Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares, Volumes 1 & 2

Edited by
S. T. Joshi

ICONS OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL

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An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares

VOLUME 1

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Preface

Although the genre of supernatural horror can be thought to date to the earliest writings of human civilization, it has gained particular importance and popularity within the last century, and particularly within the last three decades. Such popular writers as Stephen King, Anne Rice, J. K. Rowling (whose works tread the borderline between the supernatural and pure fantasy), Peter Straub, Clive Barker, and Neil Gaiman have brought the genre unprecedented attention in the literary world; less popular but perhaps even more accomplished writers such as Ramsey Campbell, Thomas Ligotti, and Caitlin R. Kiernan have elevated the supernatural to the highest levels of literary craftsmanship. The inclusion of H. P. Lovecraft, in many ways the father of twentieth-century supernatural writing, in the prestigious Library of America shows that this field can attain canonical status. Paralleling the growth of supernatural literature is the burgeoning of the supernatural in film, television, comic books, role-playing games, and other media, so that it can truly be said that we live in a haunted age.

Icons of Horror and the Supernatural examines twenty-four of the leading icons of supernatural and nonsupernatural fiction, tracing their roots in folklore and legend and discussing their prevalence in literature, film, and other media as well as in popular culture and society as a whole. The articles, written by leading authorities in the field, are aimed at a general audience of students and interested readers and written without the use of the technical jargon of literary criticism; but, because of their comprehensiveness, they will be of interest to scholars as well. Because the articles are substantially longer than conventional encyclopedia entries, ranging between 12,000 and 15,000 words, they allow for an exhaustive coverage of their topic, but are nonetheless not as lengthy as full-length books on the subject, which would make them less convenient as introductions to their chosen subjects. The articles, arranged alphabetically, use an eclectic mix of critical approaches—historical, thematic, philosophical/religious—as dictated by the subject matter. Since the supernatural literature has drawn many of its central concepts from ancient religious

and folkloristic beliefs, many of the articles discuss the anthropological roots of these icons in order to contextualize their continuing use in present-day media. But since horror can be manifested in a nonsupernatural manner—such as the icon of the Serial Killer—some articles examine the social and political implications of their subjects.

Each article concludes with a thorough primary and secondary bibliography, including full information on all works cited in the text and suggestions for further reading. These works include not only printed works but also Web sites and other electronic sources. In addition, the articles are augmented by sidebars featuring quotations from important literary works discussed, lists and chronologies that readers may find helpful for an understanding of the scope and parameters of the subject, and brief discussions of tangential issues related to the subject.

It is hoped that *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural* will be a useful guide to a genre that continues to evolve dynamically and innovatively, if current specimens in literature and other media are any guide, and that continues to elicit the enthusiasm of millions of readers, listeners, and viewers. As a genre that exposes our deepest fears—not only fears of injury or death, but fears engendered by our ignorance of the fundamental nature of the world and the universe—the supernatural will always have a place in human society, and will always stand in need of explication by authoritative hands.

—S. T. Joshi

The Alien

by Donald R. Burleson

The icon of the extraterrestrial or alien is arguably the epitome of the unknown, obtruding upon the world of the known and evoking a broad spectrum of human reactions, not least among them the sensations of awe, dark fascination, and fear. Perhaps H. P. Lovecraft said it best. "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear," he reminds us in the introduction to his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature," "and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror* 12).

The quality of "outsideness"—of coming to us from unknown spheres of being—would alone be sufficient to imbue the alien icon with a lasting aura of fascination, but matters have taken a further turn, beginning in the mid-twentieth century. Many (though certainly not all) aliens are associated in the popular mind with unidentified flying objects (UFOs), and here the question fails to confine itself altogether to the realm of fiction and fantasy, given the tens of thousands of UFO reports appearing over the years essentially beginning with the purported Roswell, New Mexico, case of July 1947. Literally millions of people claim to have seen flying saucers, and some even claim to have had contact (whether by outright abduction or some less intrusive experience) with these crafts' alien crew members.

In this sense, the alien icon in literature and film differs, in its impact upon the human psyche, from such other icons of horror and the supernatural as the vampire, the werewolf, the ghoul, and the zombie. Practically no one claims to have had any experience, indirect or otherwise, with vampires or zombies, but many people (even if they have not had such experiences themselves directly) at least have a friend or a relative who claims to have seen something truly anomalous in the skies.

Thus the alien icon is one that, at least by rumor, has enjoyed some exposure in human experience, unlike, say, werewolves. If an alien is an entity that one's Aunt Clara or one's dentist may conceivably have seen, or whose spacecraft at any rate such people may have glimpsed, then the alien enters that twilight realm of the perhaps fictitious, perhaps not entirely fictitious being. It is this ambiguity, this difficulty in categorizability, in part, that lends the icon its interest for readers and for patrons of film.

This icon, as a concept or motif, has taken on many varied forms, as could be expected of a concept having its reputed origins in the Great Outside. There is some commonality of description from people who claim to have seen extraterrestrials close up, and this has made its way into book art and into film as (primarily) the short humanoid "gray alien" with large, black, almond-shaped eyes. (Reputed abductees and contactees have also described a "reptilian" sort of alien as well as a more humanoid "Nordic" type.) But in general this motif in literature and film reflects the full spectrum of the artistic imagination, ranging from aliens cute-and-cuddly to aliens ugly and vicious, from aliens strictly humanoid to aliens monstrously grotesque, from tangible beings to abstract entities invisibly inhabiting the human minds and bodies of their unwitting hosts. In motive, the depicted aliens range from benevolent to savagely hostile, from desiring to save humankind to desiring only to exterminate humans and possess the earth by force.

It seems logical to say, at the outset, that the most emotionally engaging artistic uses of the alien motif occur not so much in those science fiction treatments that show aliens in their own faraway worlds in space—where, after all, they logically and naturally belong—but rather in those fictional and

film treatments that show aliens among us right here on earth, where these creatures (one would suppose) do not belong.

Indeed, part of the impact of the alien, especially of the intruding or invading sort, in fiction and film in the 1950s, when many of the most striking treatments of the subject appeared, was that the notion of invading aliens tended to allegorize what was in those ''McCarthy Era'' days a major popular and political concern, primarily in the United States: the possible invasion of one's homeland by communist hordes from afar, bent on destruction of one's own way of life. On either a conscious or an unconscious level, many film patrons in particular indulged in enough of this sort of artistic paranoia to make major successes of the films (and books) in question.

Aliens made their appearance in literature as early as 1898 with H. G. Wells's novel *The War of the Worlds* and remained a common motif in the print medium throughout the burgeoning of science fiction in the 1930s. But nothing impresses an idea on the public mind quite like film, and the post–World War II era in fact is primarily the period in which, fueled on some level by political concerns, the alien saw its beginnings as a vastly popular icon developed by whole series of now classic movies. Not everyone reads widely, and not everyone who reads widely reads science fiction, but virtually everyone sees movies, and there is no question that the film industry has been the primary conduit through which popular images of aliens have flowed. While many films about extraterrestrials began as short stories or novels, or were in turn novelized after the fact, the films themselves clearly have reached the widest audience, and as a result the alien is an icon firmly imprinted upon the popular mindset.

Unlike such icons as the vampire and the werewolf, whose origins recede back through the centuries, the alien motif as a popular fixation is basically a concept of relatively recent production—this in spite of the fact that ''flying saucer'' stories do go back in time several hundred years at the very least. Some commentators even point to possible Biblical references to UFOs, as in the matter of the Star of Bethlehem or the matter of ''fiery chariots'' crisscrossing the skies, and psychoanalyst Carl Jung has even suggested that the ''saucers'' amount to an archetypal presence in the human psyche.

But the difference is that while anomalous sky-objects do occasionally appear in old woodcuts and paintings, the alien presences presumably flying those devices generally do not, with the exception of occasional artistic representations of possible interpretation as strange life forms. It is only with the mid-twentieth-century Cold War era and its perhaps politically motivated books and movies—certainly influenced by popular reports of UFOs, whatever the truth of such reports may have been—that the alien comes to have a lasting place in fiction and film.

However, it is not to be denied that the far-sighted H. G. Wells (1866–1946) started the process half a century earlier with his novel of Martian invasion. If the alien motif in its more widespread form was an idea whose time had to

come—as it did in the mid-twentieth century in parallel with the popularization of UFO sighting reports—then its early appearance in literature had to be at the hands of a genius many decades ahead of his time. Wells, who had already produced several novels scarcely to be imagined by most nineteenth-century minds—*The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), and *The Invisible Man* (1897)—turned his attention in 1898 to the notion of invasion by aliens of superior technology and intellect, remarkably foreshadowing the fascination that would gather around the topic during the flying saucer sighting waves of the 1950s. *The War of the Worlds*, appealing to all ages, was to become a staple of school libraries and no doubt laid the psychological groundwork for the later popularity of aliens, a popularity that took another quantum leap in the 1980s with the Roswell story and placed the "almond-eyed alien" as a graphic icon into prominence everywhere from T-shirts to lunchboxes to casino games.

Wells was the original creative force, and his aliens were not the stuff pleasant dreams are made of. The narrator of *The War of the Worlds*, describing the tentacled thing emerging from the first fallen cylinder, says:

> Two large, dark-colored eyes were regarding me steadfastly. The mass that framed them, the head of the thing, was rounded, and had, one might say, a face. There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva. The whole creature heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air. (20)

This was strong stuff for 1898. Modern readers with long-standing familiarity with alien lore may well find it difficult to comprehend just how striking such imagery was, at about the same time electric lights were first coming into common use and man's first teetering attempts at flight were still five years away. Bulbous-headed, techno-giant squids from Mars were a momentous step forward for the human imagination.

While Wells's forte overall seems to have been his sense of technological wonder, he manages to mingle science with horror in unforgettable ways. He describes, for example, the roving Martian machines, like enormous crabs controlled by the repulsive Martian creatures themselves: "At first, I say, the handling machine did not impress me as a machine, but as a crablike creature with a glittering integument, the controlling Martian whose delicate tentacles actuated its movements seeming to be simply the equivalent of the crab's cerebral portion" (151). This imagery of the Martian "octopus-as-brain" is genuinely haunting.

Wells's narrator, speaking of these multi-legged "handling machines," refers to them as devices, "the study of which has already given such an enormous impetus to terrestrial invention" (150), eerily foreshadowing the whole later notion of "back-engineering," said by some (in the wake of the Roswell

incident) to have been responsible for the human developments of computers, lasers, and fiber optics from analysis of recovered alien spacecraft debris.

While much of the impetus for impressing the "extraterrestrial alien" motif upon the public consciousness during the twentieth century would come to reside in the area of film, and while the print medium treatment of this motif would largely consist of its being a commonplace in the realm of science fiction, at least one writer of note would bring the motif to the table in the realm of horror and supernatural literature. H. P. Lovecraft's well-known 1930 tale, "The Whisperer in Darkness," not only deals with aliens in a particularly eerie way, but even experiments with the notion of aliens' abduction of humans, and this a full three decades before the Betty and Barney Hill reported abduction case in New Hampshire (September 1961) was to make *abduction* a household word.

In "The Whisperer in Darkness," the November 1927 floods in Vermont (a real cluster of events, representative of Lovecraft's penchant for weaving real historical happenings together with accounts of profound horror) become the occasion of some witnesses' spotting certain disturbing remains floating in the flood-swollen rivers: "They were pinkish things about five feet long; with crustaceous bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins or membraneous wings and several sets of articulated limbs, and with a sort of convoluted ellipsoid, covered with multitudes of very short antennae, where a head would ordinarily be" (Lovecraft, *Dunwich Horror* 210). The story's narrator, a Massachusetts professor named Albert Wilmarth, being a student of New England folklore, takes an interest in these accounts and engages in debates, in print in the newspapers, about the veracity of what has been reported. The accounts from Vermont continue to supply tantalizing shreds of detail, "averring that the creatures were a sort of huge, light-red crab with many pairs of legs and with two great bat-like wings in the middle of the back" (Lovecraft, *Dunwich Horror* 211).

At first skeptical, Wilmarth falls into correspondence with a Vermont recluse named Henry Wentworth Akeley, who reports that his farmhouse is being besieged by the mysterious woodland creatures. In time Akeley sends Wilmarth recordings taken in the woods, and Wilmarth is chilled to hear buzzing insectoid voices imitative of human speech. At length, after receiving what appears to be an uncommonly encouraging and upbeat letter supposedly from Akeley, Wilmarth decides to travel to Vermont to see for himself. Once in the lonely farmhouse, he finds his host to be an apparently ill figure seated in the dark, with a sort of waxen face that does not seem to move, and with a kind of subliminal hum barely perceptible in the air around his host. The reader is probably quicker than the rather annoyingly naïve Wilmarth to figure out what is going on. In any case, Lovecraft's buzzing-insectoid-crab-like aliens are an early entry in what of course would come to be a wealth of public fascination with the whole concept. (Lovecraft would return to the motif of alien abduction in 1934–1935 with his novella "The Shadow out of Time.")

...most of the tales and impressions concerned a relatively late race, of a queer and intricate shape resembling no life-form known to man. This, they indicated, was the greatest race of all; because it alone had conquered the secret of time. It had learned all things that ever were known *or ever would be known* on the earth, through the power of its keenest minds to project themselves into the past and future, even through gulfs of millions of years, and study the lore of every age. From the accomplishments of this race arose all legends of *prophets,* including those in human mythology.

H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Shadow out of Time''

''The Whisperer in Darkness'' had been in the literature for two decades and H. G. Wells's groundbreaking novel *The War of the Worlds* had already been entertaining its own readers for half a century before the appearance in 1953 of the spectacular film *War of the Worlds* (Paramount, director Byron Haskin, screenplay by Barré Lyndon), starring Gene Barry, Les Tremayne, and Ann Robinson. Set in New Jersey and providing amazing special effects for a film made so early, this treatment of the Wells classic highlighted the notion of murderously advanced alien technology and, tantalizingly, provided only two very brief glimpses of the Martians themselves: one in the besieged farmhouse scene (when Gene Barry and Ann Robinson encounter a large-headed, spindly-limbed alien with one three-lobed eye) and one in the final scene, when a single sinewy arm, terminating in three suction-cupped fingers, extends itself in death from the interior of a crashed spacecraft. (Unlike the original novel, the film expends most of its energies on the aliens' flying machines, crescent-shaped flying saucers, rather than the walking machines per se.) The aliens here are treated as mental giants but physical weaklings, painfully sensitive even to strong light, and indeed they meet their demise not from human resistance but (as in the novel) from their lack of immunity to terrestrial bacteria; this eventuality is not only a convenient plot device but a plausible one as well, in terms of the probable microbiological implications of any such contact between earthlings and aliens—not surprisingly, considering that H. G. Wells himself began his career as a biology teacher and knew about such things. This film, coming as it did one year after the July/August 1952 wave of UFO sightings over Washington, D.C., found—whatever the truth about those sightings—a ready audience and served further to incite popular interest in the whole notion of extraterrestrial creatures coming to call. And again, in a developing Cold War age of anxiety, such a story had its political *raison d'être* as well, though it portrayed humankind in opposition to the alien invaders rather than in division against itself.

Just as half a century elapsed between the Wells novel and the 1953 film, another half century would elapse before the film was remade, and then there would be two (very different) remakes in the same year. Pendragon Pictures

produced *H. G. Wells' The War of the Worlds* in 2005 (director Timothy Hines, screenplay by Timothy Hines and Susan Goforth), starring Anthony Piana, Jack Clay, James Lathrop, Darlene Renee Sellers, John Kaufmann, and Jamie Lynn Sease. Set in nineteenth-century England like the novel itself, this film version, though limited in spots by rather peculiar computer-simulation effects and slow pacing, does stick closely to the original text and does provide memorable glimpses of the aliens themselves, closely true to Wells's original conception.

Here, as in the original novel, some of the Martian creatures clamber from a crashed cylinder in plain view of onlookers, and their octopoid appearance—large puffy heads, wildly thrashing tentacles—closely matches Wells's descriptions in print. The watery and irregularly pupiled eyes in particular are disturbing, with a look about them that is somehow frighteningly intelligent, yet cold and uncaring; these impressions are all the more powerful for the fact that the creatures are only fleetingly in view on camera, since for most of the film one sees the roving machines rather than the being controlling them.

There is, however, a protracted besieged-farmhouse scene in which two men in hiding observe, through a crack in the cellar wall, both the octopoid creatures and the "handling machines," the larger versions of which are eerily insect-like metallic shapes towering over the countryside. In this scene, rather distantly reflecting the Gene Barry farmhouse scene of the 1953 film, a fallen cylinder has come to rest against the side of the house, trapping the two human observers, and, as in the first film, the invading aliens send a mechanical probe snaking its way into the house in search of human life; the horror and the sense of menace are exquisite here, portraying an alien presence seeming invincible but vulnerable in the end, as in other treatments, to earthly bacteria harmless to humans.

But a more outstanding movie treatment appeared in 2005 as well, from Dreamworks/Paramount Pictures: Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* (music by John Williams, screenplay by Josh Friedman and David Koepp), starring Tom Cruise and Dakota Fanning. This ambitious film, appearing 107 years after Wells's novel and set, like the 1953 film, not in England but in New Jersey, departs in some significant ways from the original plot, yet goes a long way toward perpetuating Wells's far-sighted artistic vision and establishing the icon of the extraterrestrial alien intruder as one of the most powerful and disturbing motifs operative in the realms of horror and science fiction.

The success of this highlighting of the alien icon as a source of fright is due in no small part to the brilliant performance of Tom Cruise's child costar Dakota Fanning. Cruise portrays the head of a dysfunctional family finding itself in the midst of the Martian invasion, and Dakota Fanning, his daughter, reflects precisely the sort of half-deranged terror that a child (especially a child already somewhat unsettled by her parents' divorce) could genuinely be expected to undergo; in effect, she is a sort of dramatic sounding-board or barometer for the alien invaders' propensity for horror.

In this film treatment, the striding Martian machines have lain buried under the soil for an undisclosed but evidently very protracted amount of time until they are activated by lightning-borne aliens and rise to terrorize the human population. Though a departure from the original novel, this notion of a dormant alien presence turned active is decidedly powerful. Like the other treatments of Wells's tale, this film includes a ''besieged house'' scene in which the protagonist is forced to dodge about the nooks and crannies of a basement in an attempt to elude the Martian creatures themselves, who creep into the house and show themselves to be the sort of ''fan-headed'' aliens seen in such other treatments as the film *Roswell*, though (unlike what one sees in *Roswell*) undeniably nasty of disposition. Again, the primary energies of the film are devoted to showing the systematic rout of humankind, until the invading creatures fall victim to the effects of terrestrial bacteria to which they naturally have developed no immunity.

Altogether, it seems fair to say that with the original novel *The War of the Worlds* and all the film derivations it has generated, H. G. Wells has done as much as any person who ever lived to impress the notion of hostile aliens upon the human psyche. It should be mentioned that in fact the effect of Wells's work took a direction that he never would have been likely to anticipate when (Halloween 1938) Orson Welles broadcast a radio-play version of *The War of the Worlds* on Mercury Theater with the unintended effect of terrifying a great many people who tuned in late and did not know that what they were hearing was a dramatization.

Not all treatments of the subject function the same way, of course. Aliens are not always even portrayed as tangible beings. They may take various forms, humanoid or otherwise, when they are tangible. They are not always characterized as hostile, and indeed sometimes the matter is ambiguous, as the purportedly superior intelligence and cultural complexity of aliens may make it unclear what their intentions should be understood to be.

Such is the case with a memorable black-and-white film made by Twentieth-Century-Fox in 1951: *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (directed by Robert Wise, music by Bernard Hermann, screenplay by Edmund H. North based rather loosely on a story by Harry Bates called ''Farewell to the Master,'' published in *Astounding Stories of Science Fiction*, October 1940). The film starred Michael Rennie (as ''Klaatu''), Patricia Neal, Hugh Marlowe, Billy Gray (from *Father Knows Best*), Sam Jaffe, and Lock Martin (as the robot Gort). In this case, the mission of the visiting alien in a sense is to benefit mankind—as he invites us, in effect, to joint the galactic community—yet in another sense the import of the visit is a terrifyingly potent threat, since the alien makes it abundantly clear that if humans do not decide to forsake their warlike ways, they will be summarily exterminated.

This film, coming in the midst of a flurry of UFO sighting reports (the famous ''Lubbock Lights'' episode occurred the same year, for example), features an alien emissary, played by Michael Rennie, who is outwardly

indistinguishable from a human being—so much so, in fact, that after slipping away from military custody he is able to melt into the population and go undetected for a considerable time.

The Day the Earth Stood Still could be called a "sociological" alien story, in that it not only airs the philosophical notion that a warlike humankind could soon find itself in disfavor in a cosmically larger community, but explores, as well, at least one possible means by which a civilization more sophisticated than mankind might rid itself of the scourge of war. As the visiting alien Klaatu explains to a representative group of scientists headed by a physicist played by Sam Jaffe (he can be thought of as representing Albert Einstein), Klaatu's race, in concert with other similarly enlightened civilizations across the reaches of space, has placed its affairs under the police control of a race of large robots who, upon anyone's engaging in aggression, automatically annihilate the aggressor, so that no one can risk such irrational behavior. Klaatu has one robot (Gort) along with him to help make the point. (Lock Martin, who played Gort, was seven feet seven inches tall, without any makeup effects.) *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, as yet another way of employing the alien motif, clearly qualifies as a "thought movie," placing on the table for popular consideration some potentially important questions and issues. The film won a Golden Globe Award in 1952.

It should be mentioned that in the original Harry Bates short story "Farewell to the Master," in which the robot was named Gnut rather than Gort, the relationship between the alien Klaatu and the robot was different; it turns out, in the Bates story, that Klaatu, although he is "godlike in appearance and human in form," is subordinate to Gnut, who is really the "Master" of the title (Rovin 110). Obviously the Edmund H. North screenplay and the film itself differed in some important ways from the original story. For one intriguing thing, the film ends up including a character known as General Cutler, played by an actor named Freeman Lusk, who was also in the 1953 *War of the Worlds*, and there actually was a General Cutler on President Eisenhower's staff who, government documents suggest, had been involved in UFO investigations. In any event, the adaptations from the original story worked well, as the film was chosen for preservation by the National Film Registry.

The year 1951 also saw the appearance of what quickly came to be a cult classic: the black-and-white film *The Man from Planet X* (United Artists, director Edgar G. Ulmer, written by Aubrey Wisberg and Jack Pollexfen), starring Robert Clarke, Margaret Field, Raymond Bond, and William Schallert. This film features a visiting alien as a sort of advance emissary or vanguard who has come to earth during the close approach of the previously unknown Planet X of the title. The creature is essentially humanoid, short of stature and having a rather nightmarishly broad and expressionless face having only slits for eyes and mouth, all encased in a transparent helmet fitted up with a breathing mechanism. He inhabits a cone-shaped silvery ship that comes to be embedded in the ground on the foggy moors of a Scottish island where a

professor (played by Raymond Bond) has come to study the planetary close approach. The professor's daughter (Margaret Field) is the first to spot the alien's landed craft on the moors; like Dakota Fanning in the 2005 American version of *The War of the Worlds*, Margaret Field excels at looking genuinely frightened, heightening the menace and mystery surrounding the alien.

The Man from Planet X, however, is a creature of ambiguous intentions and character. When an unscrupulous associate of the professor's (played by William Shallert) first interacts with the alien, the creature seems friendly enough, until the associate mistreats him, upon which the alien reacts by using a mind-control ray to enslave some of the local villagers. When the military steps in to annihilate the creature and his ship, one can scarcely help wondering whether such events had to come to pass, as the creature might well have proven reasonable had he been well treated. All in all, *The Man from Planet X* is a splendid study in the sort of ambiguity that could surround such an unknown visitor, given that an alien psychology might reasonably be expected to be vastly different from human psychology, lending any such creature an inscrutable quality. Remarkably, this film was shot in its entirety in six days (Weldon 450).

Another 1951 film of note is *The Thing from Another World* (often referred to simply as *The Thing*; RKO, directed by Christian Nyby, screenplay by Charles Lederer based on a short story titled "Who Goes There?" by John W. Campbell, Jr., writing as Don A. Stuart, in *Astounding Stories*, August 1938), starring James Arness as a large humanoid alien with a somewhat enlarged but still human-looking head and taloned hands. Here, an arctic research team finds a flying saucer frozen in ancient ice and thaws out the creature, who then goes on a rampage of killing. Although essentially human in appearance, the creature is actually the product of plant seeds (dialogue in the film suggesting an uncertain boundary between animal and plant life), seeking to use human blood to germinate further seeds. Ultimately the research team members manage to electrocute the alien. The film also stars Robert Cornthwaite and Kenneth Tobey. It was remade in 1982 as *The Thing* (Universal, director John Carpenter, screenplay by Bill Lancaster with, of course, credits to short story writer John Campbell) in a way much more faithful to the original Campbell tale. Here, the encroaching alien presence—having been frozen under the polar ice for perhaps 100,000 years, and again invading a research station but in Antarctica this time, conveyed to the research station by an "infected" dog—is a kind of unlimitedly flexible shape-shifter capable of adapting itself to any life form and imitating it; in its less disguised forms it seems fond of shooting out large number of long, thin, savagely thrashing tentacles.

As events unfold, no one in the camp knows for sure who is still human and who only appears to be, as anyone may have become possessed and "copied." When arrested part way through the process of life-imitation, the alien presence transmutes into truly horrific hybrid forms. This film stars Kurt Russell, Wilfred Brimley, and Richard Dysart, and was novelized by Alan

Dean Foster so that the story came full-circle back around to print form. While the 1982 film strongly suggests that the alien life form has perished in the blowing up of the camp, the original Campbell story had suggested, in the end, that an albatross flying off from the scene might contain the seed of the Thing.

Within two years of these 1951 films, others were appearing, and the treatment of aliens on-screen began to develop and grow more variegated. One film portraying visiting aliens as physically repulsive was the black-and-white 3D movie *It Came from Outer Space* (Universal, 1953, director Jack Arnold, screenplay by Harry Essex, based on the short story "The Meteor," by Ray Bradbury), starring Richard Carlson, Barbara Rush, Charles Drake, Joe Sawyer, and Russell Johnson (of "Gilligan's Island" fame). Again, this was a film appearing amid a flurry of UFO-related public interest, as 1952 had been a record-breaking year for UFO sighting reports; among other things, a Navy photographer had taken motion pictures of a group of anomalous objects in the sky over Tremonton, Utah, on July 2, 1952, and some two and a half weeks later another group of unexplained objects were the occasion of visual and radar sightings over Washington, D.C.—the so-called "Washington National Airport" sightings which enjoyed considerable coverage in the press at the time and certainly caught the public interest. Whatever the truth about these sighting reports may have been, in 1952, it is scarcely surprising that Hollywood decided to play up the notion the following year.

