published in 1943), and "The Colour out of Space" (*Amazing Stories*, September 1927). The first of these stories proposed the broad outlines of his pseudomythology, envisioning the

coming to Earth in remote ages of an entire race of cosmic entities, led by the octopoid Cthulhu, who is trapped in his stone city, R'lyeh, at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. An earthquake causes Cthulhu and R'lyeh to emerge from the waters momentarily, but they fall back under the waves. The tale is extraordinarily rich in its cosmic scope and its suggestion that the human race is an insignificant mote in the immense vortices of space and time.

Later stories such as “The Dunwich Horror” (*Weird Tales*, April 1929), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (*Weird Tales*, August 1931), *At the Mountains of Madness* (*Astounding Stories*, February–April 1936), *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1936), “The Thing on the Doorstep” (*Weird Tales*, January 1937), and *The Shadow out of Time* (*Astounding Stories*, June 1936) vastly expand the scope and direction of the Cthulhu Mythos, depicting a succession of other extraterrestrials (Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, etc.) who are assumed by their human worshippers to be gods but who in reality have not the slightest interest in or concern for human affairs or the fate of the human race. Human encounters with these alien creatures, whether in the backwoods of New England or in such remote areas as Antarctica or the Australian desert, are described with meticulous realism and in a prose style of carefully controlled flamboyance.

It was Frank Belknap Long who took the initiative to write the first Cthulhu Mythos pastiche. In “The Space-Eaters” (*Weird Tales*, July 1928), two characters bluntly named Frank and Howard encounter creatures who have flown through space to eat human brains. The story is frankly preposterous, and its attempts to duplicate Lovecraft’s cosmicism are weak and immature. Much better is Long’s “The Hounds of Tindalos” (*Weird Tales*, March 1929), a highly innovative tale in which the hounds of the title are envisioned as creatures who can move through the angles of time and space. Long effectively uses advances in contemporary astrophysics to depict entities who can somehow manipulate the space-time continuum to their own advantage. Lovecraft

was so taken with this story that he began dropping references to the hounds of Tindalos in his own later narratives.

Long's lengthiest fictional work adapting the Cthulhu Mythos is the short novel *The Horror from the Hills*, published in two parts in *Weird Tales* (January/February and March 1931). Long directly incorporated into the narrative a long letter by Lovecraft describing a bizarre dream he had had in 1927, in which he imagined that he had gone back in time to Roman Spain and encountered bizarre "strange dark folk" (*miri nigri*). The letter excerpt does not fit particularly well into the text, which otherwise fashions a new Lovecraftian "god," Chaugnar Faugn, approximately in the shape of an elephant.

Clark Ashton Smith did much abler work in the Lovecraft vein, although in many senses it is misleading to refer to him as a disciple or follower of Lovecraft. Although clearly influenced by Lovecraft's work, Smith believed that he was creating a parallel mythology of his own in his tales, especially those that take place in the imaginary realm of Hyperborea, in the remote past of the earth. It is in one such story, "The Tale of Satampra Zeiros" (*Weird Tales*, November 1931), that the toad-god Tsathoggua was created. Again, Lovecraft was so delighted with this invention that he frequently cited it in his own later tales, leading many to believe that Lovecraft had invented the god. Smith's tales are not so much horrific as fantastic; much more so than Lovecraft, Smith was influenced by the prose-poetic imaginary realms created by Lord Dunsany, and many of his tales of Hyperborea seem echoes of the stories in Dunsany's *The Book of Wonder* (1912).

Just as Lovecraft created an entire library of imaginary forbidden books of occult lore that purportedly supply information about the gods of the Cthulhu Mythos—chief among them being the *Necronomicon* of the "mad Arab" Abdul Alhazred, written in the eighth century CE—so did Smith begin the tradition of adding to this occult library, envisioning a document entitled *The Book of Eibon* that supplied hints about Tsathoggua. Several of Smith's tales are narratives about the wizard

Eibon, and one, “The Coming of the White Worm” (*Stirring Science Stories*, April 1941), purports to be a chapter from that tome.

Smith, however, did not always succeed when writing direct pastiches of Lovecraft, since his manner of storytelling, emphasizing fantastic landscape, was so antipodally different from Lovecraft’s rigorous realism of setting. Accordingly, such a tale as “The Return of the Sorcerer” (*Strange Tales*, September 1931), although seemingly involving the *Necronomicon*, is merely a conventional tale of a revenant. Smith was much more successful when the Lovecraft influence was only latent, as in “Ubbo-Sathla” (*Weird Tales*, July 1933), a spectacularly cosmic narrative of a man who goes back in time to the very essence of the primal life principle.