In *It Came from Outer Space*, an apparent meteor crashes to earth near a small town in Arizona, making a large crater and burrowing itself into the depths of an abandoned mine. A local amateur astronomer (played by Richard Carlson) visits the crater early on, with his lady friend and a helicopter pilot, and glimpses what appears to be an extraterrestrial spaceship before a cave-in buries it. Soon the craft's inhabitants, who in their natural state leave a kind of snail-like glittering track on the ground, begin making themselves look like various townspeople (spiriting the real ones away) so that they can move about freely and gather materials to repair their ship. The film employs a camera device, unusual at the time, of taking the point of view, through a kind of watery semi-distorted effect, of the "unchanged" aliens themselves when one of them is observing humans or the surroundings. A protracted view of the aliens the way they really look is withheld until late in the film, when Richard Carlson coaxes one of them out into the open. This creature has protested, "You would be horrified at the sight of us," and he is right. When finally seen in the desert sunlight, he turns out to be little more (or less) than one large, ugly liquescent eye. But these aliens, however repulsive-looking, ultimately turn out not to be hostile, as they release their captives and leave the earth as soon as their ship is able to take off.

The same year (1953) saw the appearance of the film *Invaders from Mars* (Twentieth-Century-Fox, director William Cameron Menzies, screenwriter Richard Blake), starring Helena Carter, Arthur Franz, Jimmy Hunt, Leif

Erickson, Hillary Brooke, and Morris Ankrum. (There are both black-and-white and color versions.) Here a young boy, played by Jimmy Hunt, watches a flying saucer land in a marsh near his family's house. Soon his parents seem not to be themselves, and it turns out that anyone venturing into the sandy waste where the craft went down is pulled under the ground and implanted with a mind-controlling device. No one will believe the boy, of course—the device of character isolation was a well-developed facet of science fiction/horror tales by this time—until he enlists the aid of an astronomer (Arthur Franz) known to the family. In the end, when the boy himself has been abducted but not yet implanted, we see the controlling alien as a sort of tentacled but otherwise human-looking head in a bell jar. Here the alien visitation, ultimately repelled—perhaps; the ending is an "it was all a dream" ending, but the boy now really sees a flying saucer land near the house—has been one of clearly hostile intent. This film was remade in 1986 with the same title, directed this time by Tobe Hooper (who also directed *Poltergeist* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* among other films) and starring Karen Black, Hunter Carson, James Karen, Jimmy Hunt, Timothy Bottoms, and Louise Fletcher; interestingly, Jimmy Hunt, who had played the young boy in the 1953 version, appears here grown up as the police chief. Again, the aliens appear as an invasion force taking control of individual humans who come within their influence.

Also coming out in 1953 was the black-and-white film *Phantom from Space* (United Artists, director W. Lee Wilder, screenwriters Bill Raynor and Miles Wilder), starring Ted Cooper, Noreen Nash, and Michael Mark. In this movie a figure in what turns out to be a spacesuit has been frightening and killing people on the California coast who happen upon him. This creature is humanoid but taller than normal and lacking ears. After considerable pursuit he ends up cornered in an oil refinery and proves to be invisible when he takes off his spacesuit to avoid being seen and captured. As it happens, in his suitless state he is visible only in a wash of infrared light. All along, at least after he doffs the suit, he is ailing from the effects of breathing earth's air, and when he eventually succumbs, those in pursuit of him conclude that he was basically not hostile, having killed only because people reacted violently to him due to his bizarre appearance. Not overall a very impressive film, this one still manages to make the significant point that failure of communication could be the undoing of a first contact between humans and extraterrestrials. The irony here of course is that however frightening the notion of aliens per se may be, the more frightening thing may well be this potential for failed communication, which, given that it is a primary problem in human relations, must surely be an even more serious problem in any scenario involving contact with beings from other worlds.

Not all treatment of the subject, naturally, are equally thought-provoking. In 1954 W. Lee Wilder Productions/RKO produced a film called *Killers from Space* (directed by W. Lee Wilder, scripted by Bill Raynor from an original story by Myles Wilder), with Peter Graves playing a physicist whose plane

crashes near a nuclear test facility in Nevada. He turns up, suffering from amnesia and sporting an unexplained surgical scar on his chest, at his workplace, where his actions arouse the suspicions of federal agents who give him drugs to break through the veil of amnesia, an induced memory loss as it turns out. (The use of this notion is somewhat prophetic, as such memory-blocking stories would come to be common among accounts of reputed abductions, e.g., in the Betty and Barney Hill case in 1961.)

The physicist then tells the story of an encounter with aliens from a planet called (funnily enough) Astron Delta 4. This is an early treatment of what would come to be a guiding motif in alien stories: the notion of creatures from a dying planet seeking to take over the earth in order to survive (the idea having appeared as early as *The War of the Worlds*). The aliens here are basically humanoid with body suits, but have three-fingered hands and huge ping-pong-ball eyes. The eyes, reflecting at least an attempt at some scientific justification, are explained as having developed when Astron Delta 4's sun grew near to extinction and the creatures' eyes had to expand in compensation. The creatures that have landed on earth (there being others waiting in space) are using energy derived from nuclear tests to create giant mutations of insects and lizards, for the purpose of feeding on humankind and thus clearing off the planet for reoccupation. Naturally, when the physicist tells this tale, everyone thinks him insane, and he is forced to deal with the Astron Deltans himself, which he does. The movie also stars John Merrick as an alien named Deneb-Tala. Director W. Lee Wilder was the brother of Billy Wilder, who at the time of *Killers from Space* was directing *The Seven Year Itch* with Marilyn Monroe.

As the decade of the 1950s unfolded, with its abundance of news stories about purportedly real flying saucer sightings, the alien motif continued, not surprisingly, to fascinate the public, and whether the already existing public interest in UFOs fueled the film industry's productions or those productions fueled the public interest is difficult to say—probably both. In any case, at least one 1956 film reflects what appears to be an inspiration derived from real news stories of the day: *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (Columbia, black and white, director Fred F. Sears, screenwriters George Worthing Yates and Raymond T. Marcus, original story by Curt Siodmak), starring Huge Marlowe, Joan Taylot, Morris Ankrum, Thomas B. Henry, and Harry Lauter, and featuring the extraordinary special effects of Ray Harryhausen. Evidently influenced by reports of flying saucers over Washington, D.C., in July and August of 1952 (the "Washington National" visual and radar sighting reports), this film treats of a UFO attack on the nation's capital itself. Hugh Marlowe (from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*) plays a rocket scientist who is contacted by aliens but does not know it, at first, because the audio message transmitted to him (as a flying saucer swoops down over his car) is modulated at too high a speed to be recognized as speech, and only recognized as such when the recorded sound is accidentally slowed down later in playback—again, the theme is the tragic

An Annotated Chronology of Notable Films about Aliens

The Day the Earth Stood Still, 1951. Who can forget the humanoid alien Klaatu, his towering robot Gort, or Klaatu's cryptic instructions to Gort: ''Klaatu barada nikto''?

The Man from Planet X, 1951. Shot in only six days, this film continues to be a cult classic.

The Thing from Another World, 1951. This film is often known simply as *The Thing* and stars James Arness as a raging alien from a flying saucer long frozen in arctic ice.

It Came from Outer Space, 1953. Loss of identity and the threat of invasion were big scares in the 1950s.

Earth vs. the Flying Saucers, 1956. This film employs eye-catching special effects by the famous Ray Harryhausen and was probably inspired by real reports of UFO flyovers around Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1952, as well as by Major Donald F. Keyhoe's popular book *Flying Saucers from Outer Space.*

Invasion of the Body Snatchers, 1956. Kevin McCarthy discovers that his small-town friends and acquaintances just aren't themselves all of a sudden.

It Conquered the World, 1956. Lee Van Cleef is befriended by a radio ''voice'' from Venus.

Invasion of the Saucer Men, 1957. Here the aliens have hypodermic needles that inject victims with wood alcohol, and who would believe sighting reports from witnesses in that condition?

20 Million Miles to Earth, 1957. Never pick up an unhatched egg from Venus on the beach. The creature that hatches out is Ray Harryhausen's creation.

The Blob, 1958. The adults won't listen, and it's up to Steve McQueen and his teenage friends to save the day from a shapeless, body-absorbing alien creature.

I Married a Monster from Outer Space, 1958. Novelist-turned-actor Tom Tryon gets supplanted by an emotionless alien presence.

Day of the Triffids, 1963. Meteors render most of the population blind and bring dangerous alien spores to earth.

The Eye Creatures, 1965. A remake of the 1957 film *Invasion of the Saucer Men.*

Island of the Burning Doomed, 1967. Protoplasmic masses move about an island on jellylike bases.

They Came from Beyond Space, 1967. Meteors fall in Cornwall bringing an alien intelligence that usurps the human form.

Five Million Years to Earth, 1968. Excavation crews in the London subways find an ancient spacecraft, and more; called by some critics one of the best such films ever made.

Zontar, the Thing from Venus, 1968. John Agar stars in this unattributed remake of *It Conquered the World.*

Son of Blob or *Beware! The Blob*, 1972. A sequel to the 1958 classic *The Blob.*

Close Encounters of the Third Kind, 1977. UFO witnesses become ''imprinted'' with tantalizing images and musical strains; said by some to have been inspired by real events.

Alien, 1979. Sigourney Weaver battles ''face-hugger'' aliens in the depths of space.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers, 1978. This remake of the 1956 film stars Donald Sutherland and Veronica Cartwright.

E. T.: The Extraterrestrial, 1982. The alien visitor here is of the cute-and-cuddly but resourceful sort.

The Thing, 1982. John Carpenter's remake of the 1951 film; the South Pole this time.

Aliens, 1986. A remake of the original Sigourney Weaver *Alien.*

Invaders from Mars, 1986. Tobe Hooper's remake of the 1953 film.

Alien 3, 1992. The third film encounter with Sigourney Weaver's towering aliens.

Roswell, 1994. A film based on genuine investigations into the reported crash of a UFO near Roswell, New Mexico.

The Body Snatchers, 1994. In this remake of the 1956 film, even the military comes under the influence of alien ''pods.''

Mars Attacks!, 1996. Dark comedy with unforgettable little hostile aliens. ''Wank wank!''

The Arrival, 1996. Charlie Sheen as a radio astronomer intercepts more than he bargained for.

Independence Day, 1996. Hostile city-sized flying saucers hover over the world's major cities.

I Married a Monster, 1998. A television remake of *I Married a Monster from Outer Space.*

H. G. Wells' The War of the Worlds, 2005, the Timothy Hines version. This remake of the 1953 film sticks close to the original novel.

War of the Worlds, 2005, the Steven Spielberg version. This remake of the 1953 film stars Tom Cruise and Dakota Fanning.

effect of misfired communications: since the message goes ignored, the aliens infer hostile response from humankind.

The rocket scientist is taken for a ride in a flying saucer and convinced that the visitors now mean humankind no good, especially after they have lobotomized and killed his father-in-law. Seen up close, they are found to depend upon sense-enhancing suits or shells ("suits of solidified electricity") but appear exceedingly weak, withered or desiccated, without these devices. Clearly the similar notion in *The War of the Worlds*, where the alien invaders are helpless against terrestrial micro-organisms, influenced the nature of the aliens in *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*. These creatures' flying saucers, however, are wreaking havoc on Washington, and in the end the scientific team assigned to combat them has to develop a high-intensity sound-wave device to bring the saucers down. The film, no doubt influenced, as has been mentioned, by UFO reports from the summer of 1952, was directly inspired by a nonfiction book: *Flying Saucers from Outer Space*, by Major Donald F. Keyhoe.

Other films would soon develop the more subtle form of alien invasion— outwardly invisible possession of humans by parasitic aliens—as in the 1956 black-and-white movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Allied Artists, director Don Siegel, screenplay by Daniel Mainwaring and Sam Peckinpah, story based on the novel *The Body Snatchers* by Jack Finney, in turn expanded from Finney's short story "Sleep No More," 1954, appearing in *Collier's*). This film starred Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter, King Donovan, Carolyn Jones, Whit Bissell, and Richard Deacon. The concept here is one of giant seedpods, seeping down from space, that perpetuate alien life by invading and duplicating human beings while they sleep, by insinuating long tendrils into the sleeping form, which then collapses as the invading form draws away the essence of the original person into itself. The character played by Kevin McCarthy is a doctor who sees an unaccountable commonality among his patients in Santa Mira, California, in that they seem to share the "delusion" that certain of their friends or family members are "not themselves"—they look and sound exactly like the people themselves, but they seem to lack all emotion, or to reflect it only in an acted-out kind of way that they do not actually feel. The doctor and his girlfriend find themselves increasingly isolated when practically everyone around them appears to be affected by the spreading blight of alien possession. Even the doctor's lady friend (Dana Wynter) falls asleep and succumbs to encroachment and takeover by the insidious pods, as the doctor discovers when he kisses her and perceives that she has responded with no emotion whatever; the camera shot of his face, upon realizing this, is a very special moment in the history of film. When the doctor escapes and tries to tell the outside authorities what is happening, they naturally consider him deranged, until seedpods such as he has described are discovered in the back of an overturned truck from Santa Mira.

The 1956 film was remade in 1978; this version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (United Artists, director Philip Kaufman, screenwriter W. D. Richter)

starred Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Jeff Goldblum, Leonard Nemoy, and Veronica Cartwright (by now grown up, she was the little girl who had the birthday party in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*). Here Donald Sutherland plays a health inspector who happens upon the truth about the alien seedpods that are busy taking over the bodies and minds of humans around him. The tendency seems to have been to make the endings increasingly pessimistic, in that both the protagonist and his lady friend (Brooke Adams) are taken over in the end. Amusingly, Kevin McCarthy, from the original film version, is seen in a cameo part running along the highway screaming about the seedpods to passing motorists.

The tendency toward ultimate pessimism continued with the third version, *The Body Snatchers* (Warner Bros., 1994, director Abel Ferrara, screenwriters Stuart Gordon, Nicholas St. John, and Dennis Paoli, from a story by Raymond Cistheri and Larry Cohen), starring Terry Kinney, Meg Tilly, Gabrielle Anwar, Reilly Murphy, and Billy Wirth. Here an Environmental Protection Agency scientist, ironically enough, sees his wife taken over by the alien incursion and ends up on the run from the military, which has come under the influence of the pods. In the end the suggestion is that the whole world may eventually succumb to the alien seedpod invasion.

Altogether, the successive treatments of Jack Finney's story *The Body Snatchers* effectively explore the notion that invasion by an alien life form could raise one of the most archetypically primal questions of modern human existence: the question of the sanctity of individual human identity. One of the most dreaded of horrors is the horror of loss of self, and the alien pod-beings bring this horror unforgettably to the fore.

Another 1956 film exploration of the seemingly ongoing popular obsession with alien encroachment was *It Conquered the World* (black and white, AIP, director Roger Corman, screenwriter Lou Rusoff), starring Peter Graves, Lee Van Cleef, Beverly Garland, and the creature-creator Paul Blaisdell himself playing the controlling creature. A scientist (Van Cleef) rather implausibly gets befriended by radio voices from Venus, which inexplicably he is able to understand conversationally even though the ''voices'' are only a sort of formless hum. The alien race informs him of their imminent arrival on earth, and after they do arrive they beset human victims with a kind of flying miniature manta ray that attaches itself to the back of the neck and permanently replaces the victim's personality with an alien mind that is (like the invading aliens in *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*) devoid of normal human feelings and emotions. Peter Graves plays a rival scientist who opposes Van Cleef and ends up killing his own wife when she is taken over by one of the aliens' flying devices. Van Cleef's film-wife Beverly Garland flies into a rage and attacks the controlling alien, who is ensconced in a cave and appears as a sort of cone-shaped, lobster-clawed creature with small liquescent eyes. The film was remade (unattributedly) in 1968 as *Zontar, the Thing from Venus*, starring John Agar and employing a bat-like invader as the alien itself this time.

Aliens from outer space continued to have a varied career in the media as time went on. The year 1957 (the same year as the Levelland, Texas, UFO sighting flap in which a large disk-shaped object was reported to have landed on a roadway) saw a number of alien movies appear, including the science fiction comedy film *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (black and white, AIP, directed by Edward L. Cahn, screenwriters Robert Gurney, Jr., and Al Martin, based on the story "The Cosmic Frame," by Paul W. Fairman, *Amazing Stories*, May 1955), starring Gloria Castillo, Ed Nelson, Russ Bender, Frank Gorshin, Steve Terrell, and Lyn Osborn. In this film the saucer-borne aliens have huge heads with exposed brains, and have hypodermic-style needles in their hands (hands that have eyes in the back), with which they inject victims with alien blood, a substance that turns out to be wood alcohol; the result is that everyone claiming to have seen the aliens appears to be drunk. As in the later (and much more successful) film *The Blob*, teenagers are the victors here, as they vaporize the aliens in the bright glare of car headlights. This film was remade even more forgettably (and uncreditedly) in 1965 with the same screenwriters but directed by Larry Buchanan and retitled *The Eye Creatures*. This time the previously diminutive aliens have become full human-size and have developed a talent for not just dissolving but actually exploding when exposed to strong light.

But the same year (1957) produced at least two better films employing the motif of aliens coming to Earth. One was *20 Million Miles to Earth* (black and white, Columbia, director Nathan Juran, screenwriters Bob Williams and Christopher Knopf, story by Charlotte Knight and special effects specialist Ray Harryhausen), starring William Hopper, Joan Taylor, Frank Puglia, Thomas Browne Henry, and John Zaremba. Here, a spaceship returning from an expedition to Venus—this and other such films were made before it was known how climatically inhospitable a planet Venus really is—crashes in the Mediterranean waters off Sicily, and a canister washes ashore bearing an unhatched, jelly-like Venusian egg. A young boy finds the egg and sells it to a local zoologist. When the creature (a Ray Harryhausen creation) hatches out, it turns out to be a biped reptile looking something like a satyr and having three-toed feet and plenty of sharp teeth. This alien creature was supposed to be called Ymir—the shooting title of the film was *The Giant Ymir* (Rovin 108), but the name never occurs in the finished film. The creature, which thrives on sulfur, is born only a few inches tall but quickly grows to some thirty feet and goes on a rampage, only to be shot in a confrontation at the Roman Colosseum. While the alien "invader" here is a seemingly mindless being not having the conscious menace of other alien portrayals, the Harryhausen effects make the film memorable.

The other 1957 film of note was *The 27th Day* (black and white, Columbia, director William Asher, screenplay by John Mantley based on his novel), starring Gene Barry, Valerie French, Arnold Moss, and George Voscovec. The alien this time, played by Arnold Moss and indistinguishable from human,

appears to each of five people in different countries and gives them capsules that in each case only the recipient can open with his or her mental patterns. Each capsule contains a voice-activated weapon capable of annihilating the population of the earth. Gene Barry and Valerie French go into hiding as the rest of the population learns (from an alien announcement) about the capsules and their possessors, and various subplots unfold. The KGB tortures the Russian soldier who bears one of the capsules, and eventually the Soviet Union is wiped out. The notion here of psycho-sociological manipulation of Earth affairs by alien life is an intriguing one. The film was co-billed with *20 Million Miles to Earth*.

If movies (and the print medium) at this time were inclined to show aliens in a number of varied forms, at least one film would soon feature an alien newcomer that, though tangible, had no particular form at all. The mother of all "shapeless alien" depictions in film was of course *The Blob* (color, Paramount, 1958, director Irvin S. Yeaworthy, screenplay by Theodore Simonson and Kate Phillips based on a story by Irvine H. Millgate), starring Steve McQueen, Aneta Corseaut, Olin Howlin, and Earl Rowe. This camp classic was Steve McQueen's first starring role, and while at twenty-eight he looked a bit old to be part of the teenage crowd, he proved effective as a foil to the strange visitor from space. A meteor crashes to earth in the woods, and the gelatinous horror that emerges wraps itself around the hand of the old man who finds the meteor; it soon becomes clear that the Blob absorbs human tissue and is capable, as it grows to some fifty feet across, of ingesting whole persons alive. While it is a shapeless mass, it can move purposefully, rearing up in a disturbingly sentient way and bulging across intervening spaces to take its prey. An adversary that has no particular form and proves itself capable of squeezing through the grating at a movie theater, the Blob has its final undoing in the inability to withstand cold. The theme song, well known to classic movie buffs, was written by Burt Bacharach. The film spawned a 1972 sequel variously known as *Son of Blob* or *Beware! The Blob* (Jack Harris Enterprises, director Larry Hagman, screenwriters Jack Woods and Anthony Harris), with Godfrey Cambridge, Robert Walker, Jr., Gwynne Gilford, Carol Lynley, Shelly Berman, Burgess Meredith, and Cindy Williams. A real remake of *The Blob* appeared in 1988 under the direction of Chuck Russell and starring Billy Beck, Cindy Clark, Joc Seneca, Shawnee Smith, and Donoven Leitch; however, in this version the formless encroacher is not an extraterrestrial life form but rather the result of an Earth-based germ warfare experiment gone tragically awry.

The year 1958 provided a variety of other "alien invasion" films as well. Probably the best known of these is *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (black and white, Paramount, director Gene Fowler, screenplay by Louis Vittes), starring Tom Tryon, Ken Lynch, Gloria Talbot, and Maxie Rosenbloom. Tom Tryon—also well known as the author of the horror novels *The Other* and *Harvest Home*—plays a newlywed who is supplanted by an alien

presence devoid of human emotion; the same fate awaits numerous others (all men) in the town, much in the manner of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* except that the displaced originals in *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* are kept in suspended animation inside a concealed spaceship in the woods outside of town.

To heighten the suspense over the nature of the aliens as they really look, the film employs the device of showing glimpses, superimposed over the normal human face, of the real alien face, a sort of ropy-looking visage somewhat resembling the contours of a squid. The aliens are on a mission, from a home planet on which their females have perished, to replenish their childbearing population. Tryon's bride (Gloria Talbot) finds that her new marriage is failing to produce children, and it turns out that the alien males have not yet worked out the details of making their union with terrestrial women productive. In the end, in fact, it is only normal fertility that enables the "unpossessed" few to tell who is still a real man and who is not. When the original human males, hidden in the spaceship, are disconnected from their attachments, the aliens in their look-alike bodies (deprived now of their controlling influence from the ship) crumple up and die, exuding a soapy-looking kind of pus. The storyline here includes the notion that pure oxygen is detrimental to the alien creatures (one dies when administered oxygen), distantly echoing the old idea from *The War of the Worlds* that what is natural and harmless to humans can be the undoing of extraterrestrial invaders. The film was remade for television in 1998 as *I Married a Monster* (directed by Nancy Malone, written by Duane Poole and Louis Vittes).

While the Tom Tryon film arguably represents the high watermark of "alien icon" movies for 1958, other such productions did make their way into the theaters. Perhaps the best made of these was *The Crawling Eye* (black and white, DCA, director Quentin Lawrence, screenplay by veteran Hammer Films screenwriter Jimmy Sangster), starring Forrest Tucker, Laurence Payne, Jennifer Jayne, and Janet Munro. In this film two sisters who have a popular mind-reading act are traveling through Austria by train and stop in a village where mysterious deaths have recently occurred among the mountain climbers. One of the sisters is truly telepathic and finds herself eerily influenced by some presence that seems to emanate from the mountains, and from the nearby Trollenberg in particular.

A visitor at the same hotel where the sisters are stopping, the Hotel Europa (whose name one of the sisters intuits before getting off the train, though neither sister has ever been to the village before), goes up the tramway to visit a professor friend who operates a kind of observatory whose purpose is to study cosmic rays, and it gradually becomes clear that the recent village deaths are connected with an alien presence inhabiting a kind of radioactive cloud that hovers about the Trollenberg. The professor—who, somewhat distractingly, very much resembles Groucho Marx—has previously encountered a similar phenomenon in the Andes. As in the other treatments of the invading-alien

motif, this alien presence does away with hapless humans' consciousness and replaces it with their own. One villager thus affected comes to the hotel with murderous intent, looking for the young lady telepath, whose presence is evidently a security problem for the aliens; later another possessed villager makes the same attempt up at the observatory. In human-appearing form the alien consciousness is recognizable only by the person's feeling uncomfortably warm at normal room temperature, and by a certain lack of muscular coordination. When the creatures finally appear around the observatory and village in their own solid form, they are notably similar to the octopoid horrors described in H. G. Wells's original novel *The War of the Worlds*. The film *The Crawling Eye* was an adaptation of a British television series called "The Trollenberg Terror."

Another 1958 film dealing with the notion of alien encroachers' taking over the mind of a normal human—seemingly something of a fixation with filmmakers and writers during this period—was *The Brain from Planet Arous* (black and white, Howco, directed by Nathan Hertz [Nathan Juran], screenplay by Ray Buffum), starring John Agar as a nuclear physicist whose mind is displaced, off and on, by a sort of floating brain named Gor. We learn that Gor is a criminal refugee from his own planet and is being pursued by a rival "brain" named Vol. The reprehensible Gor is bent upon domination of Earth, and John Agar, possessed by Gor's consciousness and will, is imbued with destructive psychokinetic powers, which he demonstrates by exploring distant airplanes in flight (his eyes turning large and dark and shiny when doing this) in the process of coercing political and military leaders into acceding to his demands. The film, which also stars Joyce Meadows, Robert Fuller, and Thomas B. Henry, suffers a bit in the end from lapses of logic, since after the alien Gor is destroyed and the physicist's mind becomes his own again, one has to wonder how he is going to explain his bizarre behavior, there being no clear evidence remaining that the alien usurper ever was there. Nevertheless, *The Brain from Planet Arous* does have its entertainment value and does further develop the idea of personality displacement by aliens.

As the 1950s rolled over into the 1960s, UFO sighting reports continued, and so did the entertainment value of aliens. As popular interest in rocketry and space exploration grew more vivid with the satellite-launching programs of the Soviet Union and the United States, some of the media attention to the alien-visitation motif came to reflect these interests.

Some of the film efforts of this period rather tend to belong to the "schlock" variety despite their scripting with rocket science involvement. Such is the case with *Cape Canaveral Monsters* (CCM, 1960, black and white, directed and written by Phil Tucker), starring Scott Peters, Linda Connell, Katherine Victor, Jason Johnson, and Frank Smith. When a young couple dies in a car crash, aliens with no form of their own inhabit their bodies (one of which has a severed arm) and work at thwarting the American space program and at harvesting humans for research purposes. Some of the harvested humans

manage to get the drop on the alien usurpers, however, which manifest themselves only as small discs but wield paralyzing ray guns. The film's makers heightened its otherwise lackluster effects by the use of NASA footage of rocket launches.

Another and somewhat more impressive treatment of the Cape Canaveral connection came in 1963 in the form of Twentieth-Century-Fox's *The Day Mars Invaded Earth* (black and white, director Maury Dexter, screenwriter Harry Spaulding), starring Kent Taylor, Marie Windsor, William Mims, and Betty Beall. Here a rocket scientist encounters Martian doppelgangers imitating his family members and himself; these aliens, unseen in their own form, simply assume the contours of human look-alikes, reducing their replaced victims to a kind of ashen residue, some of which we see washing away when a swimming pool is filled with water.

Alien-invader treatments during this period seem to have been more artistically done when they did not partake of the rocket science connection, reverting to the notions most successfully explored during the heyday of the 1950s. British filmmakers, many of whom had scored successes with Hammer Films horror classics during the late 1950s, climbed on the alien bandwagon. The motif of spore-like aliens sifting down from space, so memorably portrayed in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and its sequels, and of course in the original Jack Finney novel, came back to life to high effect in 1963 with the British film *Day of the Triffids* (Allied Artists, director Steve Sekely, screenplay by Philip Yordan based on the novel by John Wyndham), starring Howard Keel, Nicole Maurey, Janette Scott, Kieron Moore, and Mervyn Jones. Here again meteors are the problem, and everyone watching their spectacular arrival is struck blind. But blindness is not all the meteors bring—the spores they spread about the countryside grow into shambling, meat-eating plants that rip themselves up out of their moorings and terrorize the mostly blind population, making a kind of hollow rattling or clicking sound as they move about and sting their victims to death. Ultimately the alien plants prove to be vulnerable to the corrosive effects of seawater.

British filmmakers, in many cases veterans of the Hammer Films horror classics period, continued to explore the alien-intruder motif. In 1967, a small independent film company called Planet signed Hammer Films stars Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing (along with one of the directors with whom these actors had most often worked) to make an interesting film called *Island of the Burning Doomed* (director Terence Fisher, screenplay by Ronald Liles and Pip and Jane Baker, based on the novel *Night of the Big Heat* by John Lymington), in which aliens that appear to be protoplasmic masses bring about a freakish heat wave during the winter on a small island where the story's protagonists are staying at an inn. In this film (also known as *Island of the Burning Damned* and, like the novel title, *Night of the Big Heat*) the aliens, amoeba-like blobs that move slowly about the island on their jelly-like bases, are capable of manipulating the ambient temperature to suit their own natures, hence another

tale of attempted alien usurpation of Earth. But as in other treatments it turns out that Earth does not make such dominion easy; in this case, the creatures are vanquished when ordinary rain falls on them. The cast also included Patrick Allen, Sarah Lawson, Jane Merrow, and William Lucas.

The same year (1967) saw the appearance of yet another British film in which Earth and its people are up for grabs by alien encroachers: *They Came from Beyond Space* (Amicus/Embassy, director Hammer Films regular Freddie Francis, screenplay by Milton Subotsky), starring Robert Hutton, Jennifer Jayne, and Michael Gough. The aliens here are formless intelligences that arrive via what appears to be a fall of meteors and take over human bodies and minds for the purpose of recruiting human slaves. Robert Hutton plays an astrophysicist who is immune to the alien influence due to a metal plate inserted medically in his head after an accident. The mission this time is not utter domination of Earth, and the story's intrigue derives from the mystery surrounding the work colony the aliens have established in rural Cornwall. The source of the tale was originally Joseph Millard's novel *The Gods Hate Kansas*.

The British continued to produce interesting and entertaining portrayals of alien visitors with a film appearing in 1968 called *Five Million Years to Earth*, also known as *Quatermass and the Pit* (Hammer/Warner Bros., director Roy Ward Baker, screenplay by Nigel Kneale), starring Andrew Kier as the scientist Quatermass, and the "Quatermass" series of movie projects having been serialized on British television. The concept here is intriguing and well developed. A crew digging under the London subway discovers an alien ship embedded in the earth, evidently having been there for an exceedingly long span of time. The craft contains the remains of insect-like creatures whose bodies begin to deteriorate rapidly when exposed to the air. Much of the appeal of the story line is due to the notion that the London neighborhood around the place where the alien craft has lain buried has always had a history of unhealthy strangeness, as if jaundiced in some way by the presence of the craft and the influence of its occupants. When opened, the alien ship beings to unleash a kind of destructive mental or psychic energy, and it turns out that the insectoid creatures are the remnants of Martians who came to earth early on and attempted to "evolve" humans. The film also stars Barbara Shelley, James Donald, Julian Glover, Duncan Lamont, and Maurice Good.

With the advent of the 1970s, the age of the relatively low-budget "classic" alien films had begun to give way to the age of high-budget "blockbuster" films in which, however, the alien motif was by no means neglected.

The UFO-borne-alien movie extravaganza of the period was of course *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Columbia, 1977, directed and scripted by Steven Spielberg, music by John Williams), starring Richard Dreyfuss, François Truffaut (the director of *Fahrenheit 451* and a number of other films), Melinda Dillon, and Teri Garr. Dreyfuss plays an electrical engineer who sees a UFO and soon finds, as do a number of other people, that he seems to have

become "imprinted" with a sort of latent memory, a shape that he sees, imperfectly and tantalizingly, in everything from a bed pillow to shaving cream to mashed potatoes. As his marriage falls apart, he comes to know a young woman (Melinda Dillon) whose infant son has been abducted during a close encounter with a UFO, and she, among others, is haunted by a musical strain that she cannot place, a sort of alien leitmotif.

These protagonists find themselves in the midst of a government cover-up designed to conceal the existence of an alien landing facility made ready at Devil's Tower in Wyoming. When the largest of the spaceships finally comes to rest there and disgorges first a group of humans (missing for decades) and then the aliens themselves, the latter appear as diminutive, spindly-limbed, friendly gray-type aliens with a look of ancient wisdom in their eyes. Making a cameo appearance, real-life UFO investigator Dr. J. Allen Hynek shows up among the onlookers; also, the French scientist played by François Truffaut was modeled on the real-life French UFO researcher Dr. Jacques Vallee. Some writers in the field of UFO studies have suggested that the film was itself based on a "planned landing" UFO event that is supposed to have occurred at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico, in April of 1964 (Randles 95–96). The theory is that such films are part of a sort of gradual manipulation of public attitudes toward the subject of an alien presence on Earth, though the question is of course much in dispute.

Another, immeasurably less flattering depiction of aliens came in 1979 in the form of what some have called "an expensive B-movie" (Weldon 8): *Alien* (Twentieth-Century-Fox, directed by Ridley Scott, screenplay by Dan O'Bannon), starring Sigourney Weaver (as "Ripley"), Tom Skerritt, Veronica Cartwright, John Hurt, Henry Dean Stanton, and dancer Bolaji Badejo (as the alien). The alien creature and the film's unforgettably frenetic artwork are the design of fantasy artist H. R. Giger. The crew of the commercial starship *Nostromo* encounter a radio beacon in deep space and are unlucky enough to come (literally) face to face with a tentacled "face-hugger" alien life form serving as a kind of exoskeleton for the seed of an even more unpleasant alien form that gestates in the innards of one of the *Nostromo* crew members and comes ripping out. This creature, soon growing to enormous height and prowling the ship, has a crescent-moon-shaped head with an abundance of teeth, and has blood with metal-eating acid potential. The creature, in which the ship's home company is covertly interested as a bio-weapon, ends up being blown out into space. Further encounters with this alien life form take place in the film's sequels *Aliens* (1986, director James Cameron) and *Alien 3* (1992, director David Fincher). Alan Dean Foster novelized the three films.

In sharp contrast to the savagely horrific "Ripley" alien creatures, the alien of one famous treatment from 1982 proved vulnerable and oddly engaging. *E. T.: The Extraterrestrial* (Universal, director Steven Spielberg, screenwriters Steven Spielberg and Melissa Mathison) starred Henry Thomas, Drew Barrymore, Dee Wallace, Robert McNaughton, and Pete Coyote, and broke all

American box-office records. The alien wanderer here is a blue-eyed, stubby-legged, wrinkled-face little goblin capable of telepathic communication. Part of a team of alien explorers, it gets left behind when its cohorts leave Earth, and ends up hiding in a garage and getting befriended by a ten-year-old boy, who, with his siblings, helps it construct a transmitter with which to ''phone home.'' Eluding pursuers, E. T. eventually manages to rendezvous with a rescue ship and take off. The film was novelized by William Kotzwinkle. While not, strictly speaking, an entry in the ongoing spate of alien-horror treatments, *E. T.* certainly served to make the notion of extraterrestrial presence all the more vivid in the public's mind.

This public interest in the subject was to continue over the years, especially when popular stories about the Roswell UFO incident began to circulate. In 1994 the Showtime original film *Roswell* appeared (Viacom Pictures, director Jeremy Kagan, story by Paul Davids, Jeremy Kagan, and Arthur Kopet, screenplay by Arthur Kopet, based on the book *UFO Crash at Roswell* by Kevin D. Randle and Donald R. Schmitt), starring Kyle McLachlan (as Jesse Marcel), Martin Sheen, Dwight Yoakam, Xander Berkeley, Bos Gunton, Kim Greist, Peter MacNicol, John M. Jackson, and Charles Martin Smith. *Roswell* is a sort of semi-documentary-style, semi-fictional treatment of the famous Roswell UFO case of 1947. The story line revolves around Jesse Marcel (in real life the chief intelligence officer, in 1947, of the 509th Bomb Group at Roswell Army Air Field) returning to Roswell, New Mexico, after thirty years to attend a reunion of the 509th, with flashbacks showing Marcel's memories from 1947. Rancher Mack Brazel (played by Dwight Yoakam) brings a boxful of strange metallic debris to town and the events begin. At his present-time military reunion, Marcel coaxes reluctant witnesses into talking about their own memories of the officially concealed episode. As the larger picture unfolds for Marcel, he learns that the bodies of a number of small, black-eyed gray aliens were recovered from the impact site—and one live one. In one of the flashbacks, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal is taken to a bunker to see the now seriously ill alien survivor, who communicates with him telepathically just before expiring. The creature has a fan-shaped head, a sort of plaintive face, and spindly limbs. This film features insets showing, among others, Dr. J. Allen Hynek, and when originally aired was followed by a documentary including interviews with some of the major Roswell witnesses and the authors of the book on which the film was based.

The twentieth century was by no means destined to draw to a close without further attention, on the part of the entertainment industry, to the whole mystique of aliens. The year 1996 in particular was a big year for alien stories.

One film of this group was a bizarre kind of dark comedy called *Mars Attacks!* (Warner Bros., 1996, director Tim Burton, written by Len Brown and Woody Gelman, inspired by a series of gum cards), starring a remarkable cast: Jack Nicholson (as the President), Glenn Close, Pierce Brosnan, Danny DeVito, Annette Bening, Sarah Jessica Parker, Michael J. Fox, Martin Short,

Tom Jones, Rod Steiger, Jim Brown, Lukas Haas, Natalie Portman, Sylvia Sidney, Joe Don Baker, Pam Grier, Paul Winfield, Lisa Marie, Barbet Schroeder, and Christina Applegate. A rather heavy-handed spoof of the classic alien movies of the 1950s, the film shows flying saucers arriving with shrimpy animation-effect Martians having maniacally grinning faces, quacking voices, and a tendency to inspire false confidence and then turn on their human hosts with devastating ray guns; at one point they are invited into the halls of Congress only to turn the scene into a bloodbath. In the end they are vanquished by cornball music being blared out of loudspeakers at them. Few films have been so successful at mingling the serious with the ridiculous.

On a more serious note, the 1996 film *The Arrival* (Orion Pictures, directed and written by David Twohy) stars Charlie Sheen as a radio astronomer who picks up signals apparently from an alien intelligence but is fired for his trouble, his superiors seemingly not eager to have the discovery any more widely known. As the conspiracy unfolds we learn that the aliens are already among us and are engaged in quietly "terra-forming" the planet, making its climate warmer to suit their natures. These aliens, who in their undisguised state are humanoids with large, dark eyes and flaps that variously cover and uncover their brains, have the ability (an idea going as far back as *It Came from Outer Space*, 1953) to transform themselves into a human appearance. In their own form, they have the unsettling ability to reverse their knee joints and walk backwards, as well as to leap to prodigious heights. Sheen pursues them to Mexico, where he discovers they have a highly secret underground base. The alien creatures turn out to be vulnerable to cold, but overall the situation in the end is unresolved. The film also stars Ron Silver, Richard Schiff, Buddy Joe Hooker, Lindsay Crouse, Leon Rippy, and Teri Polo.

The blockbuster film of 1996, though, was *Independence Day* (Twentieth-Century-Fox, directed by Roland Emmerich, written by Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich), starring Will Smith, Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman, Mary McDonnell, Randy Quaid, Judd Hirsch, Margaret Colin, and Robert Loggia. City-size flying saucers hover over major cities around the world, including Washington, D.C., and begin unleashing colossal destruction. The mother-ships release small fighter-plane-like UFOs, and when Air Force pilots bring one of these down, we have a glimpse of a tentacled, anvil-headed alien. These creatures are clearly bent upon total annihilation of humankind, and the President (played by Bill Pullman) finds himself living with his advisors aloft in Air Force One after Washington is destroyed. In one memorable exchange (echoing conspiracy-theory accounts of recovered space debris from the Roswell case of 1947) the President remarks, "Regardless of what you might have read in the tabloids, there have never been any spacecraft recovered by our government," and an advisor replies, "Excuse me, Mr. President, that's not entirely accurate." "Why wasn't I told?" he asks, and the reply is: "Plausible deniability." At length the President is taken to Area 51 in Nevada to view UFO remains and alien bodies from long ago. Unlike what happens in

so many other treatments, the end of the aliens comes not due to their inability to survive in the terrestrial bio-system, but due to human ingenuity. Discovering that the aliens have been using the earth's communication satellite systems to further their own goals, two men (played by Jeff Goldblum and Will Smith) fly into a mothership and upload a virus to the ship's computer system to disable the ship's defensive shell momentarily, and another pilot (Randy Quaid) flies a suicide mission to detonate a nuclear bomb and destroy the mothership. The film offers spectacular special effects designed by Volker Engel and Douglas Smith.

While more than half a century of film has been responsible for most of the vividness with which the alien icon has been impressed upon the public mind, the print medium has of course dealt with the motif as well. The alien icon has always been a staple in science fiction, and fictional portrayals of aliens have often interfaced with film, either (as has been noted) as short stories or novels serving as the basis for screenplays or as novelizations of movies.

But the print medium has made its own inroads, and one writer in particular has brought a special spin to the whole subject in fiction, imbuing his work with insights deriving from what he describes as his own experience. Veteran horror writer Whitley Strieber reports having had alien abduction encounters himself, has done extensive research into the 1947 Roswell UFO incident and other cases reported in the field of UFO studies, and has taken so heightened an interest in the Roswell UFO case as to fashion a novel based loosely upon that story: *Majestic* (1989), in the afterword of which Strieber says, "This novel is based on a factual reality that has been hidden and denied" (Strieber 302). It should be noted also that Strieber, whose novel *Majestic* deals at some length with the account of a group called Majestic-12, reportedly set up by President Truman to oversee UFO-related matters, wrote the introduction to Stanton Friedman's nonfiction book *Top Secret / Majic: Operation Majestic-12 and the United States Government's UFO Cover-Up* (1996).

Those familiar with the writings of Roswell researchers (see Randle and Schmitt, Friedman, Burleson, *passim*) will recognize that some characters in the novel *Majestic* are historical figures—for example, President Truman, Secretary of Defense Forrestal, Admiral Hillenkoeter, General Ramey, Colonel Blanchard—identified by their real names, while others are thinly disguised real people given fictional names, notably Major "Donald Gray" representing Major Jesse Marcel, and (in passing) "Gerald Benning" representing astronomer and professional UFO debunker Donald Menzel. (It is up to the reader to make these connections, or not make them.)

Strieber, having interviewed many Roswell-case witnesses such as Walter Haut, fictionally explores the reported crash event with a high sense of realism, describing the military's searching the desert for the crashed disk and portraying the alien bodies as those of spindly, gray-skinned creatures with large, black eyes. A fictitious alien autopsy report gives more detail: "The cadaver was 36 inches long with a weight of 8 pounds. . . . The skin appeared

smooth and a dark bluish-gray in color. . . . There were no genitals and no way of determining sex, if any. The mouth was a small opening that did not appear to be supported by an articulated jaw, and there were holes in the position of ears. The cranium was round and large in proportion to the body and the eyes were almond-shaped" (Strieber 242).

The novel's central narrator is one Nicholas Duke who has interviewed an erstwhile (and fictitious) government agent named Wilfred Stone, who intermittently functions as a secondary narrator recalling, in his terminal illness, his experience investigating the Roswell UFO crash firsthand. Stone's account gives a unique spin to the question of interaction with the aliens in that he characterizes them as "wise children" who, Stone near the end of his life recalls, have visited him in his "ancient childhood" and left him permanently imprinted: "I remember hide-and-seek in our enormous yard, laughter in the night, cool and mysterious, and where I hid somebody else hid too. . . . They touched me with cool hands, cool and little and white" (Strieber 199). Overall, Stone characterizes the aliens as creatures who, with whatever inscrutable motive, assist human beings to get (back) in touch with aspects of themselves they have seemingly lost. Admiral Hillenkoeter, for instance, has a dream in which he encounters a beautiful woman who represents the feminine archetype: "She was mother, daughter, lover, the betrayed woman within us all. She was the one in whose lap we lie when we are babies and when we die. When a boy on the battlefield calls for his mother, it is she who comes"—and: "Our eternal striving for her has brought the whole human race out of our loins" (Strieber 209); this vision, in the novel, was alien-inspired. Altogether Strieber imbues the alien presence with a sort of gentle pathos that makes them strangely sympathetic though frightening.

Following the various portrayals provided during the latter half of the twentieth century, the alien motif entered the twenty-first century with full force at the hand of one of the best-selling authors of all time: Stephen King. Arguably King's finest novel, *Dreamcatcher* (2001), gives us the gray-alien invader highlighted in a manner one is not likely to forget.

Dreamcatcher's complexly interwoven plot revolves around four men, friends from school days, whose lives have been changed forever by an incident occurring in their youth when they rescued a Down's Syndrome child from the clutches of bullies. This child, whom they call Duddits, seems to possess special talents, chiefly a kind of telepathy that the four friends call "seeing the line." This telepathic talent rubs off on the others, and they still have it in adulthood. Annually they take a vacation together at a remote cabin in the Maine woods, but one trip proves momentous when an alien spacecraft crashes somewhere nearby and the military cordons off the area, trapping the four men (and several hundred other people) within the perimeter. The commanding officer of this operation, a man named Kurtz, is so insanely diligent in his duties that the reader may well end up wondering who the real menace is, the aliens or Kurtz. Nonetheless, these aliens are nasty—in one

form they are the stereotypic gangly-limbed, big-eyed "grays" with a talent for commandeering the minds of humans, but they also bring two other alien life forms with them: a sort of red fungus that the military people call "the Ripley" (after Sigourney Weaver's role in *Alien*) and a vicious, needle-toothed, eel-shaped creature that lodges in the intestinal tract of infected humans, only to be expelled at some point in a manner fatal to the host. King describes them: "[H]e saw something clinging to the doorway about halfway up. It looked like some kind of freak weasel—no legs but with a thick reddish-gold tail. There was no real head, only a kind of slippery-looking node from which two feverish black eyes stared" (King 244).

One of the four friends, a college professor named Gary Jones, has his mind taken over by the last remaining alien after the military has performed its mop-up of the area, and the controlling alien ("Mr. Gray") compels him to drive through a storm to Quabbin Reservoir in western Massachusetts to try to infect the area water supply with the alien spore and gain a new foothold. Breaking out of the military's internment camp in Maine (where Kurtz plans to exterminate not only the infected populace but also his own personnel), Henry Devlin, another of the four friends, pursues Jones in a desperate bid to foil the alien plot, a bid that centrally involves the now grown-up but dying Duddits, who apparently in some bizarre precognitive way has been aware of "Mr. Gray" even from childhood. *Dreamcatcher*, certainly one of the most memorable treatments of the subject ever to appear, was made into a film of the same title (Castle Rock Entertainment/Village Roadshow Pictures/NPV Entertainment/Warner Bros., 2003, director Lawrence Kasdan, screenplay by William Goldman and Lawrence Kasdan), starring Morgan Freeman, Thomas Jane, Jason Lee, Damian Lewis, Timothy Olyphant, Tom Sizemore, and Dannie Wahlberg. The screenplay for the most part keeps very close to the novel.

In all, the alien icon, as an embodiment of the Great Outside and an encapsulation of the whole question of humankind's relation to the rest of the universe, is one that has captured the public imagination in a unique and compelling way, driven on in its continuing influence and its dark fascination by the energies of literature and film.

This public fascination with aliens is likely to continue with the reports of UFO sightings, alien abductions, and the like, by numerous witnesses. The majority of such reports may well be spurious, but there are enough ultimately unexplained reports to keep at least two well-established professional UFO investigative organizations busy. Both the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON, based in Colorado) and the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS, based in Chicago) conduct regular investigations and research projects and publish serious, high-quality refereed journals in the field, to which many of the world's leading UFO experts contribute articles. The phenomenon, whatever its explanations, persists, and the worlds of literature and film are quite likely to continue both to reflect and to drive the public interest in the topic.

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The Angel and the Demon

by Matt Cardin

INTRODUCTION

Even a cursory survey of the supernatural horror genre reveals the important role that the angel and the demon have long played in it. From texts such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* (written 1308–1321) and John Milton's *Paradise*

Lost (1667), which straddle the boundary between religious devotional literature and outright fiction, to fictional works such as Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971), the demon has provided ongoing fodder for creators of supernatural horror. As for the angel, while it has most often served as a mere foil for the demon, and has often been left entirely unmentioned in favor of focusing exclusively on demonic horrors, it has still made its presence known. *Paradise Lost*, for example, begins with a dramatic narration of the fall of Lucifer and his fellow angels from heaven and their subsequent transformation or transition into demons. More recently, the *Prophecy* series of horror movies of the 1990s and early 2000s has flouted modern Western conventions by abandoning the cute, cozy angels of Victorian art and the greeting card industry, returning to a more ancient and traditional portrayal of angels as powerful, terrifying beings.

Nor are these figures influential merely within the confines of the supernatural horror as such. In 1973 the cinematic adaptation of *The Exorcist* became a sensation among audiences and was subsequently recognized as the first true "blockbuster," predating *Jaws* and *Star Wars*. It was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including best picture and best director, and won two of them. Its earnings made it one of the top-grossing films at the U.S. box office that year, and in the decades since it has steadily remained in and around the top ten highest grossing films of all time both domestically and internationally. Upon its first release it ignited a national conversation about theological matters within the United States, just as its author (Blatty, who penned the screenplay from his own novel) had hoped it would do, and spurred many fear-based conversions and reconversions to Christianity.

Angels have shared a similar widespread influence. Director Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, which begins and ends with angels, received only a middling response from audiences and critics when it was first released in 1946 (although it was nominated for five Academy Awards). Then in 1974 a copyright lapse due to a clerical error placed the film in the public domain. When television stations around the country began to take advantage of the opportunity to run the film free of royalty charges, a new generation of viewers rediscovered and fell in love with it, thus transforming it into a widely beloved "holiday classic," and thus rendering the supporting character of Clarence the most famous cinematic angel of them all.

Over the course of subsequent decades, angels became the subject of a bona fide national obsession in the United States. A slew of television programs ("Highway to Heaven," "Touched by an Angel"), movies (*Angels in the Outfield*, *City of Angels*), and best-selling books (*A Book of Angels*, *Ask Your Angels*, *Where Angels Walk*) arose to cater to a rising fascination with the idea of winged heavenly guardians and messengers. In 1994 the NBC television network aired a two-hour primetime special titled *Angels: The Mysterious Messengers*, and PBS ran a well-received documentary, *In Search of Angels*. A 1993 *Time* magazine cover story about the angel craze included a survey

indicating that 69 percent of Americans claimed to believe in angels, while nearly half believed they were attended by a personal guardian angel. *Newsweek*, which ran its own angel-themed cover story the very same week the *Time* issue appeared, reported that the angel craze appeared to be rooted in a very real spiritual craving: "It may be kitsch, but there's more to the current angel obsession than the Hallmarking of America. Like the search for extra-terrestrials, the belief in angels implies that we are not alone in the universe—that someone up there likes me" (quoted in Nickell 152–53).

Not incidentally, this sentiment closely echoed Blatty's expressed motivation for writing *The Exorcist*. As he has explained in numerous interviews and also in his memoir *If There Were Demons, Then Perhaps There Were Angels: William Peter Blatty's Story of* The Exorcist (1999), when he was a junior at the Jesuitical Georgetown University in 1949 he encountered a *Washington Post* story about a fourteen-year-old boy in Mount Rainier, Maryland, who had undergone an exorcism under the official sanction of the church. Blatty had long been concerned about the spiritual direction of modern Western society—*The Exorcist*, let it be noted, was published in the immediate wake of the 1960s' "death of God" movement—and in the account of this boy and his apparent demonic affliction, Blatty thought he could discern "tangible evidence of transcendence" (quoted in Whitehead). Two decades later he fictionalized the story in his famous novel. But it was a fiction with a serious existential purpose; as he later explained, in his view the reality of demons served as a kind of apologetic proof for the existence of God: "If there were demons, there were angels and probably a God and a life everlasting" (quoted in Whitehead).

In the early 1970s it seemed that the Roman Catholic Church, or at least the pope, agreed with at least the first half of Blatty's demon-angel apologetic. In November 1972, Pope Paul VI delivered an address to a general audience in which he expressed his concern over what he viewed as demonic influences at work in the world: "Evil is not merely an absence of something but an active force, a living, spiritual being that is perverted and that perverts others. It is a terrible reality, mysterious and frightening. . . . Many passages in the Gospel show us that we are dealing not just with one Devil, but with many" (Pope Paul VI). These statements ignited a debate both inside and outside the church and embarrassed many priests whose outlook was more in tune with the secularistic, demythologized tenor of the time than with what they viewed as the mythological belief system of pre-Enlightenment Christianity. But the international phenomenon that was *The Exorcist* demonstrated that the Roman pontiff obviously spoke not only for himself but also for an enormous public that either believed as he did or, at the very least, suspected or wanted to believe in the existence of a transcendent spiritual reality. The fact that the pope's remarks were bookended, temporally speaking, by the 1971 publication of Blatty's novel and the 1973 release of the movie makes it difficult to avoid speculating that all three statements—the novel, the movie, and Paul VI's speech—were expressions of a common, burgeoning cultural phenomenon.

All of which brings the argument back to the matter at hand. It will be the task of this chapter to explore the ancient religious, historical, and psychological sources from which the iconic Angel and Demon (henceforth to be referred to as proper nouns) derive, and in the process to trace their history in literature and film. Owing to space limitations, the discussion of these books, stories, and films will be highly selective in order to hit the ''high points'' where the Angel and Demon have been most visible and influential. The overall purpose will be to demonstrate how and why a knowledge of the deep history of these ubiquitous horror icons dramatically illuminates their frequent appearances in works of supernatural horror. As indicated by the foregoing discussion, such an investigation will inevitably illuminate widespread popular religious conceptions as well, which are often not very well demarcated from the images presented in popular entertainment.

THE PREHISTORY OF THE DEMON

The English word ''demon'' derives from the Latin *daemon*, which itself came from the Greek *daimon*. ''Demon'' is technically a neutral word that refers to any spirit, whether good or evil, that is neither divine nor mortal but inhabits the intermediate realm between gods and humans. Thus, even angels belong to the general class of beings known as demons. But in common usage, owing to habits established between roughly 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E., ''demon'' has come to refer solely to the evil members of the category. Three of the most important currents of thought that went into forming the iconic Demon were, first, the beliefs and ideas about spirits that saturated the Middle East from the earliest antiquity; second, the angels and evil spirits of ancient Judaism; and third, the Greek idea of *daimones*.

As described by E. V. Walter in his essay ''Demons and Disenchantment,'' the Greek word *deisidaimonia* refers to ''a certain dimension of sacromagical, numinous experience'' that formed an authentic religious tradition in the ancient world. In addition to playing an important part in ancient Greece, this sacred experience of demon dread ''constituted the central element of the religious experience of the most ancient civilization we know from historical records: the Sumerian-Babylonian-Assyrian people. It also appeared in ancient Egypt, which was cheerful, optimistic, and much less demon-ridden than the Mesopotamian civilization'' (Walter 19, 20). It is in the demonologies of the Mesopotamians and Egyptians that the oldest ancestors of the Demon can be observed in nascent form.