Another contemporary, Robert E. Howard, came into contact with Lovecraft in 1930. Over the next six years, the two engaged in a voluminous and intense correspondence, chiefly philosophical in nature, in which these two divergent thinkers argued about the relative merits of barbarism and civilization, freedom and social order, and the rugged frontier of the West as opposed to the settledness of the East Coast. Howard, a native Texan, held his own in these debates, which occasionally became acrimonious. But the two writers never lost their respect for each other’s work.

Howard, now best known for his tales of Conan the Cimmerian, imitated Lovecraft in a handful of tales, bringing the vigor of his narrative drive to tales that Lovecraft would probably have told in a more sedate and discursive manner. Chief among these is “The Black Stone” (*Weird Tales*, September 1931), in which Howard created his own forbidden book, *Nameless Cults* by one von Junzt—Lovecraft, with help from others, later supplied a German title, *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, as well as von Junzt’s first name, Friedrich—and otherwise tells a compelling tale of a monolith in Hungary that depicts a hideous hybrid entity on its pinnacle. “The Fire of Asshurbanipal” (*Weird Tales*, December 1936) successfully blends Howard’s action-adventure style with Lovecraft’s brooding atmosphere.

A somewhat younger contemporary, Donald Wandrei, who first got in touch with Lovecraft in 1926, did some interesting work, chiefly following the innovative mingling of horror and science fiction that characterized Lovecraft's own final decade of writing. Lovecraft recognized that Wandrei had the authentic sense of cosmicism, something that he understood was "rarer than hen's teeth" (*Selected Letters* 3: 196). One of Wandrei's earliest tales was the spectacularly cosmic "The Red Brain" (*Weird Tales*, October 1927), which tells apocalyptically of the end of the entire universe. This story is not specifically Lovecraftian, but several other Wandrei tales of the 1930s emphatically are, such as "Something from Above" (*Weird Tales*, September 1930), which borrows a key element—a meteor landing on earth—from "The Colour out of Space."

But Wandrei's most searching treatment of Lovecraftian elements comes in the novel *Dead Titans, Waken!*, written in 1929–31 and published in a somewhat altered form as *The Web of Easter Island* (1948). The great virtue of this novel is that it does not mention any actual term—neither a god nor a place-name—from Lovecraft's work, and yet it is deeply infused with the Lovecraftian spirit. The notion of various bizarre events taking place all over the world, seemingly isolated but perhaps insidiously linked, is taken from "The Call of Cthulhu," while the idea that what Wandrei calls the Titans are "the originators of the human virus on earth" (Wandrei 134) is borrowed from *At the Mountains of Madness*, where the claim is made that the extraterrestrial Old Ones created all earth life as "jest or mistake" (Lovecraft, *Fiction* 739). The original version of the novel, which was published in 2012, may be somewhat superior to the later rewrite; both versions are crude in spots, but the novel as a whole is a fundamentally serious aesthetic effort in a way that, say, Long's *The Horror from the Hills* is not.

In the 1930s, Lovecraft attracted a cadre of young devotees who, through the burgeoning fan press, sought to become friends with their revered mentor and write pastiches of his work. Several of these

individuals became leading writers of weird, fantasy, and science fiction in the decades following Lovecraft's death.

Our survey can begin with Robert Bloch, who later gained celebrity as the author of the horror/suspense novel *Psycho* (1959) but who early in his career published numerous tales of lurid supernaturalism in *Weird Tales*, many of them under Lovecraft's aegis. Bloch had gotten in touch with Lovecraft in 1933, and their four-year correspondence—and, particularly, the invaluable literary tutelage he received from the older writer—were things that Bloch never forgot. Lovecraft, indeed, perennially warned Bloch away from excessive flamboyance in both style and subject matter, recognizing that these flaws had afflicted his own early writing. The lesson eventually paid off, and along the way Bloch ended up adding his own title to the growing library of forbidden books: Ludvig Prinn's *Mysteries of the Worm*, for which Lovecraft devised a suitably ponderous Latin title, *De Vermis Mysteriis*.