The early inhabitants of these regions believed their daily lives were saturated with evil spirits. If one had a headache, it was because of a demon. If one broke a pot or got into a quarrel with a neighbor, it was likewise because of a demon. For the Mesopotamians, even such an intimate experience as dreaming was under the control of these beings. Both peoples often depicted

their demons as animal-human hybrids when they depicted them at all, as in the case of *Pazuzu*, demon of the southwest wing and bringer of famine and plague, who was portrayed as a vaguely man-shaped figure with a monstrous head, the wings of an eagle, the tail of a scorpion, and the talons or claws of an eagle or lion. Then there were the mysterious *djinn*, fearsome desert spirits that were able to shape-shift into different forms. And of course both the Mesopotamians and Egyptians possessed their respective ''official'' theologies, such as the one centered around the famous Babylonian creation epic known as *Enuma Elish*, or the priestly Egyptian religion that posited the demonic Set as opposed to his noble brother, the supreme god Osiris.

The greatest spur toward the incorporation of all these ancient Middle Eastern demons into later Jewish and Christian cosmologies was the rise of new religious movements, such as Zoroastrianism in Persia and the religious reforms of Akhenaton in Egypt, that reframed the old beliefs and subjected the various indigenous spirits to new interpretations, thus providing a template for later Hellenistic Jewish and Christian demonologies and angelologies.

Unlike its later forms, Judaism up until the two or three centuries preceding the Common Era lacked the idea of ''fallen angels'' who waged war against the one God. In fact, it lacked any sort of native demonology at all. Beliefs about various spirits were absorbed from neighboring peoples, and then an influx of Chaldean (i.e., Persian-Babylonian) religious influences in the sixth century B.C.E. gave rise to the famous Jewish division between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan.

The upshot of it all is that the ancient Jewish, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian (primarily Chaldean) beliefs about demons provided a basic content and structure for the formation of the Demon. It remained for the Greek notion of the *daimon* to provide the overarching concept and vocabulary that would synthesize these various elements into a coherent, unified portrait. Even though most modern peoples have heard of the Greek Olympian deities, most are not familiar with the Greek concept of *daimones*. This is ironic and unfortunate in light of the fact that, according to scholar Reginald Barrow, the worship of daimons may have formed a kind of underground mainstream in Greek religion:

> Because the daemons have left few memorials of themselves in architecture and literature, their importance tends to be overlooked. . . . They are omnipresent and all-powerful, they are embedded deep in the religious memories of the peoples, for they go back to days long before the days of Greek philosophy and religion. The cults of the Greek states, recognised and officially sanctioned, were only one-tenth of the iceberg; the rest, the submerged nine-tenths, were the daemons. (Quoted in Diamond 67)

The daimons were originally neither good nor evil, or rather were potentially both. In Homer's time (around the eighth century B.C.E.) people commonly

believed they brought both positive and negative things. Several centuries later the Hellenistic Greeks developed the more concrete categories of *eudaimones* (good daimons) and *kakodaimones* (evil daimons). Socrates famously experienced audible communications from a personal *daimonion*, and this illustrates an important point: The Greeks understood their daimons to have not only objective but also subjective existence. They regarded the daimons as inner influences upon human thoughts and emotions, and even as controllers of individual character and destiny. They were a mysterious force that felt like an autonomous influence in a person's mind or soul.

The twentieth-century existential psychologist Rollo May, who resurrected the concept of the daimon and the daimonic for use in modern depth psychotherapy, gave definitive statement to this idea of strange internal influence in *Love and Will*: "The daimonic is any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person. Sex and eros, anger and rage, and the craving for power are examples. The daimonic can be either creative or destructive and is normally both" (123). In the most dramatic cases, the internal power might take control completely, resulting in "daimon possession." But on a more positive note, a myth created by Plato explained that each person chose his or her daimon, and there his or her fate, before birth.

When first Alexander and then the Romans succeeded in exporting all things Greek to the farthest corners of their respective empires, the resulting Hellenistic cultural matrix was rife with daimons in the Greek mold. According to Dodds, by "the second century after Christ it was the expression of a truism. Virtually everyone, pagan, Jewish, Christian or Gnostic, believed in the existence of these beings and in their function as mediators, whether he called them daemons or angels or aions or simply 'spirits' " (*Pagan and Christian* 37–38).

THE PREHISTORY OF THE ANGEL

The word "angel" derives from the Latin *angelus*, which derives from the Greek *angelos*. In the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures from the third century B.C.E.), *angelos* is used to translate the Hebrew *mal'ak*. Both *angelos* and *mal'ak* mean "messenger" and can refer to either a supernatural spirit or a human being, or at times even a natural phenomenon, that delivers divine communication to humans. By the time of Christianity's political triumph in the fourth century C.E., the word had come to refer exclusively to the iconic Angel known today.

The first mention in the Bible of the supernatural type of angel is found in the Old Testament, in Genesis, when God stations angels called *cherubim* at the entrance to Eden to keep Adam and Eve from returning after they have been expelled. After that, these supernatural beings appear frequently throughout the Hebrew scriptures to announce God's will, save and direct God's people,

and often mete out God's wrath. Most significantly for the Jewish people as a whole, a man—who is generally interpreted as an angel—famously wrestled with Jacob all night in the desert, and consequently Jacob had his name changed to Israel, meaning ''one who wrestles with God.''

Jewish angels were conceived as awesome and even terrifying beings, partly because of their visual appearance, which was modeled on monstrous spirits from nearby cultures, but also because they directly represented and somehow *embodied* the terrible God they served. To see an angel of God was in some sense to see God Himself. The terrible aspect of angels was also visible in their many destructive actions, as when they destroyed cities, brought plagues, and so on.

The idea of angels that were not only fearsome but also positively monstrous was advanced by the First Book of Enoch (second–third century B.C.E.), which was influenced by Persian mythology and the story of the Nephilim in Genesis chapter 6. It tells of a band of who are led by powerful beings named Semjaza and Azazel to rebel against God by marrying human women and teaching them various secrets that are forbidden for mortals to know. As a punishment, God chains the angels in dark places of the earth and leaves them to await the Final Judgment, at which point they will be cast into fire. On the other end of matters, many good angels, including Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel, work to help humankind.

The practice of ranking of angels into types and hierarchies was absorbed into Judaism from Zoroastrianism, in which the Wise Lord Ahura Mazda was served by his immortal sons and daughters, the Amesha Spentas or ''bounteous immortals,'' and also by lesser beings called Yazatas or ''worshipful ones.'' The visual appearance of the iconic Angel is traceable to Egypt, to the goddess Isis and her sister, who were depicted as human women with feathery wings sprouting from their sides or backs. The Greeks later imported the same imagery and attached it to Nike and Eros, the winged daimons of victory and love, and it was these figures that served as the specific template for the iconic Angel's appearance.

THE DEMON FROM THE FIRST CENTURY
TO MODERN TIMES

By the dawn of the Common Era, the Septuagint had already made crucial terminological distinctions by using the Greek *angelos* to translate the Hebrew *mal'ak*, the Greek *daimon* or *daimonion* to translate the various Hebrew words for idols, alien gods, and the like, and *theos* to translate references to the one God. In or around the first century, the rich trove of concepts and connotations associated with the Greek daimons became attached to the Jewish understanding of the spiritual world, which had been influenced by ancient Middle Eastern beliefs with their cosmic dualism. When this happened, the moral ambivalence and the dual sense of demonic dread and spiritual

inspiration that were inherent in the concept of the daimon became divided, with half the associations attaching themselves to the idea of the Angel and half to the Demon. Thus arose the demons and "unclean spirits" of the New Testament period, who with their violent usurpation of people's personalities embodied the most negative aspect of the old daimonic understanding. In the gospels Jesus is frequently shown casting out demons who rage and writhe and foam at the mouth, with the most famous story being the encounter with the Gerasene demoniac.

In the first few centuries of the Common Era, the entire roster of early church fathers and many other writers contributed to the developing Christian demonology. The books they wrote invariably conceived of demons in a manner influenced by a combination of Chaldean/Jewish apocalyptic beliefs and a mutated form of Greek daimonism. For the first part, demons were conceived as angelic beings who had rebelled against the one God and were now devoted to making war against Him and His world. For the second part, this demonic war was seen as being conducted not primarily on an objective, external plane, but on an internal one. The battle was in fact conducted within and for the sake of people's souls. The helpful inner voice of Socrates, when grafted into the Chaldean-inspired demonology, had been transformed into the voice of temptation. In the more extreme cases, the daimonic-cum-demonic influence was transformed into the full-blown phenomenon of demonic possession. There was no shortage of these evil spirits because every spirit that was not aligned with the one God was by definition a demon. This meant foreign gods were held to be demonic spirits who had deceived entire nations.

At this point it is possible to press the "fast forward" button, as it were, in this account of the iconic Demon's history, for once the concept of the Demon was firmly established in the Hellenistic and early Christian minds, it continued in much the same form down through the centuries, with only a few substantial alterations and additions. It was not until the High Middle Ages that several events began to occur that helped finalize the Demon.

One of these was the adoption at the Fourth Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent III at Rome in 1215, of a resolution that firmly defined demons as fallen angels and definitively distinguished them as *daemones* as distinct from their leader, *diabolus*, the Devil himself. This resolution established for the first time the familiar modern idea of "the devil and his angels" as explicit Catholic orthodoxy.

Another was the publication of the Italian poet Dante's famous *Inferno*, the first installment of his *Divine Comedy*, in 1314. Dante's depiction of a multi-layered hell populated by dreadful demons who spent eternity tormenting sinners helped to concretize the popular conception of hell's location by depicting it as an inverted cone extending deep within the earth. It also finalized the Gothic visual imagery of the iconic Demon, thus inspiring countless visual artists first in Italy and then throughout Europe. Dante did not so much invent the Demon's appearance as make use of preexisting trends and materials; recall

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Chronology of the Demon

- Sixth century B.C.E.—Introduction of Zoroastrian absolute dualism between good and evil spirits
- Third century B.C.E.—Translation of Septuagint (Greek version of Hebrew scriptures)
- circa 60–200 C.E.—Writing of early Christian documents
- Fourth century—Political triumph of Christianity in Roman Empire
- 1215—Adoption of official view of angels and demons at Fourth Lateran Council
- 1314—Publication of Dante's *Inferno*
- 1614—Publication of *Rituale Romanum*, including exorcism rite in Chapter XII
- 1630s—Famous demonic possession activity at convent in Loudun, France
- 1667—Publication of Milton's *Paradise Lost*
- Late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries—The Romantic Movement, birth of Gothicism and the supernatural horror story
- 1796—Publication of Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*
- 1808—Publication of Goethe's *Faust*, part one
- 1911—Publication of M. R. James's ''Casting the Runes''
- 1957—Release of film *Night of the Demon*
- 1971—Publication of William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*
- 1972—Pope Paul VI delivers address about reality of demons
- 1973—Release of film adaptation of *The Exorcist*
- 1983—Publication of Blatty's *Legion* (sequel to *The Exorcist*)
- 1985—Release of film *Demons*
- 1986—Publication of Frank Peretti's *This Present Darkness*
- 1999—Roman Catholic Church revises exorcism rite
- 2000—Reports of Pope John Paul II's involvement in an exorcism
- 2005—Release of *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*

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the elements involved in Pazuzu's physical form and in the gargoyles adorning the great European cathedrals of Dante's day. But it was Dante assembled these influences into the definitive portrait.

The period from the High Middle Ages to the late Renaissance was also important to the Demon because of the sometimes-obsessive fear of witches that gripped many Christians. Witches were supposed to consort with demons, and beliefs about this subject culminated in the so-called ''witch

craze" that engulfed Europe during the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries, and also the infamous witch trials and executions in Salem Village (now Danvers), Massachusetts, in 1692. Much of this was inspired by the ideas of the great scholastic theologian Thomas Aquinas, whose teachings about demons called *incubi* and *succubi*, which were supposed to attack humans sexually, played into beliefs about witches and their interactions with demons.

The fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries were a golden age for Demon-inspired artwork, as numerous artists offered their visual interpretations of scenes from Dante and other Christian themes. Amidst all this, and perhaps in partial response to the widespread cultural focus on such matters, the Catholic Church in 1614 issued its instructions for the exorcism of demons in the famous Chapter XII of the *Rituale Romanum* (*Roman Ritual*).

In an interesting bit of timing, one of the most famous cases of demonic possession in history occurred just two decades after the Church's publication of its exorcism ritual. Father Jean-Joseph Surin, a Jesuit who served as an exorcist for the nuns at Loudun, France, when they experienced an outbreak of possession, himself became possessed by a demon of lust that tormented him for many years. Three centuries later, Aldous Huxley told the story in *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), which itself became the basis for director Ken Russell's 1971 film, *The Devils*.

Coming shortly on the heels of the Loudun case and the Church's publication of Chapter XII was John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), which ranks on a level with Dante's *Inferno* for its profound influence upon cultural views of Satan and the Demon, and which displays clear evidence of having been influenced by First Enoch with its angelic wars. Milton may have written his *magnum opus* to "justify the ways of God to man," as he famously phrased it, but what he largely ended up doing was to present a sympathetic Satan whose interiority fascinated the general public. And although the idea of demons as fallen angels already had a very long pedigree, Milton raised popular awareness of it to such a pitch that it was cemented permanently in the forefront of Christian thought.

With *Paradise Lost*, the final refinement of the Demon was put in place. In the centuries to come, the primary vehicle for placing continued focus upon the newly unified and solidified Demon would shift increasingly from overtly religious texts to the literary genre that emerged with the birth of the Romantic Movement and its offshoot, the Gothic horror story.

THE ANGEL FROM THE FIRST CENTURY TO MODERN TIMES

Like its prehistory, the history of the Angel from its formation in Hellenistic times to the present day is largely a complement to the history of the Demon. The framers of the demonic hordes and hierarchies created the an-

gelic hosts and hierarchies at the same time, under the influence of the same Chaldean-inspired Jewish theology and from the aspects of the Greek daimons that had not been allotted to the Demon.

In the New Testament, angels were cast largely in the mold of their fearsome ancient Jewish progenitors. In Luke's gospel the angel Gabriel appears to the priest Zechariah to announce the birth of Christ's herald, John the Baptist. Shortly afterward, Gabriel appears to Mary to announce that she will be made pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. On the night Christ is finally born, an unnamed angel appears to lowly shepherds to announce the joyous news. In Matthew's gospel, after Jesus' crucifixion and interment an angel descends upon the rock rolled over the entrance to the tomb. In all three synoptic gospels, the women who go to anoint Jesus' corpse find an empty

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Chronology of the Angel

- Sixth century B.C.E.—Introduction of Zoroastrian absolute dualism between good and evil spirits
- Third century B.C.E.—Translation of Septuagint (Greek version of Hebrew scriptures)
- circa 60–200 C.E.—Writing of early Christian documents
- Fourth century—Political triumph of Christianity in Roman Empire
- Fifth century—Writing of *Celestial Hierarchy* by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite
- 1215—Adoption of official view of angels and demons at Fourth Lateran Council
- 1314—Publication of Dante's *Inferno*
- 1667—Publication of Milton's *Paradise Lost*
- 1749–1756—Publication of Swedenborg's eight-volume *Arcana Coelestia*
- Late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries—The Romantic Movement, birth of Gothicism and the supernatural horror story
- Eighteenth to twentieth centuries—Triumph of Victorian feminine angel image
- 1946—Release of film *It's a Wonderful Life*
- 1983—Publication of William Peter Blatty's *Legion* (sequel to *The Exorcist*)
- 1986—Publication of Frank Peretti's *This Present Darkness*
- 1980s–1990s—American cultural craze for angels
- 1993—Release of film *The Prophecy*
- 1998—Release of film *Fallen*

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tomb and are confronted by an angel or angels who announce his resurrection. In all cases, fear is the result. In the case of the angel rolling away the rock, the Roman guards are literally overcome by terror: "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men" (Matt. 28:2–4). The terrifying quality of these appearances is reinforced by the first words, a New Testament angel, like its Old Testament forebears, is typically obliged to speak: "Do not be afraid!"

As for the cataloguing of the angelic host, it was well underway by the close of the New Testament period. The Testament of Solomon, an apocryphal text that spoke primarily of demons, also spoke of angels by way of naming which ones should be called upon to counter and put down specific demons. Probably the most significant angelology of the period was written by the fifth-century mystical theologian Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who in his *Celestial Hierarchy* adapted the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Proclus to establish a hierarchy of angels in three "triads" which greatly influenced later medieval scholastic theologians.

The Neoplatonists, it should be recalled, represented an explicitly mystical interpretation of Greek Platonic philosophy, and for this reason their "take" on the Angel displayed a pointedly more mystical character than those of a more typically Judaic or New Testament cast. The Angel had inherited the half of the old daimonic concept that was framed more in terms of what might today be called a "higher self." Instead of tempting or possessing people, the psychologized or spiritualized Angel called them to realize of their own free will their highest and deepest spiritual potential.

Thus was born an interesting division in the figure of the Angel. Considered as hierarchies of objectively existing beings, the early angelologies clearly reflected their origins in the theology of Zoroastrianism, Hellenistic Judaism, and so on. But considered as descriptions of inner spiritual and psychological states and forces, the same angelologies clearly reflected their origins in the more mystically oriented Neoplatonic and Gnostic practice of theurgy, or the divinizing of matter and the self by "drawing down" the divine into it. The progression of the Angel on down to the modern day evinces these dual exoteric and esoteric understandings.

The visual template for the Angel had been provided by the Greek deities Nike and Eros, whose attractive human bodies with feathery wings sprouting from their shoulders—or perhaps replacing their arms, as in the famous Hellenistic statue of Nike known as *The Winged Victory of Samothrace*—are well known. The fact that the Angel in a Judeo-Christian context would have its visual appearance drawn from a Hellenistic source may be attributable to the old tradition of Jewish iconoclasm in which representations of the deity

were forbidden. Even the influence of the winged Jewish seraphim and cherubim only arrived in Christian angelic iconography by way of Nike and Eros.

A final bit of duality to enter into the figure of the Angel is found in this very area of artistic representation. On the one hand, the image continued in its original majestic form down through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, arguably culminating in the paintings of the Dominican monk Fra Angelico ("the angelic friar," c. 1400–1455), of whom C. S. Lewis said his angels "carry in their face and gesture the peace and authority of Heaven." But Lewis also noted that artistic representations of angels have steadily degenerated:

> Later [i.e., in the wake of Fra Angelico's angels] come the chubby infantile nudes of Raphael; finally the soft, slim, girlish, and consolatory angels of nineteenth century art, shapes so feminine that they avoid being voluptuous only by their total insipidity—the frigid houris of a teatable paradise. They are a pernicious symbol. In Scripture the visitation of an angel is always alarming; it has to begin by saying "Fear not." The Victorian angel looks as if it were going to say, "There, there." (Lewis 7)

One can only wish Lewis were still around to comment on the angel-oriented advertising campaign mounted by the American lingerie company Victoria's Secret in the early 2000s, which featured images of nearly nude female models decked out with large, white, feathery wings. This enormously profitable mockery of the iconic Angel one-upped the "pernicious symbol" of Victorian art by presenting a figure that managed to appear exceedingly voluptuous and artistically insipid all at once.

THE DEMON IN SUPERNATURAL LITERATURE

From its beginnings in the Gothic literary movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the supernatural horror genre has consistently made the Demon a more frequent and explicit focus than the Angel. In fact, the angel as a major focus of fictional supernatural horror did not really see much use at all until the late twentieth century. Perhaps the long delay is due not only to the modern iconic Angel's kinder nature but also to its aforementioned artistic degeneration. In the nineteenth century, right about the time the Angel was finding itself trapped in the bodies of chubby babies and doe-eyed androgynes, the supernatural horror story was just getting off the ground. The Demon, unlike the Angel, had retained its ancient horrific nature intact, and was thus ready for immediate casting in stories of supernatural horror.

A survey of the Demon as it has appeared in supernatural horror fiction and film yields an interesting conclusion: In its literary guise the Demon has

remained very much in touch with its ancient cultural background, while in its cinematic guise it has sometimes been severed from this mooring and allowed to roam free as a nearly contextless monster. Although there are a number of notable films that operate with an awareness of the Demon's historical context, in many other instances the Demon has been presented as nothing more than a mindless, vicious killing machine, so that the word "Demon" in its iconic sense hardly seems applicable any more. But even here, one who knows how to look can discern the unstated influence of the ancient figure at work, so that ultimately the demon-as-killing-machine may be understood as a bona fide new facet of this ever-evolving icon.

The idea of multiple facets provides a useful tool for understanding the Demon's various appearances in stories of the supernatural. The coherent, unified Demon that was hammered into existence over the course of millennia still displays a number of distinct aspects owing to its multifarious origin, and supernatural stories may be judged according to which of these they emphasize. In general, three such aspects may be identified: the *Demon as a fallen angel* (a.k.a. the Miltonic aspect), the *Demon as a moral tempter*, and what might be called the *Demon as an afflicting presence*. This last takes one of several forms ranging from physical and/or psychological harassment to internal daimonic-type influence to full-blown demonic possession.

Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) emphasized primarily the moral-tempter aspect, although the fallen angel was visible as well. The novel was published only twenty-two years after Horace Walpole's overwrought medievalesque fantasy, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), had launched the Gothic novel. *The Monk* therefore represents the first major use of the Demon in the nascent supernatural horror genre. It caused a scandal and a sensation when it first appeared, and a survey of its content indicates why. Set in Madrid during the time of the Inquisition, it tells the story of a monk named Ambrosio who is arrogantly proud of his ironclad moral virtue, for which he is widely revered. This virtue is corrupted when he falls in lust with a woman named Matilda who is later revealed as a demon, and whose enticements lead him into acts of intense debauchery and violence. Theologically, the novel frames demons as fallen angels that can be "called up" via occult rituals, as Matilda first describes and then later demonstrates to Ambrosio. A movie version starring Franco Nero and scripted by renowned surrealist filmmaker Luis Buñuel appeared almost 200 years later, in 1973, and did not significantly alter the story's presentation of the Demon.

Part One of Goethe's *Faust* was published in 1808. *Faust* is not generally labeled a horror story as such, although Goethe himself was prominent in the Romantic Movement that spawned the horror genre. But Goethe's rendering of the ancient story of the great magician who sells his soul to the Devil or a demon has become known as the definitive version. As in *The Monk*, the view of the Demon here is utterly in line with the Roman Catholic/Miltonic concept of the fallen angel, although Goethe with his eclectic political, theological,

philosophical, scientific, and mystical concerns puts the concept to decidedly wider use. The demon Mephistopheles who offers his diabolical bargain to the eponymous protagonist was portrayed in medieval and Renaissance Christian legends as a powerful angel who had been the second to fall from heaven after Lucifer. In Goethe's story Mephistopheles makes reference to his own fallen status a number of times, and the play's ''Prologue in Heaven'' further signals and cements the deployment of the iconic theology by presenting the archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael praising God in heaven, followed by Mephistopheles placing a wager with God about Faust in a scene modeled directly on the interaction between Satan and Yahweh in the Book of Job. All in all, the play ranks as one of the most significant works in the history of demonic literature.

Attention to the Demon continued apace throughout the nineteenth century as the supernatural horror genre expanded and gained an identity. Often the Demon appeared or was referenced as a tangential figure in works that devoted more attention to Satan or the Devil specifically, as in the case of novels and stories that explored the ever-popular ''deal with the devil'' motif, of which Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) is a notable example. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni* (1842) featured a being called the ''Dweller on the Threshold,'' conceived as a kind of daimon-type evil spirit that guarded the border between worlds, and his *A Strange Story* (1862) featured additional ruminations on theological and spiritual matters in both an orthodox and a mystical-occult vein; the Christian apocrypha, for example, were referenced, and various esoteric subjects broached. Even skeptical works such as Sir Walter Scott's *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830) evinced the strong popular interest in demonic matters by becoming bestsellers. Nor was this interest confined to Great Britain and Western Europe; the great Russian poet Lermontov's best-known work was a long poem titled *The Demon* (1842), which although it devoted much of its energy to playing off the idiosyncratic connotations of the word ''demon'' in Russian culture, still presented a recognizable aspect of the iconic Demon in its story of an angel who is exiled from paradise and then wanders the earth in misery.

By the middle and late nineteenth century, the supernatural horror story had come fully into its own and begun to produce authors who would later constitute a canon. Many of these made use of the Demon, as in the spate of stories where the Demon was active as a psychologically and physically afflicting presence. These include Sheridan Le Fanu's ''Green Tea'' (1872), Guy de Maupassant's ''The Horla'' (1886), and M. R. James's ''Casting the Runes'' (1911), all of which are recognized as classics of the genre. ''Green Tea'' depicts the plight of one Reverend Mr. Jennings, who is driven to suicide by either a mental breakdown or an excess of supernatural sight that has enabled him, and him alone, to see a demon in the shape of a monkey that pursues him everywhere. The story's basic conceit, drawn from Swedenborg, is that Mr. Jennings's may have accidentally had his ''interior sight opened,''

thus attracting the malevolent attention of the little demon that is attached to him.

The protagonist of Maupassant's "The Horla" is so terrorized by repeated nocturnal assaults by an invisible creature that he is eventually driven to suicide. But before his end, he realizes that the entity attacking him is a representative of an entire race that is intent upon wresting control of the earth from humankind. The Horla is the entity who throughout history "was feared by primitive man; whom disquieted priests exorcised; whom sorcerers evoked on dark nights, without having seen him appear, to whom the imagination of the transient masters of the world lent all the monstrous or graceful forms of gnomes, spirits, genii, fairies and familiar spirits" (466).

In James's "Casting the Runes," a man named Edward Dunning is similarly plagued by an invisible demon that is unleashed upon him by a resentful occultist. In the end the occultist himself is apparently done in by his own evil. The entire story as well as its famous cinematic adaptation, *Night of the Demon*, a.k.a. *Curse of the Demon* (1957; see below), demonstrates an awareness of the subject's rich background. This is unsurprising, since James was a professional academic, specifically a medieval scholar, whose interest in the Demon extended far beyond the writing of horror stories. He studied medieval and ancient demonology in earnest and applied his powers to translating ancient works, producing, for example, a translation of The Testament of Solomon.

Regarding the Demon as a presence that afflicts in the daimonic sense of causing inner disturbance, it is instructive to look briefly back to the early nineteenth century, to the height of the Romantic period, and observe that this appears most prominently not in works of fiction, but in works of philosophy and literary theory that explore the Romantic concept of "genius." All the great Romantics—Goethe, Hoffmann, Rousseau, Shelley, Byron, Blake, Coleridge—as well as their philosophical heirs in the Transcendentalist and Antitranscendentalist movements (Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville) devoted much attention and many words to analyzing, celebrating, and even deifying the creative impulse that led people such as themselves to produce art and literature. In the Romantic view, creative inspiration became likened to a demon, or rather a daemon, or rather a genius in a modified classical Roman mode, so that these individuals with their overheated personalities and obsessive creative manias were framed as being influenced and inspired by a type of higher power. Additionally, Goethe, Hoffmann, and others wrote much about the idea of the "demonic" man who was controlled by a deeply obsessive force that led him always to strive for more in all things. So this was an alternate, extra-textual mode by which aspects of the Demon were known.

The 1890s saw the birth of the movies, and the Demon got involved right from the start. The great early French director George Méliès became famous for his short films featuring devils and demons, and before the silent era was over, the Demon would also appear in such productions as director Giovanni

Vitrotti's 1911 adaptation of Lermontov's *The Demon*, numerous versions of Dante's *Inferno*, director Paul Wegener's 1920 remake of his own earlier film *The Golem*, and director Benjamin Christensen's enigmatic *Häxan* (1922), a.k.a. *Witchcraft Through the Ages* (1922).

The Demon also continued to make its presence known in various literary venues in the early twentieth century, not least in the burgeoning world of "pulp fiction." *Weird Tales* published a number of stories by various authors that played upon the Demon. Although the huge majority of the material that appeared in *Weird Tales* was amateurish rubbish, a number of truly talented authors contributed worthwhile fiction to the magazine. Robert Bloch, for example, created a gripping story in "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" (1943), which posited that Jack the Ripper had in fact been a sorcerer who achieved immortality by sacrificing to evil demons, and that he was still alive and able to possess people's minds and bodies in the present day. The idea was potent enough that Bloch later reworked it for a teleplay for "Star Trek" in the 1960s. H. P. Lovecraft also developed his famous demonology during this period, but since it does not involve the iconic Demon, it is the subject of a different essay.

Quite a few books dealing with demonic themes were published during first few decades of the twentieth century, but most of these were concerned more with the Devil than with the Demon. C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) is worthy of mention even though it is a Christian devotional book instead of a work of supernatural fiction per se. With its witty fictional presentation of the advice and instruction given by a senior demon to a lower demon in the fine art of tempting humans, the book stands as one of the chief depictions of the Demon-as-moral-tempter. The afflicting Demon that brings psychological and physical torment was present in L. Ron Hubbard's *Fear* (1940), which told an interesting tale about an anthropologist who publishes a monograph scorning belief in demons as primitive delusions and then finds himself under apparent attack by demons in search of revenge. Elsewhere in the publishing industry, the world of horror comic books frequently featured demonic themes when it became popular in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. But again these were much more often associated with the Devil than the Demon. When the Demon did make an appearance, it was usually in its aspect as the moral tempter or the afflicting presence.

In 1957 *Night of the Demon*, director Jacques Tourneur's superlative cinematic adaptation of M. R. James's "Casting the Runes" appeared. Released in America under the title *Curse of the Demon*, the film deservedly became a classic. As in the short story, the Demon here appeared in its guise as an afflicting presence that harassed its victims both physically and psychologically. The controversy involving Tourneur's supposed fight with the film's producer over whether an actual demon should be shown onscreen is as famous as the film itself. Whatever the truth of the matter, the film that was released indeed featured an explicit "head-on" depiction of the title demon. Although Tourneur may ultimately have been correct that the film's final

interpretation was better left ambiguous, and thus the demon was better left out, the visual design of the creature showed an admirable grasp of the iconic Demon's historical and artistic grandeur; its designer reportedly worked with an eye to reproducing the sort of nightmarish figures seen in medieval woodcuts (and also depicted in *Häxan*).

Novelist Ira Levin's devilish *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) and director Roman Polanski's film adaptation (1968) made a great stir in the late 1960s, but again these were concerned with the Devil, not the Demon. But perhaps they may be given credit, in tandem with the "death of God" movement that was making waves across the American landscape, for helping to lay the groundwork for the astonishing popular success that was *The Exorcist*. Walter points out that Blatty's novel "represents the ambiguity of Roman Catholic culture in the throes of disenchantment after Vatican II" (Walter 20). Into this cultural stew came Blatty's novel in 1971 and the film version in 1973. In retrospect it seems impossible to separate the two, so entwined have they become in cultural memory. Walter hit upon the key to the electrifying power of both when he wrote in the mid-1970s that the film version "exploits the *deisidaimonia* of a disenchanted public." *The Exorcist* demonstrated that a visceral portrayal of the Demon in its most horrific guise, as the afflicting presence that possesses a person's body and personality, was capable of wrenching the emotions of a confused modern populace in a way that nobody would have predicted, but that had been quite familiar to people in former historical eras. The unhappy priest Damien Karras, who in the story examines the exorcism case and subjects it to intense medical scrutiny before proceeding to explore supernatural explanations, served effectively as a stand-in for a spiritually skeptical but existentially fearful American public. The story seemed all the more horrifying to this public because it posited that a vile supernatural presence, like a revenant of a mythological age thought long dead, could enter the body of an innocent young person. In the attempt to build a suitably fearsome backstory, Blatty turned to ancient Mesopotamian mythology and framed the demon that possessed young Regan MacNeil as Pazuzu.

Along with its exploration of the possession theme, *The Exorcist* also played upon the Demon's aspect as fallen angel in its depiction of the confrontation between Pazuzu and the aged Father Merrin. The performance of the exorcism rite from Chapter XII of the Roman Ritual formed the substance of the story's final half, and what with the various adjurations in the name of Christ and the traditional names and identifications aimed to the demon, the novel and film left no doubt about the nature and status of the spirit.

The astonishing popular success of *The Exorcist* changed the face of popular entertainment. In the literary world, *The Exorcist* kicked off the pop horror fiction boom that reached its apex in the works of Stephen King in the 1980s and 1990s. Naturally, many of these books and stories—far too many to be comprehensively explored here—featured the Demon in some form or other.

One such story was Harlan Ellison's "The Whimper of Whipped Dogs" (1973). Ellison was inspired by the notorious story of Kitty Genovese, who in 1964 had been stabbed to death in New York while thirty-eight of her neighbors watched without attempting to help or call the police. His fictionalized version used a similar murder as the jumping off point for positing the existence of a malevolent supernatural force at work in the heat and grime of New York: "A new God, an ancient God come again with the eyes and hunger of a child, a deranged blood God of fog and street violence. A God who needed worshippers and offered the choices or death as a victim or life as an eternal witness to the deaths of *other* chosen victims. A God to fit the times, a God of streets and people" (Ellison 129). The fact that Ellison was fully aware of the wider and deeper psychological and philosophical implications of what he was doing, as opposed to merely offering his story for pure entertainment value, was evidenced by the epigraph he placed at the end of it, a meditation on violence and the daimonic from Rollo May's *Love and Will*.

As for the new crop of Demon-inspired novels, the Christian thrillers of Frank Peretti deserve especial notice. *The Exorcist* had entered American public consciousness during a period of religious confusion. Later in the 1970s the American cultural scale tipped decisively, though not universally, in the direction of conservatism, and this in combination with the resurgent popularity of religious fundamentalism engendered a renaissance of literalistic supernatural Christian belief. This soon found an outlet in the new field of Christian popular fiction, in which Frank Peretti became one of the first giants. His novel *This Present Darkness* (1986) and its sequel, *Piercing the Darkness* (1988), depicted the literal reality of Demons warring with Angels in the American heartland. Peretti's theology was entirely Miltonian and Dantesque, as were his descriptions of angels and demons. One is described in *This Present Darkness* as being "like a high-strung little gargoyle, his hide a slimy, bottomless black, his body thin and spiderlike: half humanoid, half animal, totally demon" (36). Others are enormous saurian beings of immense power. In an expression of an idea common to the type of theology the books represent, many demons are named after specific sins or negative emotions, such as the demons Complacency, Deceit, and Lust, whose functions are obvious. Additionally, full-blown demon possession, complete with the requisite writhing, guttural speech, etc., results when people dabble with dastardly New Age beliefs.

Clearly, all three aspects of the Demon are exhibited here: fallen angel, moral tempter, and afflicting presence in its three variations. From a viewpoint informed by the Demon's history, what seems most fascinating about these novels is that they employ the streamlined, generic prose and narrative styles typical to modern thriller fiction in order to expound a theology that might be dubbed "Milton-lite." What is more, they do so quite effectively given their peculiar ideological and stylistic constraints, and given the willingness of the reader to surrender to their simplistic worldview.

Another best-selling, post-*Exorcist* modern author whose works have featured the Demon is Anne Rice. The fifth book in her Vampire Chronicles, *Memnoch the Devil* (1995), presents one of the most extensive demonological explorations in modern popular fiction when the vampire Lestat is given a guided tour of hell and heaven, and a thorough explanation of the spiritual cosmology of the universe, by a being named Memnoch who presents himself as the Devil in his fallen-angel form. Another series, The Chronicles of the Mayfair Witches, tells the history of a family which has been plagued by a demon named Lasher. *Servant of the Bones* (1996) tells the story of Azriel, an educated Jew in ancient Babylon who is transformed into a spirit that endures into modern times. Rice's use of the Demon consistently demonstrates a knowledge of its history and prehistory. She has been justly criticized at time for purple prose and an excessive, overwrought romanticism, but her injection of a self-aware Demonology into her novels has been valuable to the horror genre.

Brian Keene's *The Rising* (2003) and its sequel, *City of the Dead* (2005), also demonstrated a contextual awareness of the Demon and featured a storyline that combined the afflicting aspect of the Demon with another supernatural icon, the zombie. Keene explicitly linked his demons to the iconic Demon by referencing various evil spirits of ancient Hebrew and other mythologies. In *The Rising*, a demon named Ob (whose name is taken from a spirit mentioned in the Old Testament) says to a human, "We are your masters. Demons, your kind called us. Djinn. Monsters. We are the source of your legends—the reason you still fear the dark" (31–32).

THE DEMON IN FILM AND OTHER MEDIA

The Demon also appeared frequently in the comic book industry, as in Marvel Comics's *Ghost Rider* and DC Comics's *The Demon*, always with the traditional iconography intact and the traditional theology at least referenced. The enigmatic character of John Constantine, created by comic book writer and modern occult magician Alan Moore, encountered the Demon in various guises as he strode through a number of titles in the booming comics industry of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Eventually he gained his own comic book series, *Hellblazer*, which was loosely adapted as the 2005 film *Constantine*. In the movie, the eclectic spiritual world of the comic book was simplified into a watered-down Roman Catholic dualism that involved demons of an entirely traditional cast warring against equally traditional angels, with humans used as pawns. The aspect of the Demon thus emphasized was the fallen angel, as well as the afflicting presence, with a few instances of demonic possession thrown in for good measure.

Constantine was only one in the flood of Demon-inspired movies that followed *The Exorcist*. It is in this cinematic outpouring that the aforementioned

severing of the Demon from its historical mooring can be observed, even while other movies retained the old connections.

An example of this second, more traditional type is *The Entity* (1981), which depicted the plight of a woman who was sexually assaulted by an invisible demon over a period of months, thus invoking the memory of the medieval *succubi* and *incubi*. The underappreciated *Amityville II: The Possession* (1982) trumped its progenitor by presenting a horrifying story of demonic possession that emphasized all three of the Demon's chief aspects. Its conclusion featured a brief exorcism scene involving the Roman Ritual (or something that sounded like it). Director John Carpenter's *Prince of Darkness* (1987) speculated about an alternative demonic theology linked to quantum physics, and as a bonus presented the spectacle of people being turned into murderous zombies by a demonic force that propagated via projectile vomiting. A New Zealand production titled *The Irrefutable Truth about Demons* (2000) recalled elements of *Night of the Demon* and L. Ron Hubbard's novel *Fear* with its tale of an anthropologist who scorns belief in demons and the supernatural and as a result is targeted by a group of occultists who conjure up demons to pursue him.

In 1990 director Adrian Lyne and screenwriter Bruce Joel Rubin brought the thoughtful *Jacob's Ladder* to the screen. As in Rubin's famous screenplay for *Ghost* (1990), the writing in *Jacob's Ladder* exhibits a keen spiritual sensitivity as the story's protagonist undertakes an agonized quest to understand why he is being plagued by hideous demonic visions and visitations. At one point a possible explanation is given by his chiropractor (who is subtly framed in an angelic light via dialogue, characterization, and cinematography):

> Eckhart [the medieval Christian mystic] saw Hell, too. He said the only thing that burns in Hell is the part of you that won't let go of life, your memories, your attachments. They burn them all away. But they're not punishing you, he said. They're freeing your soul. So, if you're frightened of dying and you're holding on, you'll see devils tearing your life away. But if you've made your peace, then the devils are really angels, freeing you from the earth.

The movie thus offered a modified view of the old unity between good angels and bad ones, and concluded with an angelic boy conducting Jacob to heaven.

The Wishmaster (1997) kicked off a series of low-budget, gore-laden movies that attempted with some success to wring horror from the old Middle Eastern *djinn*. Although the first entry in the series degenerated into camp humor by the end (probably influenced by the popular wisecracking screen monster Freddy Krueger), and the succeeding ones followed the same tack, the *Wishmaster* series still represented an interesting attempt to locate demonic horror in a different context. The Demon-as-djinn was presented as an afflicting and, in a sense, a possessing spirit, since it could force people to act

against their will. The first movie's explanation of the ancient *djinn*'s horrific nature, as told to the protagonist by an anthropology professor, is worth quoting: "Forget what our culture has made of the djinn. Forget Barbara Eden. Forget Robin Williams. To the peoples of ancient Arabia, a djinn was neither cute nor funny. It was something else entirely. It was the face of fear itself." While the *Wishmaster* movies may not have lived up to the promise of its premise, the attempt itself was praiseworthy.

Frailty (2001) likewise demonstrated an awareness of context. In flashback, the movie related the story of a workingman who becomes convinced that he has been commissioned by God, via an angelic visitation, to become a demon slayer. Over time he kidnaps and murders a number of people, acting on the belief that they are actually demons that only he and his two sons are able to recognize as such. The theological heart of the movie is found in the older son's struggle to convince his father that whole enterprise is delusional. In a deleted scene included on the DVD release, the son spends long hours studying a Bible that containing medieval illustrations of demons and angels. He argues theology with his father but cannot convince him. Overall, *Frailty* represents a restrained and fascinating take on the theme of the Demon, although like *Night of the Demon* it suffers from a compulsion to explain too much in the end.

These, then, are some of the films that attempted to present the Demon with a contextual awareness of its nature and history. The other type arose when certain filmmakers decided to ignore that tradition altogether and cut the Demon free from its past associations. Examples of this type of movie could be multiplied *ad nauseam* since it became popular in the low-budget and direct-to-video markets. But the two series that do it best are the Evil Dead trilogy, consisting of *The Evil Dead* (1981), *Evil Dead II: Dead by Dawn* (1987), and *Army of Darkness* (1993), and the Demons trilogy, consisting of *Demons* (1985), *Demons 2* (1986), and *La Chiesa* (1989). The demons in both series

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Dialogue from the movie *Wishmaster*:

Forget what our culture has made of the djinn. Forget Barbara Eden. Forget Robin Williams. To the peoples of ancient Arabia, a djinn was neither cute nor funny. It was something else entirely. It was the face of fear itself. . . . The djinn are a race created after the angels but before mankind—powerful, magical, evil. . . . [Modern stories are] sweetened fables. Over the centuries faith became fairy tales. We avoided our terror by taming it into fictions, inventing stories of magical lamps to rock our children to sleep. . . . In the old writings, the djinn is everything that we have ever feared: an utterly inhuman race of beings that mean us harm, older than our oldest history, more powerful than our worst imaginings, and driven by an ancient and endless malevolence.

are spirits that take over people's bodies and turn them into vicious killing machines. The violence is copious and explicit and the demons' behavior standardized: Possessed people roar in guttural voices, foam at the mouth, writhe, rend, claw, shriek, and tear. They are the inhuman embodiment of pure ferality, of an insatiable lust for wanton, bloody destruction.

What indicates that these demons have been cut loose from their mooring in the iconic Demon is that the explanations offered of their nature are hasty and thin. In *The Evil Dead* the demons are raised by the reading aloud of passages from a book titled after Lovecraft's fictional *Necronomicon*, which in the movie is said to be of Sumerian origin. The demons are thus, perhaps, of the ancient Sumerian variety. But this explanation is quickly downplayed or ignored in favor of moving the action forward with scenes of intense, feral violence. It is almost as if the explanation is a mere perfunctory nod to the more sustained and detailed ones explored in other films. Similarly, in *Demons* the demons are "explained" by a faux quotation from Nostradamus that prophesies "the coming of the time of the demons," and says of these creatures, "They will make cemeteries their cathedrals and the cities your tombs." The film offers nothing else by way explaining what the demons are supposed to be or where they are supposed to come from.

Although it would be all too easy to interpret this omission as a liability and to label it the result of laziness or ineptness, it is in fact possible to see it as a strength and to interpret it as a new and effective angle on the iconic Demon in its afflicting aspect. *Demons* makes this clear when it reveals that it is actually a kind of existentialist parable. The basic plot involves members of a movie audience who find themselves trapped in a nightmare when the movie, a movie about demons, ruptures the boundary between cinematic reality and existential reality. People in the audience begin transforming into demons and killing others. Eventually the panicked crowd realizes that since the movie started everything, perhaps stopping it will stop the killing. But when they storm the projection booth, they discover it is completely automated, without a projectionist running the film. This leads to the startled realization, "But that means—nobody's *ever* been here!"

The point seems to be that the demon plague is playing out automatically, without any oversight or direction by an intelligent force. It is simply a spontaneous occurrence without explanation. The demons have no explanation, no background in anything like the history that lies behind the iconic Demon. Recognizing this, one can recognize that these unmoored demons represent an alternative answer to Blatty's and Friedkin's challenge from the 1970s.

What if God died but the Demon had not died with Him? What if there were evil but no good to counterbalance it? What if there were indeed demons, but this in no wise entailed the existence of angels, God, or a life everlasting? This seems to be the philosophy or theology implicit in the postmodern demon (as it might be called). A careful look at the behavior of this demon shows that it is not entirely divorced from its iconic cousin. The postmodern demon may not

be linked by a shared theological background, but it is linked by the behaviors listed above. All that frothing, snarling, and screaming is familiar from Regan's behavior in *The Exorcist*, and also from the countless cases of demonic possession documented throughout history. By the Middle Ages these behaviors were standardized and catalogued, and all are visible in the postmodern demon, which thus seems to represent the phenomenon of possession divorced from the possibility of exorcism. The postmodern demon is not a fallen angel who can be commanded in the name of Christ or driven away by any version of the iconic Angel, but is instead an unaccountable spirit of viciousness that arrives for no reason and cannot be driven away. As such, it may be taken as a kind of apotheosis of the iconic Demon as the afflicting, possessing presence.

So the postmodern demon may be taken as representing an alternative strand sprouting from the tradition begun by *The Exorcist* but pursuing an entirely different philosophical tangent. As of the time of this writing, both streams remain strong. Movies about the postmodern demon continue to proliferate, even as one of the most prominent of the post-*Exorcist* films is *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005), which was based on the true case of a young German college student named Anneliese Michel who reportedly became possessed and, after several months of exorcism, died in 1976. The movie properly lies outside the range of this chapter, since the supernatural explanation that is offered to viewers (but fortunately not forced upon them) is that Emily Rose, the movie's fictionalized version of Anneliese Michel, was possessed not just by a demon but by Lucifer himself. But it is interesting to note in the present context that even as the postmodern demon continues to rampage across movie and television screens in its orgy of theologically ungrounded violence, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* explicitly presents almost exactly the same spiritual message that Blatty had hoped to convey with his novel: that the horror of the demonic harbors the seeds of its own redemption, since it directly entails its opposite in the saving grace of God. The Demon, it seems, is ever the subtle trickster.

THE ANGEL IN SUPERNATURAL LITERATURE AND FILM

The history of the Angel in supernatural horror is much quicker to trace, for the simple reason that there is less of it to deal with. The works of Bulwer-Lytton may be taken as an example: They featured the Angel in various speculations about theological and occult matters, but the Demon proved more interesting to most readers. As mentioned earlier, the Angel's near-exclusion from the supernatural horror genre as a serious object of attention in its own right may well have been due to the artistic coma into which it had fallen. For well over a century it was far more bound up in popular consciousness with saccharine ideas of peace and rose-filled gardens than with

serious matters of supernaturalism. For any serious dealings with the Angel, one had to look not to supernatural fiction and film but to outright religion.

The Angel did of course find expression in some parts of popular culture during its period of vacation from supernatural horror. It was particularly prominent in Hollywood, where it found its way into many movies during the 1940s and 1950s. Various guises of the Angel appeared in such movies as *A Guy Named Joe* (1944, remade in 1989 as *Always*), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), *The Bishop's Wife* (1947), *Heaven Only Knows* (1947), and *Angels in the Outfield* (1951, remade in 1994). In 1956 Cecil B. DeMille's bloated (but entertaining) Bible epic *The Ten Commandments* presented a surprisingly frightening angel of death that came in the form of a sentient mist to claim all the firstborn Egyptians. But this was an aberration. By the 1970s, when audiences were reportedly vomiting, fainting, and fleeing theaters where *The Exorcist* was playing, the Angel was still confined to light entertaining fare like *Heaven Can Wait* (1978). In 1987, German director Wim Wenders's *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*, remade by Hollywood as *City of Angels* in 1998) gave a truly interesting portrayal of angels who watch over the human denizens of a modern city and envy their earthly existence. But this was still a far cry from supernatural horror.

Wenders's film, however, came near the end of the supernaturally fearsome Angel's long sleep. Already in 1983, Blatty had given readers an interesting bit of angelic speculation in *Legion*, his sequel to *The Exorcist*, wherein he offered a sweeping solution to the age-old "problem of evil" by suggesting that humans are all fragments of the original angelic being, Lucifer, who fell from heaven, and that we are all therefore involved in a collective, ongoing attempt to be reunited with God. This did not constitute an actual use of the Angel as an object of fear, but it did involve the Angel in a horror novel. Oddly, Blatty omitted this concept entirely from the film version, titled *The Exorcist III* (1990), which he not only wrote but also directed.

Frank Peretti's supernatural thriller novels of the 1980s were largely responsible for reviving the Miltonian Angel's image as a fierce heavenly warrior. Near the beginning of the novel, two men visit the small midwestern town of Ashton. Soon after their arrival, they are revealed as more than men:

> And now the two men were brilliantly white, their former clothing transfigured by garments that seemed to burn with intensity. Their faces were bronzed and glowing, their eyes shone like fire, and each man wore a glistening golden belt from which hung a flashing sword. . . . [T]hen, like a gracefully spreading canopy, silken, shimmering, nearly transparent membranes began to unfurl from their backs and shoulders and rise to meet and overlap above their heads, gently undulating in a spiritual wind. (*This Present Darkness* 13)

Reading the description is like witnessing the resurrection from the dead of the pre-Victorian, non-Raphaelite Angel who had warred against the Demon

in the service of God for centuries. The novel's later intricate and overheated descriptions of spiritual and aerial battles between sword-wielding Angels and Demons is an equally welcome sight, regardless of its comic-bookish gaudiness.

The American horror writer Thomas Ligotti offered a unique take on the Angel in 1991 with his story "Mrs. Rinaldi's Angel." It tells of a young boy whose mother takes him to a local sage-like woman named Mrs. Rinaldi for help in curing his nightmares. In this capacity, Mrs. Rinaldi takes him to a back room of her house and performs a strange ritual intended to free him entirely from dreaming. Dreams, she tells him, "are parasites—maggots of the mind and soul, feeding on the mind and soul as ordinary maggots feed on the body" (Ligotti 56). Then she produces a curious box which when opened emits a shining white light couched in a misty vapor. After the conclusion of the ritual, the boy returns home and seems cured for a time until his dreams return and he finds himself unaccountably drawn to embrace them. His mother takes him back to Mrs. Rinaldi and they find her strangely transformed and withered. "You let my angel be poisoned by the dreams you could not deny," she tells the boy. "It *was* an angel, did you know that? It was pure of all thinking and pure of all dreaming. And you are the one who made it think and dream and now it is dying, but as a demon" (64). The meaning seems to be a Gnostic-type one, in that the angel contained in the box was associated with absolute formlessness and freedom from matter, just as the ancient Gnostic theology held that the material world was an evil trap, the creation of a bungling or malevolent demiurge, while the truly divine realm was pure spirit. In any case, Ligotti's story is an interesting contribution to the Angel's history in supernatural horror.

Given the popularity of the "Milton-lite" phenomenon that Peretti helped to create with his novels, and given the ongoing popularity of the horror genre, it was just a matter of time before a purely horrific angel appeared. The venue where this rare modern creature finally reared its head was *The Prophecy* (1993), a film written and directed by Gregory Widen and featuring one of the most fascinating premises in the history of the supernatural horror genre: Unbeknownst to humans, there is presently a war being waged not between angels and demons, but between angels and other angels. This is a second war, described only in an extra "lost" chapter to the Book of Revelation, that came after the original war in which Lucifer and his followers were cast out. The archangel Gabriel, jealous of God's love for humans, whom he (Gabriel) refers to as "talking monkeys," is spearheading an effort among the angels to return things to the way they were when humans were secondary and God loved angels the most. The whole concept is Miltonic through and through, even with its peculiar "twist." Stated in summary form, it might sound hackneyed or silly, but as it plays out in the movie it is entirely gripping. This is certainly due at least in part to the masterful lead performance turned in by Christopher

Walken in the role of Gabriel, who seems an authentic embodiment of a positively terrifying reservoir of power being kept dubiously in check by a hot temper. It is also due to Widen's able direction and the judicious use of special effects that give glimpses of iconic angelic and demonic images.

But it is also due to careful writing and a carefully realized concept. Widen truly understands the horror inherent in the ancient, iconic Angel before whom men and women traditionally fainted and fell to their knees. One of *The Prophecy*'s protagonists, a former candidate for Catholic priesthood, describes the nature of this Angel in words as effective as any ever spoken: "Did you ever notice how in the Bible whenever God needed to punish someone or make an example, or whenever God needed a killing, he sent an angel? Did you ever wonder what a creature like that must be like? A whole existence spent praising your God, but always with one wing dipped in blood. Would you ever really want to see an angel?" Gabriel himself reinforces the point in his self-description to a horrified human who has dared to question him: "I'm an angel. I kill firstborns while their mamas watch. I turn cities into salt. I even, when I feel like it, rip the souls from little girls, and from now till kingdom come, the only thing you can count on in your existence is never understanding why." Obviously, the answer to the question above is no, nobody would ever want to see such a creature in real life. *The Prophecy*, let it be noted, it far from a perfect movie. It is flawed by some laughable dialogue, a subplot that is overcomplex and therefore confusing, and the regrettable insertion of some sappy voiceover narration at the end. But the fact that it still manages to deliver on the promise of its potent central conceit despite its weaknesses it a testament to its worth.

It spawned sequels, of course—three of them at the time of this writing—which predictably became progressively more mired in their own "cool factor." It seems the temptation to use Widen's ideas simply as an excuse to present attractive actors running around and fighting each other against a backdrop of shadowy, Gothic-esque imagery and choral music was too much for lesser filmmakers to resist. The third installment in the series, which came two years after the stupendous success of the science fiction film *The Matrix* (1998), even featured some *Matrix*-style martial arts fighting. But even in these progressively degenerated outings, the power of Widen's original concept occasionally shines through. This is especially visible in *The Prophecy II* (1998), which shocks by providing the single most powerful scene featuring the Angel in modern American cinema. Presaging the scene, a young woman encounters a man who is actually an angel, and his first words to her echo the words spoken so often by biblical angels: "Don't be afraid." Later, she doubts him when he tells her of his true identity. The scene takes place in a cathedral, and the film depicts the angel's self-unveiling via its shadow projected on the decorated wall and on the woman herself: enormous wings unfurl from his back, and his stature increases. The woman's reaction is the quintessence of

angelic dread: Her eyes widen in an expression of mingled wonder and terror, her hand rises to her mouth, and then her head drops as she falls to the floor sobbing, unable to bear the sight any longer. It is truly a tremendous moment in the Angel's sojourn through supernatural horror.