Bloch's early Lovecraftian tales are not of much account, entertaining as they are as a guilty pleasure. At times it seems as if Bloch was so steeped in Lovecraftian writing that some echoes of his mentor's work may well be unconscious. There is little need to rehearse the quaint trilogy of stories that the two writers produced: Bloch's "The Shambler from the Stars" (*Weird Tales*, September 1935), in which a character manifestly based on Lovecraft was killed off hideously, inspiring Lovecraft's own "The Haunter of the Dark" (*Weird Tales*, December 1936), in which a character named Robert Blake is similarly annihilated, followed years later by Bloch's "The Shadow from the Steeple" (*Weird Tales*, September 1950). Bloch seemed particularly fascinated by the figure of Nyarlathotep, which in an early prose poem Lovecraft declares to have emerged in Egypt, "out of the blackness of twenty-seven centuries" (*Fiction* 121). Bloch accordingly produced many tales of Egyptian horror in which that baleful shape-shifting entity lurks in the background.

A more serious treatment of Lovecraftian themes occurs in the later story "Black Bargain" (*Weird Tales*, May 1942). In a tale written in the

clipped, hard-boiled prose that we recognize from his later suspense novels, Bloch effects an ingenious variation on the theme of psychic transference, borrowing elements from Lovecraft's "The Thing on the Doorstep" but creating a tale that, in its understated power, is very much his own.

Fritz Leiber was in touch with Lovecraft for only the last six months of the latter's life, but he too has testified that Lovecraft was "the chiefest influence on my literary development after Shakespeare" (qtd. in Byfield 11). Leiber perhaps intended to place particular emphasis on the word *development*, for in his early tales he draws frequently, but on the whole indirectly, on Lovecraft's themes and motifs. "The Sunken Land" (*Unknown Worlds*, February 1942), for example, draws upon at least four different Lovecraft stories for some elements of plot. Leiber was particularly inspired by Lovecraft's quasi-science-fictional tales *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Shadow out of Time*, and the influence of these narratives is apparent in such tales as "Diary in the Snow" (1947). Even Leiber's celebrated novel *Conjure Wife* (1943), about the existence of witchcraft in the modern world, may owe something to Lovecraft's "The Dreams in the Witch House" (*Weird Tales*, July 1933).

Less successful in his Lovecraftian writing was Henry Kuttner, who corresponded with Lovecraft for about a year before the latter's death. His pastiches of the Cthulhu Mythos are generally unimaginative and implausible; even the most celebrated of them, "The Salem Horror" (*Weird Tales*, May 1937), is a crude imitation of "The Dreams in the Witch House." Lovecraft introduced Kuttner to his future wife, C. L. Moore, but although she exchanged many letters with Lovecraft over a two-year period, there is little demonstrable influence of his work upon her own.

I have delayed the discussion of August Derleth until now because, although he came in touch with Lovecraft as early as 1926 and corresponded voluminously with him for a decade, his role in the preservation of Lovecraft's work and his development of the Cthulhu Mythos

came largely after his mentor's death. Derleth had, indeed, written several pastiches during Lovecraft's lifetime, including the first draft of "The Return of Hastur" in 1931; Lovecraft read many of these and commented charitably on them, even going to far as to say in a letter, "I *like* to have others use my Azathoths & Nyarlathoteps—& in return I shall use Klarkash-Ton's [Clark Ashton Smith] Tsathoggua, your monk Clithanus, & [Robert E.] Howard's Bran" (*Essential Solitude* 1: 353; ital. in orig.). Derleth took this sentence as a kind of *carte blanche* to elaborate upon the Cthulhu Mythos in his own fashion; but in doing so he departed radically from Lovecraft's own conceptions.

Derleth, a devout Roman Catholic, appeared unwilling to face the chilling cosmic vision at the heart of Lovecraft's fiction and worldview. Accordingly, he revised the mythos so that the amoral "Old Ones" (Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep, etc.) were deemed "evil"; then, out of whole cloth, he devised a countervailing set of entities, the Elder Gods, whose purpose was evidently to preserve mankind from the Old Ones' depredations. Strictly speaking, Derleth was within his rights to take the mythos in whatever direction he wished; but he was not within his rights to attribute these conceptions to Lovecraft, as he did in article after article, as well as in such monographs as *H. P. L.: A Memoir* (1945). As a result, what has come to be called the "Derleth mythos" was assumed to be identical to Lovecraft's own vision.

Derleth compounded his failings by writing a series of oxymoronic so-called posthumous collaborations—tales elaborated from random entries in Lovecraft's commonplace book (a series of brief plot germs and fragments of imagery that Lovecraft kept throughout his life and used on occasion as the source of his own tales) and published deceitfully as "By H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth." The first of these, the short novel *The Lurker at the Threshold* (1945), is based on only twelve hundred words of actual Lovecraft prose; it begins well, but it rapidly deteriorates into a naive good-versus-evil struggle between the Old Ones and the Elder Gods. Other posthumous collaborations have even less Lovecraft prose, and most have none at all. Derleth also

wrote other Lovecraftian stories that he gathered in such volumes as *The Mask of Cthulhu* (1958) and *The Trail of Cthulhu* (1962).

The chief flaw with Derleth's work, above and beyond his perversions of Lovecraft's pseudomythology, is that it is simply poor on an abstractly aesthetic level. Characterization is wooden and stereotypical, the plots are frequently repetitive and predictable, and Derleth's unwise attempts to imitate Lovecraft's dense, richly textured prose result in unwitting parodies of his mentor's work. Paradoxical as it may sound, Derleth did not have much of a feel for weird fiction, even though he spent much of his life writing, editing, and publishing it, and most of his non-Lovecraftian tales are conventional stories of ghosts and revenants.

Where Derleth is to be commended is in his largely selfless promotion of Lovecraft's work and reputation. When Lovecraft died in 1937, he was revered in the small world of pulp fiction but a virtual nonentity in the broader literary community, as no book of his tales had been issued by a major publisher. Derleth attempted to interest in his own publisher, Scribner, in a large volume of Lovecraft's tales; but Scribner demurred at the size of the volume, so Derleth quickly decided to publish it himself. He and Donald Wandrei formed the small press Arkham House, initially for the sole purpose of publishing Lovecraft's work in hardcover; Arkham House later issued work by other weird writers and was for decades the most distinguished small press in the field.

But there are problematical aspects even to this work of Derleth's. He made dubious claims of owning the copyrights of Lovecraft's texts and even asserted that the Cthulhu Mythos was copyrighted by Arkham House. His editions of Lovecraft's work are full of typographical and textual errors, and it would be decades before they could be corrected. And his relegation of Lovecraft to the small press actually hindered Lovecraft's acceptance by the broader literary world, a development that occurred only after Derleth's death.

The first few decades following Lovecraft's death saw little development of the Cthulhu Mythos beyond Derleth and his immediate

colleagues. Some very interesting work appeared in *Weird Tales* by writers unconnected with Lovecraft. One notable item is “Far Below” (*Weird Tales*, July 1939), by the obscure writer Robert Barbour Johnson, a mesmerizing tale of the New York subways manifestly inspired by “Pickman’s Model” but nonetheless a potent and original contribution. C. Hall Thompson also wrote some striking mythos tales, notably “Spawn of the Green Abyss” (*Weird Tales*, November 1946), which interestingly mingles Lovecraftian cosmicism with domestic conflict. But Derleth took offense at Thompson’s encroachment into the Lovecraftian domain and forced him to give up the writing of such pastiches.

Derleth, however, did unwittingly give a certain impetus to a more searching treatment of Lovecraftian themes. In the mid-1960s, he came in touch with the British philosopher Colin Wilson, who had written harshly about Lovecraft in the treatise *The Strength to Dream: Literature and the Imagination* (1961). Derleth apparently invited Wilson to write his own Lovecraftian pastiche, and the latter complied with not one but a trilogy of novels, beginning with *The Mind Parasites* (1967). This stimulating novel of ideas uses Lovecraft as a springboard for the exploration of the future intellectual development of the human race. Even more centrally Lovecraftian is *The Philosopher’s Stone* (1969), which depicts the millennia-old history of the Old Ones in an unforgettable fashion. The final volume in the loose trilogy, *The Space Vampires* (1976), is less specifically Lovecraftian but an entertaining read nonetheless.