The other, friendlier aspect of the Angel continued to perpetuate itself in such outings as *The Preacher's Wife* (1996), *Michael* (1996), and *A Life Less Ordinary* (1997). Interestingly, in 1993, the same year *The Prophecy* was released, Tony Kushner won the Pulitzer Prize for his play *Angels in America*, which had debuted the previous year and made great cultural waves. Although it was not a work of supernatural horror, but was instead a kind of political and social fantasia that tackled the issues of homosexuality, AIDS, race relations, religion, and more, it did feature what was generally judged one of the most dramatically memorable appearances of the iconic Angel in the history of the theater, when an angel crashed through the roof of an apartment at the end of Act One. In 2003 a film version directed by Mike Nichols premiered on HBO as a miniseries. It was also adapted as an opera.

In 1998 appeared director Gregory Hoblit's *Fallen*, which ranks with *The Prophecy* in its importance to the modern revival of the Angel's fearsomeness. This film is structured as a police procedural thriller in which two detectives try to fathom how someone is still murdering people in the exact mode of a notorious serial killer who was recently executed. As it so turns out, this original serial killer had been possessed by the angel Azazel, who after the killer's death migrated to another body. The police procedural aspect of the film is thus paralleled by a spiritual one, in which the head detective on the case moves from skepticism to belief in Azazel and the world of angels and then tries to figure out how such a being can be stopped when, as quickly becomes apparent, it can migrate instantaneously from person to person through the simple medium of physical touch. As in *Wishmaster*, another character offers the protagonist a succinct statement of the film's central spirituality: "There are certain phenomena which can only be explained if there is a God and if there are angels. And there are. They exist. Some of these angels were cast down, and a few of the fallen were punished by being deprived of form. They can only survive in the bodies of others. It's inside of us, inside of human beings, that their vengeance is played out."

Dialogue from the movie *Fallen*:

There are certain phenomena which can only be explained if there is a God and if there are angels. And there are. They exist. Some of these angels were cast down, and a few of the fallen were punished by being deprived of form. They can only survive in the bodies of others. It's inside of us, inside of human beings, that their vengeance is played out.

Although this explanation indicates that *Fallen* could easily have been discussed in the section of the essay dealing with the demon, its inclusion here seems appropriate given the angelic emphasis of the above comments. However, considered as a demon it is clear that the Demon in this film emphasizes both the fallen angel aspect and the possession aspect. Azazel is of course familiar from The First Book of Enoch, *Paradise Lost*, and a host of other works from history. Its inclusion in *Fallen* is only one of many reasons, others including the fine lead performances and restrained, sophisticated pacing and directorial style, that the film's relative lack of impact among critics and audiences is unfortunate. The film is a significant one that will perhaps one day be valued for its many merits.

Frailty featured a brief but significant appearance of the Angel in its classic warrior guise. The father who believed he had been chosen to slay demons received his first divine communication one night when a light began to glow from an angel-shaped trophy in his bedroom. Then one day at his job he received a full-blown angelic vision or visitation in the form of a warrior angel (complete with beard, armor, and flaming sword) that floated down toward him from what looked like the ceiling of a Gothic cathedral. The power of the scene was enhanced by the fact that it represented the only overt use of special visual effects in the entire film.

The movie adaptation of *Constantine* likewise featured iconic warrior angels; only in this case they were around for longer than a single shot. One of the major supporting characters was the angel Gabriel, who is played by a woman and appears complete with large white wings. *Constantine*'s makers seemed to be influenced by both *The Prophecy* and *City of Angels* in their portrayal of Gabriel. As in *The Prophecy*, Gabriel pursues his (or in this case, her) own private agenda and consequently falls from God's grace. Then as in *City of Angels* and its German progenitor, this angel is able to feel physical sensations, including pain, for the first time. This cinematic equivalent not of artistic quotation but of inbreeding is all too common in the genre; *Constantine* is not a very good film overall and its sloppy borrowings are a part of this. But like a number of movies before it, it is redeemed at times by the verbal stating of ideas that ring out with a quality higher than the movie in which they appear. Constantine has been blessed or cursed since childhood with the ability to see the spiritual realm, and in the middle of the film he explains what this has taught him: "Heaven and hell. Behind every wall, every window. The world behind the world. And we're smack in the middle. Angels and demons can't cross over onto our plane, so instead we get what I call 'half-breeds,' the influence peddlers. And they can only whisper in our ears, but a single word can give you courage or turn your favorite pleasure into your worst nightmare." So here in the midst of a rather lackluster movie is an interesting direct expression of the original inner meaning of the Angel and the Demon that reaches all the way back to the Greek, Egyptian, and

other ideas of daimonic communication, of a higher self that communicates inwardly. It is this sort of thing that gives one hope for future of supernatural horror, no matter how far and few between such instances of self-awareness and historical heritage within the genre may be.

CONCLUSION: THE DAIMONIC ZEITGEIST, 1971–2001

In 1999 the Roman Catholic Church revised its exorcism rite in order to bring it more into line with modern knowledge about mental illnesses. In 2000 reports surfaced of Pope John Paul II's involvement in the exorcism of a demon from a young girl. Something had obviously changed in the thirty years since William Peter Blatty had seen in the Maryland possession case an opportunity to write an apologetic in fictional form that would address the rising secularistic tide in America. He could not have known that American culture was on the verge of a revival of religious sentiment that would rival the various Great Awakenings of its national history.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Christianity had not only survived but thrived as well. The Left Behind series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins were selling hundreds of millions of copies and may have even been influencing U.S. policy decisions via the influence its ideas exerted upon the President, himself a conservative Christian. Victoria Nelson has argued in *The Secret Life of Puppets* that "in certain ways popular entertainments more than high art act as a kind of a modern sub-Zeitgeist that is constantly engaging in a low-level discourse on intellectually forbidden subjects—philosophy's disavowed avant-garde, as it were." This would imply that if one wants to find out what is currently being rejected by the dominant philosophy, one should look to popular entertainment. That is what the bulk of this chapter has been devoted to doing. The proliferating popular Demonology and now Angelology of modern culture would seem to bear out the rest of Nelson's assertion: "Because the religious impulse is profoundly unacceptable to the dominant Western intellectual culture, it has been obliged to sneak in this back door, where our guard is down. Thus our true contemporary secular pantheon of unacknowledged deities resides in mass entertainments, and it is a demonology, ranging from the 'serial killers' in various embodied and disembodied forms to vampires and werewolves and a stereotypical Devil" (18). Not to mention a stereotypical Angel and Demon formed over millennia and now active not only in popular movies and books, but also in music, computer games, and elsewhere.

It was stated in the introduction to this chapter that Blatty's *The Exorcist* is purely a work of fiction while *Paradise Lost* and the *Inferno* are partly de-votional literature. In light of Nelson's observation and the last thirty years of American cultural history, that distinction now seems difficult to maintain. It

is possible that the books, films, and other works from other media that populate the supernatural horror genre may serve as serious religious texts in themselves. It remains for the future to reveal how narrow will become the gap between fictional enjoyment and existential belief.

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The Cosmic Horror

by Brian Stableford

INTRODUCTION

The notion of ''cosmic horror'' is closely associated with H. P. Lovecraft and the school of weird fiction associated with him. Lovecraft's fascination with the adjective ''cosmic'' is clearly evident in his essay on supernatural horror in literature, which was initially written in 1924–1926 and published in the *Recluse* in 1927 before undergoing the thorough revision that led to the

version published in the Arkham House collection *The Outsider and Others* in 1939. The adjective is, however, used there in a sense that is rather different from the connotations eventually acquired by "cosmic horror."

In the first chapter of the revised essay, in which Lovecraft defines his field, he speaks of a "literature of cosmic fear" that is to be distinguished from the literature of "physical fear and the mundanely gruesome." At first glance "cosmic" seems to be used here merely as a replacement term for "supernatural," but the substitution also implies a particular psychological attitude to the supernatural. The text refers to "that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguards against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space."

Much of the subsequent argument of the essay is devoted to the establishment of a canonical set of texts in which supernatural phenomena are conceived and represented in these terms, while many other works featuring standard motifs such as ghosts and witches are excluded from that canon on the grounds that the figures in question have become stereotyped, and hence returned to a kind of mundanity. Lovecraft complains at a later stage about the "tedious, artificial and melodramatic" tendencies of much vulgar Gothic fiction.

It is possible, given Lovecraft's inclinations, that the reference to "daemons" in the cited passage is merely a pretentious spelling of "demons." It is more probable, though, that Lovecraft had in mind the kind of daemon featured in Platonic and neo-Platonic thought, which is a kind of raw supernatural power that has far more to do with knowledge than with evil. Lovecraftian fiction is, in essence, a kind of fiction in which horror arises from knowledge that is too much to bear; the ultimate knowledge of that kind is, indeed, related to "unplumbed space" rather than the shallows of human evil, and to "assaults of chaos" rather than the pedestrian traffic of commonplace apparitions and curses. In his own work, Lovecraft was not content merely to continue the existing tradition of supernatural fiction; he attempted to take it to a new extreme, in which the specific element of "cosmic horror" would be carefully focused and extrapolated to its ultimate; by the time it became feasible to talk of *the* cosmic horror as a kind of entity, the adjective had been considerably refined.

The second section of Lovecraft's essay argues that the roots of "cosmic terror" are very ancient. He finds its echoes in a good deal of ancient folklore, associating it with a hypothetical pagan cult of "nocturnal worshippers" whose "revolting fertility-rites" had been driven underground by more elevated and organized religions even before Christianity completed the process. The history and anthropology of this part of his argument—derived from the speculations set out in Margaret A. Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*—are questionable, but the scholarly fantasy in question had become a central element of the mythic past from which most late-nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century horror fiction drew its imagery. The fundamental thesis that Lovecraft developed in the cultivation of cosmic horror is that

technological and social progress since Classical times have facilitated the repression of an awareness of the magnitude and malignity of the macrocosm in which the human microcosm is contained—an awareness that our remoter ancestors could not avoid.

In Lovecraft's argument, *all* organized religion, pagan or Christian—he specifically mentions Druidism and Graeco-Roman religion—is part and parcel of this repressive process: a calculated denial of the essential awfulness of cosmic truth by means of the invention and attempted invocation of gods which, if not actually benign, can at least be flattered and palliated. Lovecraft's argument is that the most artistic and effective works of modern weird fiction are recovering something of a more ancient sensitivity, not in the form of committed belief but in the form of an aesthetic response. In this respect, his argument echoes one that had earlier developed within the context of formal aesthetic philosophy, although it had condemned to the margins of debate by the establishment of a sharply contrasted orthodoxy. The argument in question concerned the supplementation of the notion of beauty with a second kind of aesthetic sensation, more closely akin to awe: "the sublime."

THE SUBLIME, ROMANTICISM AND THE GOTHIC

The notion of the sublime originated in the first century C.E., but the treatise in which it was introduced—by a Sicilian Jew named Cecilius—has been lost, and the earliest surviving work on the subject is a slightly later essay by Longinus (first century C.E.). Although Longinus had a considerable influence on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian aesthetic theory, the notion remained esoteric elsewhere in Europe, where a very different kind of aesthetic theory developed, which not only remained centered on the notions of beauty, order, and harmony but also conceived their artistic reproduction in naturalistic terms. Alexander Baumgarten, who popularized the term "aesthetics" in its modern meaning, was a follower of Gottfried Leibniz, and his summary *Aesthetika* (1750–1758) makes much of the Leibniz's representation of literature as a mode of cognition aspiring to "perceptual clarity." In consequence, Baumgarten's theory focuses attention on matters of order, pattern, and symmetry.

Although Leibniz's philosophical consideration of "possible worlds" allowed that works of art might contain worlds markedly different from the world of experience, he had argued in his *Theodicy* (1710) that ours must be the best of all possible worlds (a supposition ruthlessly parodied by Voltaire in the character of Doctor Pangloss in *Candide*). In consequence of this argument, Baumgarten argued that the highest ideal of artistic "secondary creation" must be to produce simulacra of the world of experience rather than to venture into the innately inferior practice of "heterocosmic" creativity.

In spite of the popularity of Voltaire's mockery of the Leibnizian argument, Baumgarten's stress on naturalistic representation—especially insofar as it

detected and celebrated beauty and harmony—fit in very well with the dominant trend in contemporary literature. It did not, however, go entirely unopposed. In Britain, Mark Akenside produced a poetic celebration of *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1744), which was wholeheartedly committed to the cause of heterocosmic creativity. Akenside's reputation as a poet soon went into a sharp decline, but his ideas were taken up, refined, and further extrapolated by Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), which reintroduced the notion of the sublime into English aesthetic theory.

Burke's aesthetic theory was rooted in the emotions rather than the Leibnizian notion of "perceptual clarity." Instead of construing beauty in terms of symmetry and organization he connects it with loving emotions. The sublime, on the other hand, he derives from the fundamental emotion of "astonishment." According to Burke, sublimity is associated with danger, power, vacuity, darkness, solitude, silence, vastness, potential, difficulty, and color—and it always has an element of horror. Although this is not disconsonant with Longinus's account of the sublime, Burke's particular emphasis on the horrific component was new. Superficially, at least, it was also rather surprising, in that he associated it with the additional powers of insight lent to the rapt contemplation of nature by contemporary natural philosophy. He was not alone in this; many of his contemporaries found the revelations of scientific Enlightenment innately horrific, although others considered their response more akin to exaltation.

This division of opinion was very obvious in literary reflections of scientific progress, particular those responsive to the conception of the universe developed by Sir Isaac Newton, whose infinite scope, lack of any definable center and mechanical regularity contrasted very strongly with the narrowly confined, geocentric, and divinely organized Aristotelian cosmos that had long been accepted into the dogmas of orthodox Christian faith. Although early accounts of the heliocentric solar system had only slightly displaced the center of the universe, without having much effect on the conception of the peripheral realm of the "fixed stars," eighteenth-century extrapolations of Newton's cosmos took aboard the awareness that our sun was, after all, merely one star among many, and that even the entire sidereal system of which it was an inconspicuous element might be one among many.

Two years before Burke published his thesis, Immanuel Kant had published *Allegemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* (1755; trans. as *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*), which included the contention that the Milky Way is merely one lenticular aggregation of stars among a sequence of "island universes"—a notion that had already obtained some empirical support from William Herschel's studies of nebulae. Herschel's observations—which had led him to conclude that the Milky Way consisted of some 300 million stars, most of them invisible, arranged in a lens-shaped system measuring some 8,000 light-years by 1,500. The first measurements

of stellar parallax, published in 1838–1840, fitted neatly enough into the vastness of this imagined scale. The imaginative impact of these measurements was considerable; Edward Young's *The Complaint; or, Night Thoughts* (1742–1745) observed that "At once it quite engulfs all human thought; / 'Tis comprehension's absolute defeat" before relieving the sense of sublime astonishment with a residue of pride in being able to conceive of such things: "How glorious, then, appears the mind of man, / When in it all the stars, and planets, roll!"

This kind of ambivalence is clearly reflected in much subsequent fiction. Fiction enthusiastic about the discoveries of science tended to focus on the element of exaltation, while fiction sympathetic to the mythological imagery that science seemed to be devastating and displacing was more likely to concentrate on the horrific, but the most interesting effect was on writers who retained the ambivalence within themselves and their work. Burke's aesthetic theory became a key influence on the English Romantic Movement, several of whose key figures were keenly interested in science—Samuel Taylor Coleridge had been tutored by the proto-anthropologist J. F. Blumenbach, and Percy Shelley by the proto-meteorologist Adam Walker.

The roots of Romanticism were various; its rebellion against a perceived "Classicism" took several different forms, of which the most prominent in retrospect are its nostalgic interest in the fantastic and the folkloristic, and its championship of the spontaneity of psychological and aesthetic responses against the imposed order and discipline of formal representation. What philosophers like Walker contributed to the movement was, however, the notion that the world of ordinary sensory experience and mundane time calculation and social interaction was merely a network of appearances, behind which lay the arcane realities of cosmology, physics, and geological time. Walker, by virtue of his meteorological interests, was particularly fascinated by the notion of "atmospheric electricity," and the notion that electricity might provide the key to the phenomenon of life was very fashionable in the late eighteenth century, garishly reflected in the medical theories of such fashionable quacks as James Graham and Anton Mesmer.

Such ideas were a distinctly subsidiary component of Romantic aesthetics, overshadowed and almost overwhelmed by other components. The passage quoted from Young's *Night Thoughts* is a momentary digression from that poem's chief concerns, which are much more intimate, and the Romantic poets who extrapolated the mission of the graveyard school were similarly preoccupied, first and foremost, with mediations on mortality. In the same way, the school of Gothic horror fiction which was one of Romanticism's two chief extensions into prose fiction—the other being what the German Romantics called *Kunstmärchen*, or "art fairy tales"—is primarily preoccupied with death and darkness, and only peripherally concerned with the further reaches of Burkeian sublimity. Even so, Romanticism was fertile ground for the development of a kind of cosmic horror that was not merely supernatural

but possessed of a newly exaggerated sensation of sublimity in its attitude—a sublimity that derives from, although it is not usually explicitly associated with, the imagery of the new cosmos of post-Newtonian science.

This kind of attitude can be found in some atypical Gothic novels—most obviously William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) and Mary Shelley's *Franken-stein* (1818)—and in such poems as Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) and Percy Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1813), but the work in which the sensibility that subsequently came to be central to "cosmic horror" is most elaborately and explicitly developed in Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), in a key passage that attempts to define the altered state consciousness induced by opium, in which "a theatre seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain, which presented nightly spectacles of more than earthly splendour."

Having described the primary effects of an increase in "the creative state of the eye," De Quincey notes that his sense of space and time were "powerfully affected" by opium: "Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unut-terable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as he vast expan-sion of time: I sometimes seemed to have lived for 70 or 100 years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a millennium passed in that time, or, however, of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experi-ence." He also notes the effect that opium appears to have on the phenomenon

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As the creative state of the eye increased, a sympathy seemed to arise between the waking and sleeping states of the brain in one point,—that whatsoever I happened to call up and to trace by a voluntary act upon the darkness was very apt to transfer itself to my dreams; so that I feared to exercise this faculty; for, as Midas turned all things to gold, that yet baffled is hopes and defrauded his human desires, so whatsoever things capable of being visually represented I did but think of in the darkness, immediately shaped themselves into phantoms of the eye; and, by a process apparently no less inevitable, when thus once traced in faint and visionary colours, like writings in sympathetic ink, they were drawn out, by the fierce chemistry of my dreams, into insufferable splendour that fretted my heart.

For this, and all other changes in my dreams, were accompanied by deep-seated anxiety and gloomy melancholy, such as are wholly incommunicable by words. I seemed every night to descend—not metaphorically, but literally to descend—into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I could ever reascend. Nor did I, by waking, feel that I *had* reascended. This I do not dwell upon; because the state of gloom which attended these gorgeous spectacles, amounting at least to utter darkness, as of some suicidal despondency, cannot be approached by words.

Thomas De Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater

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of memory, which lead him to draw the conclusion that nothing ever is or ever can be entirely forgotten. No matter what veils are employed by the conscious mind to conceal or bury memories, he asserts, they can always be withdrawn in the correct state of mind to reveal the hidden memory in all its awful clarity.

The role played by opium in De Quincey's account of the perfection of sublime sensibility is a crucial one, echoed in many subsequent literary accounts of cosmic horror. It is a central tenet of the argument that everyday consciousness is blind—conveniently if not willfully—and that it requires some extraordinary intervention to reveal the reality behind appearances (or, in Kantian terms, the noumenal world beyond the phenomenal one). The everyday mind working through the five senses, and the imagination to which it gives rise, cannot comprehend the true implication of the infinity of cosmic space and the depth of cosmic time, nor the extremes of anxiety and melancholy inevitably associated with their perception—which are, in De Quincey's estimation, "wholly incommunicable by words."

The entire tradition of cosmic horror fiction can be regarded as a heroic but doomed attempt to rise to that challenge: to communicate the uncommunicable, by suggesting—in the absence of any possibility of explicit description—the sheer enormity of the revelation that would be vouchsafed to us, were we ever granted permission to see and conceive of the world as it really is, rather than as it appears to our senses: deflated, diminished, and domesticated. It is for this reason that "the cosmic horror," conceived as an entity, is by far the most elusive of all the icons of horror fiction, almost definable by its indescribability. Its presence can be felt, but only the merest glimpses an ever be caught of its form. Its description and definition can be tentatively approached in various ways—one may observe that it is daemonic rather than demonic, and that it is more akin to the alien than the traditionally supernatural—but can never be completed or clarified.

Discussion of "the comic horror" is, in consequence, bound to consist primarily of a series of contrasts, incessantly stating what it is *not*—because what it *is* remains intrinsically beyond the reach of ordinary experience, potentially accessible only by means of some hypothetical transcendental experience. Even hallucinogenic drugs give no more than a hint of the possibility; De Quincey's highly idiosyncratic response to opium proved unrepeatable by many others who followed his example. Coleridge, who solicited—and obtained—various different hallucinogenic drugs from the botanist Joseph Banks, the President of the Royal Society, never managed to complete the interrupted "Kubla Khan," let alone discover further imaginary worlds that he could explore and describe in detail. Subsequent literary representations of hallucinatory experience bear no more resemblance to actual experiences of that kind than literary dreams do to actual dreams; the literary mind inevitably pursues meaning, even in mazy experiences whose procedure is destructive of meaning.

COSMIC PESSIMISM AND ITS ANTIDOTES

As Edward Young's two couplets illustrate, one of the most common—and perhaps most natural—responses to the sensation of cosmic horror is the rapid substitution of a more uplifting sense of wonder. The neo-Platonists and their intellectual descendants, who attempted to retain, refine, and complicate the essential holism of their world-view by assiduously searching out all manner of occult connections and correspondences, encapsulated their supposed wisdom in the dictum "as above, so below," asserting that the microcosm and the macrocosm were reflections of one another. When the revelation arrived that the scales of cosmic space and time were much vaster than the schemes of human visual experience and the human lifetime, its horrific component could be resisted by several means, including the conviction that the human mind might be capable of far more than it routinely achieved.

Although there were significant works of Romantic and post-Romantic fiction that embraced various shades of cosmic pessimism—Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) and Robert Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" (1855) are among the more conspicuous examples—the more typical literary response was to search for antidotes to that threat. One writer who took a good deal of inspiration from his brief acquaintance with the Shelleys, Edward Bulwer—who adopted his mother's surname into his own before becoming famous as Edward Bulwer-Lytton—found his antidote in the notion of Rosicrucianism, an imaginary "occult science" whose teaching might equip a man, intellectually and spiritually, to apprehend the cosmos as it was without cowering in terror. The operative word was, however, *might*. His two great occult romances, *Zanoni* (1842) and *A Strange Story* (1862)—which proved a great inspiration to subsequent lifestyle fantasists as well as literary fantasists—place a heavy emphasis on the difficulty of that attainment and the dangers of hastening toward it without adequate preparation.

The eponymous Zanoni has already made significant progress in his occult studies under the tutelage of his associate Mejnour, but eventually turns away from that path in order to enjoy the mundane love of the story's heroine. The young Englishman Glyndon, rejected by the heroine, attempts to take Zanoni's place as Mejnour's pupil, but impatience brings him into confrontation with the Dweller of the Threshold, the symbolic guardian of the path to superhumanity and the first tentative step in the direction of equipping "the comic horror" with a perceptible mask. Nothing can be discerned of its face by a pair of demonic eyes, whose stare penetrates its shrouding veil.

In the more explicitly Faustian *A Strange Story* Majnour is replaced by the seductively handsome Margrave and Glyndon by the materialistic physician Fenwick, and the crucial confrontation scene is delayed until the end of the story. This time the threshold between this world and the macrocosm is guarded by a veritable host of entities initially discernible as an array of terrible eyes—but when a single entity coalesces from the swirling confusion of

> All fancies, the most grotesque, of Monk or Painter in the early North, would have failed to give to the visage of imp or fiend that aspect of deadly malignity which spoke to the shuddering nature in those eyes alone. All else so dark—shrouded—veiled and larva-like. But that burning glare so intense, so livid, yet so living, had in it something that was almost *human*, in its passion of hate and mockery—something that served to show that he shadowy Horror was not all a spirit, but partook of matter enough, at least, to make it more deadly and fearful an enemy to material forms.
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> Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Zanoni

demonic forms, all that can be seen of it is a gigantic foot. Although Margrave is destroyed, Fenwick withdraws from the uncrossed threshold in a much better condition than Glyndon, morally and spiritually rearmed and confident of the vale of incurious human faith.

A more complex path to a similar destination was followed by Edgar Allan Poe, whose earliest publications included the visionary poem "Al Aaraaf" (written c. 1820; published 1829), which echoed Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* in some respects but set a significant precedent of its own. Titled for Tycho Brahe's New Star, which heralded the reconstruction of the cosmos by John Kepler, Galileo, and Sir Isaac Newton, it details a visionary odyssey through a universe undergoing a crucial conceptual metamorphosis. Poe's prose fiction gave more explicit voice to his early cosmic pessimism, which seems to be at its height in "Shadow—A Parable" (1835), "Silence—A Fable" (1838), and the apocalyptic "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" (1839). By the time he wrote the more elaborate "Mesmeric Revelation" (1844), he had found an antidote of sorts to "the substantive vastness of infinity," in the notion that the present life of humankind is merely "rudimental," limited by the inadequacy of the sense organs, whose eventual transcendence is inevitable.

"The multitudinous conglomeration of raw matter into nebulae, planets, suns and other bodies, which are neither nebulae, suns, nor planets," Poe's mesmerized subject laconically reports, "is for the sole purpose of supplying *pabulum* for the indiosycrasy of the organs of an infinity of rudimental beings. But for the necessity of the rudimental, prior to the ultimate life, there would have been no bodies such as these." In other words, although the vast cosmos of modern science could not have been conceived for the use and convenience of man—as the geocentric cosmos was—it is nevertheless a mere contrivance, whose vastness and complexity merely reflects the abundance and variety of "rudimental beings."

Poe expanded this perspective to its conceptual limits in *Eureka* (1848), which concludes with a vision of a Kantian cosmos in which island universes follow a complex life-cycle, eventually collapsing under the influence of gravity so that its matter re-achieves a primal "unity" from which a new island universe might be reborn giving rise to an eternal sequence that is the pulsation

of the "Heart Divine." By this means, the matter made for the containment and generation of rudimental beings is endlessly recycled, in order that it might continue to serve its purpose, while the beings themselves move on to some (unimaginable) further phase of existential evolution.

While Bulwer-Lytton and Poe were engaged in these and other literary experiments, several attempts were made in continental Europe to make more productive use of the altered state of consciousness described by De Quincey. In Paris, opium had recently been supplemented by the importation of hashish, which was fed to Théophile Gautier and other members of the self-styled *Club de Haschichins* by the proto-psychologist Joseph Moreau, who liked to style himself "Moreau de Tours." Moreau's scientific treatise on *Hashish and Mental Alienation* (1845), based in these experiments, reprinted the whole of an article on "Hashish" that Gautier had published in 1843.

Gautier describes the effects of hashish in more generous terms than Coleridge's description of the effects of opium, alleging that his body appeared to become transparent, allowing him to see the drug he had consumed as an emerald within his breast "emitting millions of little sparks." These began to spin around, joining with other precious stones in a kaleidoscopic dance, while his companions appeared to be disfigured, becoming chimerical figures with vegetal or avian characteristics. He began laughing and juggling with cushions, while one of his companions spoke to him in Italian, which the hashish translated into Spanish. Subsequently, he experienced a further series of visions, involving swarms of butterflies and amazing flowers, when his sense of hearing became so "acute" that he could "hear the very sounds of the colours" and was set adrift on an ocean of sounds.

"Never had such beatitude flooded me with its waves," he claims. "I had so melted into the indefinable, I was so absent, so free from myself (that detestable witness ever dogging one's footsteps) that I realised for the first time what might be the way of life of elemental spirits, of angels, and of souls separated from their bodies. I was like a sponge in the midst of the ocean: at every moment floods of happiness penetrated me . . . my whole being had been transfused by the colour of the medium into which I had been plunged."

There is no cosmic horror here, but rather a sense of comfort and belonging— a blitheness reproduced in most of Gautier's tales of the supernatural, in which momentary anxieties always end to be blotted out by erotic ecstasy. His experiences were, however, not matched by those of a writer whose tenure in Moreau's club was much briefer and far less satisfactory. Charles Baudelaire's essay "Du vin et du hashish" (1851) similarly represents itself as a quasi-scientific study, but its treatment of the supposed delights of alcoholic intoxication moves swiftly on to a sarcastic description of the "supersublime" ignominies of drunkenness, and the shorter account of hashish follows much the same pattern.

Baudelaire advises that one should submit oneself to the action of hashish only in "favorable circumstances and environments," because its effect is to

magnify *all* subjective sensations, including negative ones. "From time to time," he concedes, "your personality vanishes. The sense of objectivity that creates pantheistical poets and great actors becomes so powerful that you are confounded with external objects. Now you are a tree moaning in the wind and murmuring vegetal melodies to nature. Now you hover in the azure of an immensely expanded sky. Every sorrow has disappeared. . . . Soon the very idea of time will disappear." He is, however, pessimistic about the prospect of reproducing such sensations in literary form. He attempted to do it in such prose-poems as "Le Chambre double" (1862), in which an opium dream briefly transforms the viewpoint-character's drab room into a kind of paradise, but the major trend in his work was in the opposite direction, visionary transformations producing such horrific images as those detailed in "Les Métamorphoses du vampire" (1857) and his whole attitude to the world being infected and permeated by the allegedly unbearable effects of *spleen*—a kind of inescapable anguish born of an unusually clear-sighted sensitivity to the vicissitudes of existence.

Baudelaire found his antidote to *spleen* in a paradoxical readjustment of his attitude. Rather than settling for the consolations of faith, as his spiritual brother Poe had done, he elected to re-evaluate horror as a positive sensation, to be welcomed for its preferability to the corrosive tedium of *ennui*. In one of his longest poems, "Le Voyage" (1859), he offers the perversely triumphant lament: "Amer savoir, celui qu'on tire du voyage! / Le monde, monotone et petit, aujourd'hui, / Hier, demain, toujours, nous fait voir image: / Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui!" [Bitter is the knowledge we obtain from traveling. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, the monotonous and tiny world confronts us with our own image: an oasis of horror in a desert of ennui.]

The notion that horror itself—or, at least, the ability to derive aesthetic satisfaction from horror—might constitute an antidote to cosmic pessimism was taken up by the writers inspired by Baudelaire who came to constitute the Decadent Movement, who were provided with a Bible of sorts by Joris-Karl Huysmans's black comedy *À Rebours* (1884), which offers a darkly ironic guide to the ultimate Decadent lifestyle fantasy, as undertaken by Jean Des Esseintes, whose health has been ruined by syphilis—a disease that, for him, takes on the key attributes of cosmic horror.

Des Esseintes' conscious vision is followed by another, which takes the form of a nightmare that confronts him with the incarnate specter of the "Great Plague": a horridly diseased rider. In fleeing from the rider he experiences various bizarre visions, eventually finding himself confronted by a woman who undergoes a progressive metamorphosis, the parts of her body being replaced and consumed by features of exotic plants he had earlier been studying. At the climax of the dream, he sees the woman's sexual organs as a huge Venus fly-trap: a "bloody maw surrounded by sword-blades"; a vegetal *vagina dentata*. Far from being downcast by this dream, however, Des Esseintes revels in its reportage, appreciating the both keenness and the lurid

He had a sudden vision, then, of humankind in its entirety, ceaselessly tormented since time immemorial by that contagion. From the beginning of the world, all living creatures had handed down from father to son the everlasting heritage: the eternal malady which had ravaged the ancestors of man, whose disfigurations could be seen on the recently-exhumed bones of the most ancient fossils! Without ever weakening in its destructive power it had descended through the centuries to the present day, cunningly concealing itself in all manner of painful disguises, in migraines and bronchial infections, hysterias and gouts. From time to time it clambered to the surface, preferentially assaulting those who were badly cared for and malnourished, exploding in lesions like nuggets of gold, ironically crowning the poor devils in its grip with diamond-studded head-dresses, compounding their misery by imprinting upon their skin the image of wealth and well-being.

Joris-Karl Huysmans, ''Des Esseintes' Dream (from À Rebours)''

quality of its associated sensations. The horrific element of the sublime is here explicitly represented as something to be concentrated and savored. It had, of course, been *tacitly* savored in the earlier works of Beckford, De Quincey, Bulwer-Lytton, and Poe, but none of those writers had been prepared to acknowledge the perversity of their own tastes, and all of them had taken refuge in some form of consolatory retreat. In the wake of Baudelaire and Huysmans, however, such retreats became unnecessary; the problem of representing cosmic horror, and the search for a means of depicting *the* cosmic horror, was transformed by its connoisseurs into a curious kind of perverse literary grail-quest.

THE DECADENT WORLDVIEW

Baudelaire was not the only writer of his era to achieve an alchemical transmutation of cosmic horror into perverse delight. He would not have been the first had not Gustave Flaubert, who completed the first version of *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine* on September 12, 1849, been persuaded by two friends—Maxime Du Camp and Louis Bouilhet, to whom he read it aloud— not to publish it. According to Du Camp's memoirs, Bouilhet advised the author to "throw it in the fire and never speak of it again." He did not, but it was not until 1874 that he finally published a revised version.

Flaubert's direct inspiration for the *Tentation* was a famous painting by Pieter Brueghel that he had seen in Genoa; Flaubert's account of the phantasmagoric contest between Satan and the ascetic saint was far less orthodox than Brueghel's. Satan is the real central character of the first version of the drama; he delivers the novel's last triumphant speech and departs leaving the stage echoing with his laughter, clearly believing that the dawn

that has banished his apparitions cannot deliver Anthony's salvation. The Devil's confidence is based on the final sequence of his temptations, consequent upon his carrying Anthony away from the Earth into the infinite realm of the stars, in order to deliver final proof of the utter irrelevance of the Earth—and hence of humankind—within the universe.

The final version of the text offers a much more elaborate account of this part of the narrative than the first, and adds a further aspect to the visionary odyssey, which is only briefly trailed in the original as a speech made by "Science." When Anthony returns to his hovel after his flight through time and space, he is assailed in both versions by the phantoms of his imagination, but where pagan deities and personalizations of the seven deadly sins raise a clamor in the first, they are replaced in the final version by a parade of bizarre monsters. Satan is not even on stage during this final act of the final version, having quit the scene after challenging Anthony with the philosophical possibility that the phenomenal world might be an "illusion of . . . intellect." The final parade of monsters is thus presented without any diabolical commentary; Anthony is left to draw his own, rather surprising, conclusion:

"Oh bliss! bliss! I have seen the birth of life," Anthony says, in his final speech. "I have seen the origin of motion. The blood beats so powerfully in my veins that it seems set to burst out. I feel the urge to fly, to swim, to bark, to bellow, to howl. I would that I had wings, a turtle's shell, a rind; that I were able to blow out vapour, possess a trunk, coil my body; to spread myself out, encompassing every place and every thing, emanating all odours; to flow like water, vibrate like sound, radiate like light; to be outlined in every form, penetrate every atom, descend into the very depths of matter—to *be* matter!" The horror implicit in the cosmos of science and the parade of monsters is not set aside in favor of commitment to an old or new faith, but transformed into a kind of exaltation.

Flaubert's exemplar presumably prompted the production of one the most striking nineteenth-century accounts of existential breakthrough to the realm of cosmic horror, Jules Richepin's "La Machine à métaphysique" [The Metaphysical Machine], which appeared in the collection *Les Morts bizarres* (1877), but its revelation remains tantalizingly elusive. Many of the writers who subsequently embraced the Decadent world-view did not find it so easy to achieve the kind of transfiguration contrived by Flaubert. Jean Lorrain, who provided a dramatized record of his own experiences under the influence of ether in a sequence of *contes d'un buveur d'éther* written in the early 1890s (trans. in *Nightmares of an Ether-Drinker*) was much more severely afflicted, physically as well as psychologically, and yet he persisted in reveling in the horrific imagery he produced. His novel *Monsieur de Phocas* (1900) includes one of the most elaborate literary accounts of a nightmarish hashish dream. Rémy de Gourmont found it hard to write further stories in the delightedly perverse vein of *Histoires Magiques* (1894; trans. as "Studies in Fascination" in *Angels of Perversity*) when he was horribly disfigured by the effects of

lupus, but he maintained his steadfast critical championship of Decadent style and Decadent pretensions.

The notion of Decadence had started out as a form of cosmic pessimism, based in the hypothesis that cultures or civilizations have a natural life-cycle akin to that of human individuals, and that the phase corresponding to an individual's senescence would manifest analogous symptoms of decrepitude and disorientation, as its jaded and morally-anaesthetized aristocrats indulged sybaritic lifestyles, hyperconscious of their own futility. The idea had been given quasi-scientific expression by Montesquieu in *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (1734), but the supposition that the glories of imperial Rome had given way to the Dark Ages because its rulers had embraced debauchery rather than cultivating ambition had been commonplace even while the process was in train.

The decision by Baudelaire and his followers to celebrate Decadence rather than decrying it was itself a source of horror to those who persisted in their horrified response to the scientific revelation. Max Nordau's *Entartung* (1893; trans. as *Degeneration*) assaulted all forms and analogues of Decadent art as morbid symptoms of a cultural twilight. This German antithesis to the French idea of progress was further extrapolated by Oswald Spengler's *Der Undertang des Abendlandes* (1918–1922; trans. as *The Decline of the West*), which looked gloomily forward to the inevitable eclipse of the Faustian culture that had traded its soul for scientific enlightenment and technological enrichment. Ideological opposition to the idea of progress also found support in physics, when the formulation of the concept of entropy drew a swift response from Sir William Thomson (Lord Kelvin), whose essay "On a Universal Tendency in Nature to the Dissipation of Mechanical Energy" (1852) concluded that the Earth must one day become uninhabitable because of the effects of entropy. Kelvin attempted to put a date on this inevitable extinction in "On the Age of the Sun's Heat" (1862), which assumed (falsely) that the sun's heat is produced by the energy of gravitational collapse.

Kelvin's calculations exercised a considerable influence on the literary imagination, providing the ideative underpinnings of a school of far-futuristic fantasy whose products included Camille Flammarion's *La Fin du monde* (1893–1894; trans. as *Omega: The Last Days of the World*), H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), and William Hope Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland* (1908). Although the first two titles adopted an elegiac tone, finding the prophesied end of the world to be too far distant in time to be worth overmuch worry, Hodgson took a different view, embracing Kelvin's cosmic pessimism much more intimately, and integrating it into an unprecedentedly elaborate account of cosmic horror.

The House on the Borderland is a threshold fantasy like *Zanoni*, but it reverses the earlier work's narrative scheme. While Bulwer's protagonists were willing, and sometimes able, to cross the threshold separating the phenomenal and noumenal worlds in order to come to terms with the latter, Hodgson's

lives in mortal dread of that threshold breaking down and allowing the entities native to the noumenal world to cross over into ours. As in *A Strange Story*, those entities are vague and demonic, and the forms that they assume, in dreams or materially, are attributed to them by the particular phobias of the beholder. In Hodgson's work they are invariably swinish; one of its key manifestations was in the posthumously published ''The Hog'' (1947, in the Mycroft & Moran edition of *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder*).

By the time Hodgson published *The House on the Borderland* he had already written the first version of his masterpiece, *The Night Land* (1912), in which a dreamer devastated by loss transforms the nourishment of his grief into a vision of a Kelvinesque end of the world, when the barriers separating the phenomenal and noumenal worlds begin to break down and the Earth's surface is invaded by all manner of monstrous entities whose sum constitutes the burden of cosmic horror. In both these novels, as well as *The Ghost Pirates* (1909), Hodgson offers tentative pseudoscientific explanations of these entities, but has no authoritative spokesman among his characters. In the short story initially published as "The Baumoff Explosive" (written 1912; published 1919) and reprinted with a fully restored text as "Eloi, Eloi, Sabachthani" (1975), however, the scientist Baumoff offers a more detailed account of matter as ''a localised vibration [in the Aether], traversing a closed orbit'' whose vibration is capable of modification by alien vibrations. When Baumoff attempts to recapitulate the experience of Christ on the cross he exposes himself to such an alien vibration, and the revelation he receives is very different from the kind of revelation that underlies the Christian faith. (Hodgson, like many other writers of scientific romance, was the freethinking son of a dogmatic clergyman.)

"The Hog" also contains an attempted explanation of the nature of its eponymous entity, this time delivered by the psychic detective Carnacki, who

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Ten Leading Short Stories of Cosmic Horror

Edgar Allan Poe, ''The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion'' (1839)

Arthur Machen, ''The Great God Pan'' (1890)

Algernon Blackwood, ''The Willows'' (1907)

H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Colour out of Space'' (1927)

Donald Wandrei, ''The Red Brain'' (1927)

Clark Ashton Smith, ''The Eternal World'' (1932)

H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Shadow out of Time'' (1936)

Don A. Stuart (John W. Campbell, Jr.), ''Who Goes There?'' (1938)

William Hope Hodgson, ''The Hog'' (1947)

Fritz Leiber, ''A Bit of the Dark World'' (1962)

suggests that planetary atmospheres are stratified in a whole series of zones, the outermost of which is psychic as well as physical, and which is home to a "million-mile-long clouds of monstrosity." The final pages of the story elaborate on this thesis considerably: "The monstrosities of the Outer Circle are malignant towards all that we consider desirable. . . . They are predatory— as all positive force is predatory. They have desires regarding us which are incredibly more dreadful to our minds when comprehended than an intelligent sheep would consider our desires towards its own carcass."

Although this comes close to relegating the cosmic horror to the status of a mere alien—the intelligent product of an alternative process of material evolution—that was not Hodgson's intention; the difference between the inner circles of matter and the psychic circle is one of kind as well as magnitude. The cosmic horror belongs to a different order of existence, which lies beyond the phenomenal world of ordinary perception, separated from it by a threshold that the human mind can breach in dreams with relative safety, although the consequences of a crossing in the other direction would be dire.

This kind of notion had been tacitly or explicitly reflected in various other works connected with the English extension of the French Decadent Movement. The central pillar of the British Movement—whose downfall virtually killed it off—was Oscar Wilde, whose incorrigible flippancy stifled the horror element in such stories as "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime" and "The Canterville Ghost" (both 1887), although the visionary odyssey contained in the early poem "The Sphinx" (1874) attributes some of the menace of Hodgson's hoggish monstrosities to its eponymous chimera. Here too, however, the eventual movement is one of revulsion and rejection, as the narrative voice wonders, "What snake-tressed fury fresh from Hell, with uncouth gestures and unclean, / Stole from the poppy-drowsy queen, and led you to a student's cell?" and eventually bids the apparition, "Get hence, you loathsome mystery! . . . Go thou before, and leave me to my crucifix."

While Decadence flourished in Britain, Arthur Machen developed a kind of cosmic horror in "The Great God Pan" (1890) and "The White People" (1899), but drew back thereafter from the nastier implications of his sublime vision; his later fantasies found a powerful antidote to cosmic horror in the form of the Celtic Grail featured in "The Great Return" (1915) and *The Secret Glory* (1922). The closest parallel to Hodgson's fiction in Britain was contained in Algernon Blackwood's story, "The Willows" (1907), in which a small island in the Danube serves as an interdimensional gateway similar to *The House on the Borderland*. Like Machen, however, Blackwood countered the horror element of his subsequent metaphysical fantasies with a powerful positive force. In *The Human Chord* (1910) and *The Centaur* (1911) sensitivity to slightly different versions of cosmic reality provide creative inspiration, ecstatic experience, and a potential route to superhumanity, while much of his other fiction developed a complex and rather elusive theory of elemental spirits.

Although there was no place on Earth less hospitable to the ideas and ideals of the Decadent Movement than the United States, fugitive echoes can be found in the work of some of the self-styled Bohemians who clustered in New York and San Francisco. The most striking early manifestation of Decadent horror were contained in the early stories in Robert W. Chambers's *The King in Yellow* (1895), written during or shortly after his sojourn in Paris as an art student, but Chambers soon went native in his own land and turned to more commercial work. The imagery of the horror stories in *The King in Yellow* borrows some motifs from the work of one of the West Coast Bohemians, Ambrose Bierce, but Bierce's own horror fiction has no significant cosmic component. Another of Bierce's associates, however, was the poet George Sterling, whose continuation of the tradition of *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, "Al Aaraaf," "Le Voyage," and "The Sphinx" was "A Wine of Wizardry" (1907), which is more indulgent than any of its predecessors.

The visionary odyssey undertaken by the poet's Fancy in "A Wine of Wizardry"—whose publication in *Cosmopolitan* amazed and appalled many of that periodical's readers—not only takes her into realms of bizarre Decadence but revels in her experience thereof. The poem overflows with references to such entities as "the bleeding sun's phantasmagoric gules," "tiger-lilies known to silent ghouls," "unresting hydras wrought of bloody light," and "red alembics whence [Circe's] gleaming broths obscenely fume" even before Fancy reaches Satan's Hell—which cannot satisfy her lust for exotic sensation, and from which she soon moves on to the substance of Asiatic mythologies before returning home to her grateful host. It was Sterling's friend and protégé, Clark Ashton Smith, who took up the torch of this tradition and took it to its furthest extreme, and whose correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft assisted Lovecraft to move on from the relatively crude conception of "cosmic fear" contained in his essay to a more elaborate and fully-fledged notion of cosmic horror.

THE LOVECRAFT SCHOOL

Clark Ashton Smith was a more dedicated student of French Decadence than any other American Bohemian; he learned French in order to savor the works of Baudelaire, and produced numerous translations and pastiches of Parnassian and Decadent verse. His most elaborate poem, *The Hashish-Eater; or, The Apocalypse of Evil*, first published in *Ebony and Crystal* (1922), crosses the visionary extravagance of "A Wine of Wizardry" with the splenetic attitude of Baudelaire's most aggravated works. Smith subsequently referred to it in a letter to Sam Sackett, written in 1950, as "a much misunderstood poem, which was intended as a study in the possibilities of cosmic consciousness," adding: "It is my own theory that, if the infinite worlds of the cosmos were opened to human vision, the visionary would be overwhelmed by horror in the end, like the hero of this poem."

This is, in capsule form, the manifesto of the cosmic horror story, and *The Hashish-Eater* is a striking extrapolation of the contention made in De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. It begins with the arrogant declaration, "Bow down: I am the emperor of dreams," and proceeds to follow an extraordinarily elaborate "trail of terror" through a syncretic amalgam of mythologies, whose climax is another confrontation that attempts to equip the indescribable with a suggestive mask, in the form of a rapidly-expanding star: "and floating up through gulfs and glooms eclipsed, / It grows and grows, a huge white eyeless Face, / That fills the void and fills the universe, / And bloats against the limits of the world / With lips of flame that open . . ."

In another account of "the argument" of *The Hashish-Eater*, reproduced as a preface to the 1989 edition of the poem issued as a pamphlet by Necronomicon Press, Smith describes this final image as "the face of infinity itself, in all its awful blankness." In the prose fiction that he wrote for the pulp magazines *Weird Tales* and *Wonder Stories* when he was in desperate need of money to support his aged and ailing parents, Smith made numerous attempts to paint suggestive features on the blank face of infinity. In the Hyperborean fantasy, "The Seven Geases" (1934), he reversed Hodgson's notion of stratified circles surrounding the Earth by obliging its protagonist to descend through a series of subterranean circles until he finally reaches the innermost cavern of the Archetypes (the word being used here in a Platonic rather than a Jungian sense). The various hypothetical past milieux he employed eventually proved inadequate to his needs, however, and his most extravagant Decadent fantasies were developed against the far-futuristic background of the Earth's last continent, Zothique, in which a terminal corrosion of barriers of possibility, similar to that afflicting Hodgson's Night Land, has restored the power of black magic and malign miracle. Such stories as "The Empire of the Necromancers" (1932), "Xeethra" (1934), and "Necromancy in Naat" (1936) replaced the irony of "The Seven Geases" with a more intensely splenetic narrative voice and an unprecedentedly wholehearted cosmic pessimism.

Although Smith's supernatural fiction was more successful in purely literary terms than his science fiction, it was in the stories he contributed to the science fiction pulps that he made his most concerted attempts to make cosmic horror incarnate. Initially, in such stories as "Marooned in Andromeda" (1930) and "The Amazing Planet" (1931), he adopted the simple strategy of envisaging cosmic horror in terms of a plethora of repulsive alien life-forms, but he embarked on more adventurous endeavors in a group of metaphysical fantasies, most notably "The Eternal World" (1932), in which a traveler in four-dimensional space-time breaches the boundary of perceived space to enter a timeless milieu, one of whose native inhabitants is drawn back into the material universe. "The Dimension of Chance" (1932) similarly attempts to describe a parallel universe in which the physical constants underlying the order of the material world are mercurial, giving rise to a world of chaotic change.

The element of horror in these stories is, however, overtaken and subsumed by the intellectual challenge of the project. A further group of relatively modest tales of altered states of consciousness, including "The Light from Beyond" (1933) and "The Visitors from Mlok" (1933), similarly moves the focus away from horror in the direction of more detached cerebration—a movement characteristic of the genre.

H. P. Lovecraft's early poetry has little of the depth and flair of Smith's, and such imitations of Poe as "Astrophobos" (written 1917) are unconvincing. The prose fiction he began to publish in 1919 is, however, much more enterprising in its attempts to develop the kind of cosmic fear that his historical essay had identified as the most interesting aspect of supernatural fiction. This quest was initially alleviated by a much more optimistic fascination with the lure of the exotic derived from the works of Lord Dunsany, but once he began writing for *Weird Tales*—which was founded in 1923—he began to concentrate much more intently on the horrific component of his hallucinatory fantasies. Before then, in "The Music of Erich Zann" (1921), he had broached the idea of breaching the kind of cosmic barrier that Hodgson had envisaged, with similarly disastrous consequences.

As with Hodgson, there was an idiosyncratic aspect to way in which Lovecraft went about constructing the imagery of the noumenal world and the manner in which its produce might be transferred into phenomenal reality. The notion of "nocturnal worshippers" engaged in "revolting fertility-rites" always retained a special resonance in Lovecraft's consciousness; such imagery recurred continually in his work from "Dagon" (1917) through "The Horror a Red Hook" (1925) and "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926) to "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1931). The objects of such cultish worship in Lovecraft's fiction are, however, even more chimerical than Hodgson's swine-creatures; the key elements of their confused nature tend to be batrachian, vermiform, and cephalopodan, although reanimated corpses already much ravaged by decay also crop up repeatedly. The early glimpses of the multitudinous faces of cosmic horror caught in such stories as "The Outsider" (1921), "Pickman's Model" (1926), and the barrier-breaching "The Dunwich Horror" (1928) became much more elaborate in later novellas that produced a new hybrid form of horror/science fiction.

Less tolerant of Hugo Gernsback's idosyncrasies than Smith, Lovecraft only appeared once in the Gernsback pulps, with "The Color out of Space" (1927), a subtle story that makes cosmic horror manifest as a kind of animate parasitic sheen, whose appearance recalls Baudelaire's professed fascination with "the phosphorescence of putrescence." In "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), which appeared in *Weird Tales*, the careful hybridization of horror and science fiction was more clearly manifest, but in this novella—to a greater extent than any other of his stories—Lovecraft confined the manifestations of cosmic horror to indirect hints. The climactic revelation is content to reveal the existence of a mask, while teasingly refusing to describe that which it had concealed.

One of the two novellas that Lovecraft subsequently published in *Astounding Stories*, *At the Mountains of Madness*, was considerably rewritten by the editor, but a version closer to the original was included in *The Outsider and Others* and subsequently reprinted as the title story of a collection. Cast as an archaeological fantasy, with deliberate echoes of Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), the story facilitates the gradual revelation of the Earth's prehistory, specifically its invasion and long occupation by the Old Ones, the creators and engineers of earthly life, whose eventual destruction by glaciation has kept various relics and residues capable of dangerous reanimation.

The accommodation within this secret history of the substance of numerous earlier stories allowed them to be retrospectively reconfigured as a semi-coherent series, usually dubbed the Cthulhu Mythos—a process of syncretic fusion that also absorbed Lovecraft's other *Astounding* story, "The Shadow

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Danforth was totally unstrung, and the first thing I remember of the rest of the journey was hearing him light-headedly chant an hysterical formula in which I alone of mankind could have found anything but insane irrelevance. . . .

''South Station Under—Washington Under—Park Street Under—Kendall—Central—Harvard—'' The poor fellow was chanting the familiar stations of the Boston-Cambridge tunnel that burrowed through our peaceful native soil thousands of miles away in New England, yet to me the ritual had neither irrelevance nor home feeling. It had only horror, because I knew unerringly the monstrous, nefandous analogy that had suggested it. We had expected, upon looking back, to see a terrible and incredible moving entity if the mists were thin enough; but of that entity we had formed a clear idea. What we did see—for the mists were indeed all too malignly thinned—was something altogether different, and immeasurably ore hideous and detestable. It was the utter, objective embodiment of the fantastic novelist's ''thing that should not be''; and its nearest comprehensible analogue is a vast, onrushing subway train as one sees it from a station platform—the great black front looming colossally out of infinite subterranean distance, constellated with strangely colored lights and filling the prodigious burrow as a piston fills a cylinder.

But we were not on a station platform. We were on the track ahead as the nightmare, plastic column of fetid black iridescence oozed tightly onward through its fifteen-foot sinus, gathering unholy speed and driving before it a spiral, rethickening cloud of the pallid abyss vapor. It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train—a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and unforming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling that bore down upon us, crushing the frantic penguins and slithering over the glistening floor that it and its kind had swept so evilly free of all litter.

H. P. Lovecraft, At the Mountains of Madness

out of Time'' (1936). In this novella, a different company of alien masters—whose empery spanned a later period of prehistory than that of the Old Ones—is called the Great Race. The Great Race is not a manifestation of cosmic horror, but it is pursued and harassed by enigmatic semi-material enemies, which are.