More vitally, Derleth nurtured the early work of the British writer Ramsey Campbell, publishing his first volume, *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants* (1964), when Campbell was just eighteen. These teenage Lovecraftian pastiches are certainly crude enough, but very soon thereafter Campbell began doing much more profound work. Such tales as “Cold Print” (1969) and “The Franklyn Paragraphs” (1973) reveal an understanding of the essence of Lovecraft’s vision—especially the notion of the forbidden book—that would put

writers of twice Campbell's age to shame. Derleth accepted but did not live to see the publication of Campbell's second book, *Demons by Daylight* (1973), which in many ways single-handedly ushered in a new era of literate weird fiction, one that featured searching characterization, a bold confrontation of social and personal trauma, and an originality in the manipulation of weird motifs that makes much supernatural fiction of the preceding centuries seem crude by comparison.

Derleth was less successful in his promotion of the British writer Brian Lumley. Lumley wholeheartedly espoused the Derleth mythos, and in a vast series of novels and tales expounded endless battles between the Elder Gods and what he ludicrously called the CCD (Cthulhu Cycle Deities), all for the benefit of humankind. Lumley's work is crippled by slipshod writing; highly conventional scenarios; a penchant for such gimmicks of popular fiction as the cliffhanger, action-adventure plots, and crude, simple-minded prose; and, in general, a lack of depth or intensity of vision.

It seemed to require Derleth's death for the next phase of both Lovecraft scholarship and neo-Lovecraftian fiction writing to develop. It was just at that time that a new generation of scholars began to look more penetratingly into both Lovecraft's fiction and the philosophical vision—mechanistic materialism, forthright atheism, and other elements—that underlay it. Such critics as Richard L. Tierney and Dirk W. Mosig exposed the fallacies of the Derleth mythos and displayed the epic grandeur of Lovecraft's cosmicism for the first time.

Writers were not slow to take up the cause. The veteran Robert Bloch, in the novel *Strange Eons* (1978), portrayed the emergence of Nyarlathotep into the modern world as the harbinger for the destruction of the entire universe. Ramsey Campbell's later novels, including *The Hungry Moon* (1986), *Midnight Sun* (1990), and *The Darkest Part of the Woods* (2002), are infused with a chilling cosmicism that much of his earlier Lovecraftian work lacks.

Younger writers also came to the fore. T. E. D. Klein, in such tales as "Black Man with a Horn" (published in Ramsey Campbell's landmark

anthology *New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*, 1980) and “Nadelman’s God” (in his exemplary collection *Dark Gods*, 1985), depicts strange creatures and races dwelling on the underside of human society, and his novel *The Ceremonies* (1984) fuses elements from Lovecraft, Arthur Machen, and other weird writers into a complex tapestry of horror. Still more dynamic was Thomas Ligotti, who emerged out of fandom to publish *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (1986) and other story collections that draw upon Lovecraft’s ideas while at the same time reflecting an intensely personal and unique vision of a world turned into nightmare.

Writers of today now seem to have endless opportunities for publishing neo-Lovecraftian work, given how many original anthologies in recent years have been devoted to such writing. These range from Stephen Jones’s *Shadows over Innsmouth* (1994) and *Weird Shadows over Innsmouth* (2005) to Ellen Datlow’s *Lovecraft Unbound* (2009) to S. T. Joshi’s ongoing *Black Wings* series (2010–). Such writers as William Browning Spencer, Caitlín R. Kiernan, Laird Barron, W. H. Pugmire, and Jonathan Thomas have drawn deeply upon Lovecraft’s work for inspiration while at the same time remaining profoundly original in their weird writings. Spencer’s scintillating novel *Résumé with Monsters* (1995) is a kaleidoscopic fusion of Lovecraftian terror, social satire, and an enthralling action-adventure scenario. Kiernan, who moved to Lovecraft’s Providence in the early years of the new millennium, has written such novels as *The Daughter of Hounds* (2007), drawing upon the ghouls that Lovecraft described in “Pickman’s Model” and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, and *The Red Tree* (2009), set in Lovecraft’s native state. Barron’s novel *The Croning* (2012) is infused with Lovecraftian elements. Jonathan Thomas’s *The Color over Occam* (2012) uses “The Colour out of Space” as a springboard for a searching portrayal of environmental degradation and political corruption, and its climactic scene, in the sewers of Occam (the new name for Lovecraft’s Arkham), is one of the most gripping scenes in contemporary weird fiction.

An interesting development is the use of Lovecraft himself as a literary character. Earlier depictions of Lovecraft as an eccentric recluse have given way to newer and more accurate information about the man and writer, but his complex and perhaps contradictory personality—not to mention his iconic visage, now reproduced on T-shirts, coffee mugs, and other paraphernalia—has attracted the interest of many fiction writers. Peter Cannon has written two engaging short novels: *Pulptime* (1984), in which Lovecraft and his New York friends engage in a case with the aged Sherlock Holmes, and *The Lovecraft Chronicles* (2004), an alternate-history narrative in which Lovecraft attains literary success and visits his beloved England. Richard A. Lupoff, in *Lovecraft's Book* (1985), daringly probes Lovecraft's racism by depicting the Providence writer becoming momentarily involved in a campaign to disseminate Nazi propaganda. An augmented version appeared as *Marblehead* (2007). S. T. Joshi, in *The Assaults of Chaos* (2013), takes Lovecraft to England, where he engages in a supernatural adventure with such weird writers as Arthur Machen and Lord Dunsany.

Lovecraft's influence on science fiction is a largely untouched subject—surprisingly so, since many of his later tales of the Cthulhu Mythos are largely within the rubric of science fiction and were published in such flagship periodicals as *Amazing Stories* and *Astounding Stories*. It would appear that some science-fiction writers of earlier generations found Lovecraft's lush prose, antipodal to the bare-bones English of much early science fiction, not to their liking, and they also took umbrage at his dark vision of a universe populated by hostile entities, so different from the standard science-fiction view of the universe as a platform for endless human exploration and development.

Typical of this attitude was John W. Campbell Jr., who in 1939 explicitly noted, in describing what kind of writing he wished for his new journal *Unknown*: "I do not want old-fashioned, 19th century writing, the kind that has burdened fantasy readers steadily in *Weird Tales*. . . . I do not want the kind of stuff Lovecraft doted on. He was

immensely liked—by the small clique that read *Weird* regularly. It still wasn't good writing" (qtd. in Dziemianowicz 14). It has been plausibly maintained that Campbell's novelette "Who Goes There?" (*Astounding Science Fiction*, August 1938) was a deliberate answer to *At the Mountains of Madness*: in this Antarctic adventure, Campbell takes care to pay far more attention to the human protagonists than to the otherworldly threat facing them.

The case of Arthur C. Clarke is quite different. In his memoir, *Astounding Days* (1989), he testifies to how much he enjoyed Lovecraft's two long tales in *Astounding Stories*, *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Shadow out of Time*. The latter tale in particular seems to have inspired him. One key element of that tale is the notion that a group of highly intelligent extraterrestrial entities, the Great Race, has perfected the art of mind exchange over time and has thereby infiltrated the minds of select human beings in all periods of human history, with the dim implication that these human beings have thereby fostered dynamic developments in the species. Clarke elaborates on these conceptions in two of his novels, *Childhood's End* (1953) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), in a manner that leaves no doubt that Lovecraft was a significant influence upon them.

Lovecraft's influence on mainstream literature is also a topic deserving much more detailed treatment. Although glancing allusions to Lovecraft can be found in writers as diverse as Gore Vidal, S. J. Perelman, Paul Theroux, and Umberto Eco, it cannot be said that these passing mentions constitute significant literary influence. Lovecraft was so little known in his own time, and in the half century following his death, that mainstream writers could be excused for not realizing that such a writer even existed.

The well-read Thomas Pynchon may, however, be an exception. J. L. Meikle has made an ingenious argument for the influence of "The Call of Cthulhu" on *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966). Meikle may be overstating the case, as the novel does not read at all like Lovecraft, and the parallels that Meikle has detected may be coincidental or tangential. A

stronger case may be made in regard to Pynchon's more recent novel *Against the Day* (2006): one element of this sprawling, byzantine novel may owe something to *At the Mountains of Madness*.

Joyce Carol Oates should not be omitted. Her respect for Lovecraft is of long standing, and she has not only edited a selection, *Tales of H. P. Lovecraft* (1997), but written frequently about him in essays and reviews. A significant body of Oates's bountiful work is in the realm of the gothic and the weird, and Lovecraft is a frequent source of inspiration in some of her short stories.

H. P. Lovecraft has become not only a recognized American author—his canonization occurred no later than the publication of his *Tales* (2005) in the Library of America—but an icon of popular culture. His influence has extended well beyond literature and into the realms of film, television, comic books, video and role-playing games, and even the merchandising of toys. It is safe to say that writers of many different stripes will continue to draw inspiration from his chilling but seductive vision of a cosmos in which human beings occupy a minuscule and derisively transient place.

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