The aggregation, consolidation, and further elaboration of the Cthulhu Mythos was largely carried out by Lovecraft's disciples and imitators, who began such work in response to an open invitation to his correspondents to make use of motifs he had invented—particularly the imaginary library of ''forbidden books,'' centered on the *Necronomicon*, that he had invented to serve as a continual source of awful revelations. The hybridization of horror and science fiction pioneered by Lovecraft and Smith in the interests of invoking the sensation of cosmic horror was quickly and enthusiastically taken up by two of the coterie, Donald Wandrei and Frank Belknap Long.

Wandrei produced a short series of far-futuristic fantasies that looked far beyond Smith's tales of Zothique, to the end of the entire cosmos. In ''The Red Brain'' (1927) the Cosmic Dust is in the process of consuming everything, and the vast Brains that are the last representatives of material intelligence gather in the Hall of the Mist to debate their future. The Red Brain offers them a ray of hope, but it turns out to be the illusory product of madness. The climactic work in the series, ''On the Threshold of Eternity,'' was presumably written at the same time as the earlier items, but remained unpublished until 1944. It describes the reverie of the last surviving Great Brain as it bears rapt witness to ''the supreme triumph of Death,'' watching ''the final play and march of mighty color,'' while ''out of its being welled a silent response to the greatest music, to the greatest anthem of them all.''

Wandrei, the co-founder with August Derleth of Arkham House, subsequently wrote a Lovecraftian archaeological fantasy for that project that helped to summarize the syncretic progress of the Cthulhu Mythos, *The Web of Easter Island* (1948), but in the meantime he contributed a series of flamboyant melodramas to the science fiction pulps. Most turned away from cosmic horror in order to contrive the positive endings favored by science fiction editors, or clichéd climactic retrogressions into inchoate slime, but there are significant attempts to give phantom form to cosmic horrors in ''Blinding Shadows'' (1934), ''Finality Unlimited'' (1936), and the apocalyptic ''Infinity Zero'' (1936).

Long's early attempts at cosmic horror fiction, ''The Space Eaters'' (1928), ''The Hounds of Tindalos'' (1929), and *The Horror from the Hills* (1931), were relatively straightforward Lovecraftian pastiches, but he made more ingenious use of science-fictional melodrama in a sequence of far-futuristic fantasies comprising ''The Last Men'' (1934), ''Green Glory'' (1935), and ''The Great Cold'' (1935), in which the Earth has fallen under the dominion of land-based insects and ocean-based giant barnacles, which have reduced humankind's descendants to the status of loyal servitor. Long's subsequent

science fiction, however, became increasingly orthodox and its horror elements became much more mundane. A similar fate overtook the collaborative development of the Cthulhu Mythos, as its materials became increasingly familiar and stories employing it increasingly mechanical in their operation. August Derleth, not as a writer and as Arkham House's presiding genius, played a considerable role in this routinization, although his novel based on a Lovecraft fragment, *The Lurker at the Threshold* (1945), is a reasonably effective story of an interdimensional barrier whose threatened breakage is eventually prevented.

Although the productions of subsequent generations of the Lovecraft school became increasingly profuse, most of the innovative work done within the tradition moved away from cosmic horror towards more intimate forms of psychological stress. Attempts to describe the indescribable inevitably came to seem a trifle pointless, especially when the suggestive motifs adopted by Bulwer-Lytton, Hodgson, Lovecraft, and Smith were eroded by frequent repetition. Such belated pastiches as the fragments making up Brian Lumley's *The Transition of Titus Crow* (1975) added little to the initial quest, and ex-Lovecraftian writers like Fritz Leiber and Robert Bloch tended to be more effective when they moved away from Lovecraftian templates. Leiber's "Smoke Ghost" (1941) and Bloch's "The Funnel of God" (1960) aim for horrific essences of an ambitious but markedly different kind. Writers more specifically influenced by Clark Ashton Smith—including Jack Vance, who updated Zothique in his accounts of *The Dying Earth* (1950), also found it difficult to carry forward the cosmic horror component of their model's work, although Vance took far-futuristic Decadence to a more elaborate extreme in *The Last Castle* (1966).

Although Leiber's *Our Lady of Darkness* (1977)—which pays explicit homage to Clark Ashton Smith—is the best of all late Lovecraftian novels it follows the example of "Smoke Ghost" in anchoring its horror to the specific vicissitudes of city life. Leiber's most adventurous attempt at cosmic horror fiction, "A Bit of the Dark World" (1962), founders on the rock of its own discipline, unable in the end to penetrate the darkness in which its horrors are scrupulously hidden. The surreal gloss added to his materials by the most stylish of all the late-twentieth-century Lovecraftian writers, Thomas Ligotti, was not well adapted to the pursuit of cosmic horror, although such stories as "The Tsalal" (1994) move suggestively in that direction. More concerted and flamboyant attempts were made by Michael Shea, under the marked influence of Clark Ashton Smith and Jack Vance, in a graphic series of far-futuristic fantasies; many of them make abundant use of a bizarrely exotic underworld, which is brought into the foreground in some of the stories in *Nifft the Lean* (1982) and *The Mines of Behemoth* (1997).

In spite of the intense commitment of many of Lovecraft's and Smith's disciples to the ideals of their fiction, keys to the effective evocation of cosmic horror proved very elusive, and there is a sense in which the attempts he and

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Ten Leading Novels of Cosmic Horror

Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (1826)

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *A Strange Story* (1862)

Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (1874)

William Hope Hodgson, *The House on the Borderland* (1908)

Algernon Blackwood, *The Centaur* (1911)

William Hope Hodgson, *The Night Land* (1912)

Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men* (1930)

H. P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936)

Jack Vance, *The Dying Earth* (1950)

Fritz Leiber, *Our Lady of Darkness* (1977)

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his contemporaries made were essentially products of their particular time. They were not entirely confined to *Weird Tales*—Lovecraft called attention in the revised version of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" to Leonard Cline's novel *The Dark Chamber* (1927), which offers an account of drug-induced of psychosomatic metamorphosis that gropes in the same direction as many of his own tales of retrogression—but they did not extend much further. *Weird Tales* became inhospitable to such work when it changed proprietors in 1940—three years after Lovecraft's death—and Dorothy McIlwraith was installed as editor with a brief that specifically excluded the kind of literary extravagance that Clark Ashton Smith had introduced to its pages. *Wonder Stories* and *Astounding Stories*, which had played host to many attempts to evoke cosmic horror, had also changed proprietors and editors, and had similarly struck out in different directions.

The temporal restriction of attempts to reproduce the sensation of cosmic horror was not simply a matter of the obliteration of its marketplace, however. The new cosmos whose magnitude had first been revealed by Herschel a century before had continued to evolve within the scientific imagination—the fact of its expansion, which was to provide the foundation-stone of Big Bang cosmology was first discovered in the 1920s—but it no longer seemed as intimidating as it once had. The argument of Smith's *Hashish-Eater*, that a clear imaginative vision of the cosmos must ultimately be overwhelmed by the horror, became less plausible as time went by, and the advent of pulp science fiction generated a powerful ideological force in favor of the supposition that the component of wonder, rather than that of horror, was the more important aspect of the modern experience of the sublime. Genre science fiction soon marginalized the kinds of hybrid pioneered by Lovecraft and Wandrei, and made robust attempts to discover and amplify new antidotes to cosmic

pessimism—but in so doing, it sometimes contrived to re-emphasize the attitude it was opposing.

COSMIC HORROR IN SCIENCE FICTION

The champion who emerged to carry the cause of science fiction forward when pulp science fiction threatened to decay into a stereotyped form of futuristic costume drama was John W. Campbell, Jr., one of the pioneers of the "space opera" that took action-adventure fiction on to a galactic stage. Campbell was eventually forced to give up writing when he became editor of *Astounding Stories* (which he renamed *Astounding Science Fiction*, and then *Analog*) but there was a brief interim between his career as a space opera writer and the cessation of his writing activity when he adopted the pseudonym Don A. Stuart for work of a more sophisticated kind, including far-futuristic fantasies.

Campbell had begun dabbing in far-futuristic fantasy in "The Voice of the Void" (1930), in which beings of "pure force" attack the ultimate descendants of humankind 10 billion years in the future, and "The Last Evolution" (1932), which sketches out a future history in which a decadent human species threatened by a war for survival is replaced by intelligent machines designed to fight that war, which are superseded in their turn by similar "beings of force." The notion of future human decadence induced by over-dependence on machine, leading inevitably to supersession by the machines in question, is more elaborately dramatized in two Don A. Stuart stories, "Twilight" (1934) and "Night" (1935).

Subsequent Stuart stories elaborated various alternative scenarios for humankind's future evolution, all of which searched for an antidote to this impasse and the pessimism associated with it. The one that seemed to Campbell to provide the most satisfactory solution—a solution that subsequently became central to the image of the future synthesized by his magazine—was "Forgetfulness" (1937), in which the pattern of technological dependence is conclusively interrupted by the development of parapsychological powers. This breakthrough was closely akin to that credited by Edward Bulwer-Lytton to his Rosicrucian sages, and also to the future humankind whose mastery of the primal force of *vril* is described in his Utopian novel *The Coming Race* (1871). In spite of the success of this antidote, however, the cosmic horror it was intended to combat was not entirely vanquished. "Don A. Stuart" went on to write one of the most effective of all horror-SF stories in "Who Goes There?" (1938), in which a group of humans is confronted with a protean alien menace capable of mimicking any living form. In the face of such potential opposition, human presence—even augmented by parapsychological armor—seemed simply inadequate, in spite of the narrative fix contrived in the story.

The vast majority of alien menaces envisioned by science fiction writers posed straightforwardly mundane threats, and they were usually defeated in the end, but the notion of humans as conquerors and colonists of infinite space was always subject to the suspicion that *Homo sapiens* was simply not up to the job, which would have to be taken over in the long run by creatures better designed to accomplish it. Inevitably, this sensibility was most obvious in far-futuristic fantasies, which routinely imagined the supersession of humankind on the Earth, and frequently took that supersession for granted on a cosmic time-scale.

Scientific estimates of the likely future duration of the Earth took a great leap forward when Arthur Eddington proposed in 1926 that its radiation was produced by a nuclear fusion reaction, rendering Lord Kelvin's nineteenth-century estimates obsolete. The reflection of the new timetable in such accounts of future human and post-human evolution as J.B.S. Haldane's "The Last Judgment" (1928), J. D. Bernal's *The World, the Flesh and the Devil: An Enquiry into the Future of the Three Enemies of the Rational Soul* (1929), and Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1930) found this a cause for optimism, but Stapledon's account of the superhumanity of the ultimate descendants of *Homo sapiens* also served to highlight the inadequacies of the current model, resulting in a splenetic resentment of contemporary existential restriction whose bitterness was considerably magnified in *Last Men in London* (1932), *Odd John* (1934), and *Star Maker* (1937). The last-named integrates a distinct note of cosmic horror into its climactic vision of the kind of creator who might be responsible for a universe like ours—which, in Stapledon's estimation, falls far short of being the best possible.

Star Maker was published in the year of H. P. Lovecraft's death, which became a watershed in the history of cosmic horror in Britain as well as the United States. The Lovecraftian school of horror fiction continued to make attempts to exploit the resource, but the writers of British scientific romance and American science fiction who followed in the footsteps of Olaf Stapledon and John W. Campbell were swimming with a different tide. In their work, the element of cosmic horror was not only counterbalanced but ultimately overwhelmed by the exaltatory aspects of the sublime. This imaginative thrust was by no means restricted to fictional analyses of the macrocosmic context; the most determined attempt to put an optimistic gloss on the prospect of a future evolution that would render humankind obsolete was made by the French evolutionist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who began to formulate his Omega Point thesis in the 1920s but was forbidden to publish by the Society of Jesus, of which he was a member.

The first published version of Teilhard's Omega Point hypothesis eventually appeared posthumously, in *Le Phénomène humain* (1955; trans. as *The Phenomenon of Man*), which argues that the Earth's evolving ecosphere is supplemented by an equivalent intellectual entity, the noösphere, whose future evolution will involve its progressive integration into a coherent whole,

until a climactic "concurrence of human monads" brings Earthly evolution to its terminus. The local Omega Point described in *The Phenomenon of Man* had already been extrapolated to a universal stage in a 1945 lecture that was reprinted in *L'Avenir de l'homme* (1959; trans. as *The Future of Man*), which suggested that the Earthly noösphere might detach itself from the planet in order to join a universal collective, comprising all the intelligences in the universe.

The notion of the Omega Point was eventually taken up, and dramatically reconfigured, by the physicist Frank Tipler in *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead* (1994), which combined Teilhard's model with ideas drawn from Freeman Dyson's "Time without End: Physics and Biology in an Open Universe" (1979) and inspiration borrowed from the strong version of Brandon Carter's "anthropic cosmological principle," which points out that if the fundamental physical constants were even slightly different, the universe would be incapable of harboring life as we know it. Building on the assumption that any space-traveling species ought to be able to take eventual control of the entire universe, Tipler suggested that such a civilization would undoubtedly want to deploy some of the resources of the universe to the purpose of recapitulating its entire history, contriving the resurrection of every entity that has ever existed within the cyberspace of an ultimate computer, thus fulfilling the most ambitious dreams of theology.

Teilhard's Omega Point was mirrored in a good deal of science fiction, but Tipler's sparked a more immediate and prolific response. Some of the works that followed in its train had elements of horror within them, but it was not cosmic horror; in making the Omega Point imaginatively available for philosophical and literary development, Teilhard and Tipler drastically reduced its power to generate shock and awe; although the scale of the ideas involved was still capable of making minds boggle, it was not capable of inducing the kind of reflexive reaction that Clark Ashton Smith had integrated into the climax of *The Hashish-Eater*. The notion had become graspable, and it was no longer inherently intimidating.

There were many other developments in the science fiction of the latter half of the twentieth century that were conducive to the production of horror stories. The popularization of the idea of genetic engineering had a built-in "yuck factor" that generated a whole school of horror-SF, and the notion of nanotechnological "assemblers"—molecule-sized machines—that would be capable of processing any raw materials into object of desire rapidly gave rise to melodramatic accounts of "grey goo catastrophes" and monstrous reconstructions of the environment perpetrated by out-of-control nanotechnology. Even at their most extreme, however, such horror stories could not strike the note of cosmic horror that had served as a siren song for the Lovecraft school when it was in its heyday.

The Lovecraftian idea of cosmic horror is founded in the supposition that the human mind is, ultimately, the helpless prisoner of the macrocosm, the futility of all its microcosmic ambitions and self-delusions being illustrated and defined by the magnitude and strangeness of a cosmos to which the principle of "as above, so below" is flatly inapplicable. The imaginative thrust of scientific romance and science fiction, however, challenged the assumption that the vastness of the cosmos can only be made imaginatively tolerable by making it correspond in some fashion to the sphere of human life. Early science fiction did try to maintain such a correspondence, by developing such motifs as the galactic empire, in which the vast cosmos of contemporary astronomy was filled up with an infinite array of the Earth-clone worlds and human-clone aliens—but it was not a forced move. Sophisticated science fiction was not intimidated by the notion that *Homo sapiens* is an ephemeral species, or the notion that the evolving universe will ultimately change out of all recognition.

If human beings are infinitely adaptable, and cannot only be unintimidated by, but willingly play midwife to, a new era of post-human diversification, then the threshold between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds can no longer be protected by anything as crude as a Dweller of the Threshold. That kind of cosmic horror is impotent to resist the imaginative antidotes offered by contemporary science fiction. Although the prospect of wholesale transfiguration is not without its own horrific potential, the horror in question is not cosmic—indeed, it is more intimate than the traditional sources of horror.

There have always been horrors lurking within actual and potential human nature; that is where the great majority of the icons considered by this book originated, and where most of them remain confined. In the past, they have been arbitrary and accidental aspects of that nature, conceivable as unlucky afflictions of fate. In the future, that will not be the case; the horrors luring within future human nature will be products—or, at least, by-products—of human design. That prospect generates many discomfiting possibilities, but the one possibility it denies absolutely is that humans are prisoners of their own nature, doomed to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune without any means of fighting back. The kinds of terrors that might have motivated the kinds of fertility-cults that figured in H. P. Lovecraft's nightmares—whether or not any such institutions ever really existed—have not been uneasily repressed but permanently exorcized; they cannot come back.

This does not mean, however, that cosmic horror is redundant as an aesthetic experienced or as an object of literary ambition. Nor has it been reduced to a mere matter of nostalgic amusement. It is useful, now that we can no longer be horrified by mere matters of spatial and temporal magnitude, or by the consciousness that the cosmos was not constructed for our benefit, to be able to remember and appreciate what a privilege that freedom is. There is a definite imaginative utility in continuing to test its limits. An ability to remain

unhorrified by the fact that the entire universe, outside the fragile envelope of the Earth's biosphere, is extremely and unremittingly hostile to human existence ought to amplify, rather than diminish, the horror implicit in the fact that we are more than sufficiently hostile to one another, and to the human microcosm in its worldly entirety, not to need any cosmic assistance.

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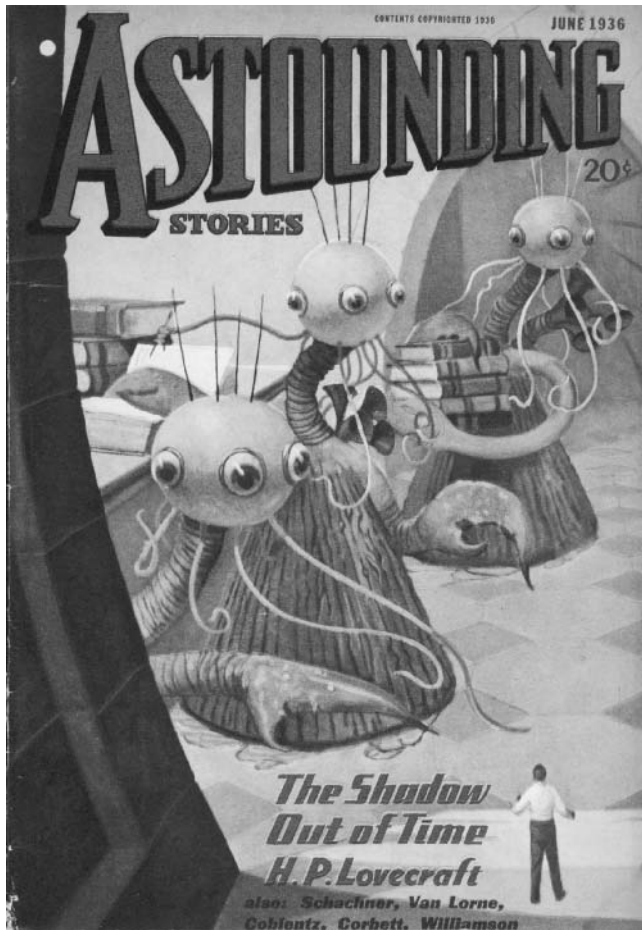
The Cthulhu Mythos

by S. T. Joshi

It is one of the many paradoxes of the Cthulhu Mythos that its development over most of the past seventy-five years owes less to its creator, H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937), than to Lovecraft's colleague and self-styled disciple, August Derleth (1909–1971). It was, indeed, Derleth who gave it its name, and it was Derleth who was chiefly responsible for nurturing its growth in a particular direction, both by encouraging certain writers and by discouraging others. That Derleth took the Mythos in directions Lovecraft would almost certainly

not have approved is now widely accepted; what directions Lovecraft himself would have taken if he had lived longer is largely a matter of conjecture.

Exactly why the Cthulhu Mythos has been so widely imitated, not only by the many writers with whom Lovecraft was acquainted in his lifetime but by dozens, perhaps hundreds, of writers after his death, many of whom have little connection with the intricate network of friends, colleagues, and disciples that developed during and after his lifetime, is a perhaps unanswerable question. Chris Jarocha-Ernst, in *A Cthulhu Mythos Bibliography and Concordance* (1999), lists 2,631 works of the Cthulhu Mythos written up to the time of its publication. This number is perhaps a bit inflated, since it includes more than 100 letters by Lovecraft in which Mythos names of various sorts are mentioned, often in passing; but the figure is still impressive. Commonly drawn parallels with the equally well-developed mythos of Sherlock Holmes do not seem particularly helpful, given the wide difference in genre orientation, and given also that the detective story much more readily lends itself to formulaic imitation than the horror tale. Lovecraft's own colleagues, Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard, would appear to have fashioned equally compelling myth-cycles, the first in his fantastic realms of Zothique, Averoigne, and Hyperborea, and the other in his popular tales of King Kull, Solomon Kane, and Conan the Cimmerian; but, although Conan has enjoyed wide dissemination in films, comic books, and other media, relatively few other writers have produced actual imitations.

The Cthulhu Mythos is, accordingly, an unusual icon of supernatural literature because it is so centrally derived from the work of a single author. Unlike such icons as the ghost or the vampire, whose roots in folklore reach into the earliest origins of human society, the Mythos is a uniquely intellectualized, even philosophical icon that could not have emerged except at a critical moment in Western history, when conventional religious belief was being threatened by radical discoveries in the sciences, which were painting a picture of the universe as a spatially and temporally infinite realm where the achievements, and even the very existence, of the human race were merely fleeting accidents. In a real sense, the Cthulhu Mythos could only have been fashioned by one who had understood, or at any rate absorbed, Einstein, Darwin, and Freud. Lovecraft himself referred to his creation as an "artificial mythology" (*Selected Letters* 3.66), but, as we shall see, David E. Schultz may be more on target when he refers to the Mythos as an "antimythology" (212)—for, in truth, the Mythos subverts the goals and purposes for which actual religions or mythologies function.

THE LOVECRAFT MYTHOS

In Lovecraft's hands, the "typical" Mythos tale, if there really is such a thing, depicts the incursion of immensely powerful forces from the depths of space—labeled as "gods" by the human beings who either combat them or

seek to gain a sliver of reflected power by worshipping them—to various remote corners of the earth. Knowledge—of a sort—about these "gods" can be found in various books of occult lore, themselves so rare that extant copies of them can be numbered on the fingers of one hand. Accordingly, the central icon of the Mythos can be seen to consist of several subsidiary icons, of which four can be concretely identified: (1) a vitally realized but largely imaginary New England topography; (2) an ever-growing library of occult books, both ancient and modern (and, in consequence, a band of scholars who seek out these texts, either to carry out the spells and incantations contained in them or to combat them); (3) the "gods," their human followers, and their monstrous "minions" or acolytes; and (4) a sense of the cosmic, both spatial and temporal, that often links the Mythos more firmly with science fiction than with the supernatural. How Lovecraft came to fuse these four elements into his most representative Mythos tales requires not only an understanding of the course of Lovecraft's two-decade career as a fiction writer, but a grasp of the philosophical thought that underlies it.

The Cthulhu Mythos, as envisioned by Lovecraft, was an expression of his deepest philosophical convictions. Growing up in a conventionally religious household in Providence, Rhode Island, the precocious Lovecraft quickly shed his religious belief and, by successive absorption of Greco-Roman literature and thought and the sciences of chemistry and astronomy, became an atheist and materialist who saw in science the ultimate arbiter of truth; but at the same time he recognized that science did not, and perhaps could not, fully explicate the universe, so that a permanent reservoir of mystery would remain. What is more, as both an appreciator of art and a creative artist, he understood that scientific truth could not provide emotional satisfaction; that could come only from art and from other sources such as close ties to one's family and one's race, and to the topographical and historical milieu that the accidents of one's birth and upbringing had provided.

Lovecraft lived in a time of intellectual ferment. His prodigious self-taught learning in the sciences had made him a master of such disciplines as chemistry, biology, geology, astronomy, and anthropology; but much of this learning, derived from such nineteenth-century titans as Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley, Ernst Haeckel (*The Riddle of the Universe*, 1899), and Edward Burnett Tylor (*Primitive Culture*, 1871), and Sir James George Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, 1890 f.), had to undergo painful revision as the twentieth century introduced new conceptions that threatened to modify, and perhaps overthrow, the rather cocksure materialism of the nineteenth—especially such thing as Einstein's theory of relativity, Max Planck's quantum theory, and Werner Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle. The Cthulhu Mythos is, in a very real sense, a reflection of Lovecraft's awareness of the uncertainty of knowledge in his own time, but at the same time it is a subtle rebuke to those who saw in that uncertainty an excuse to return to the credulous and outmoded myths of religion.

A littérateur as much as a scientist, Lovecraft read voraciously, both in his chosen field of supernatural fiction and in general literature. Much of his early fiction is imitative—of Edgar Allan Poe, whom he read at the age of eight; Lord Dunsany, the Irish fantasist whose works he enthusiastically embraced in 1919; Arthur Machen, whose dark tales of the "little people" in secret corners of the world fired his imagination; and Algernon Blackwood, whose cosmic vision was scarcely less intense than Lovecraft's own—and it would take a full decade for Lovecraft to assimilate these and other influences so that he could write tales that were, while still indebted in certain elements to his predecessors, nonetheless fully his own.

The first tale of Lovecraft's maturity, "The Tomb" (1917), already begins the etching of the history and topography of New England that would be one of his great strengths as a writer, and that makes him, no less than Nathaniel Hawthorne or Sarah Orne Jewett, an authentic local color writer. Lovecraft was aware that New England offered, in the otherwise brashly new United States, a *depth* of history that could otherwise be found only in the Old World. Just as the Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries drew upon the depths of medieval ignorance and superstition as the haven for their incursions of horror into a rational age, so did the seventeenth century in New England—typified by religious fanaticism, witchcraft fears, and ever-present terror of the untenanted wilderness beyond the limited zones of settled civilization—represent a kind of American dark age from which all horrors could emerge. "The Terrible Old Man" (1920), brief as it is, is significant not merely in its citation of the first of Lovecraft's imaginary New England towns, Kingsport, but in its suggestion that sorcery can unnaturally prolong a person's life well beyond the norm—a theme that resonates in many of the Mythos tales.

In "The Terrible Old Man," however, Kingsport is largely a product of Lovecraft's imagination. Two years later he first visited the town of Marblehead, Massachusetts, and was captivated by the seeming completeness of its preservation of a colonial past. Not long thereafter he wrote "The Festival," an important precursor to the Mythos not only in its clear evocation of a New England weighted with age-old horrors, but in its depiction of a hideous hybrid race of creatures—"They were not altogether crows, nor moles, nor buzzards, nor ants, nor vampire bats, nor decomposed human beings; but something I cannot and must not recall" (*Dagon* 215)—that anticipate several of the subsidiary Mythos entities. In later years Lovecraft would admit that his other mythical cities were based very loosely upon real places. Arkham—first cited in "The Picture in the House" (1920)—was derived from Salem (although Salem had, at this time, no university to match the imaginary Miskatonic University). Dunwich, vividly realized in "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), was based upon a trip Lovecraft took to a remote south-central Massachusetts area containing the towns of Wilbraham, Hampden, and Monson. Innsmouth, the decaying seaport in "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1931), was based on several trips made to

Newburyport, Massachusetts, a town whose genteel decline into seediness has now been strikingly reversed. Lovecraft was perhaps a bit cavalier in stating so frequently in letters that his imaginary towns were based on single real towns in New England; in reality, his visits throughout the region—to the coastal towns of Gloucester and Rockport, Massachusetts; to the rural stretches of Vermont in 1927 and 1928, depicted so poignantly in "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930); or to such towns as Foster, Greenwich, and Providence in his native state of Rhode Island—colored the smallest touches of landscape description throughout his work.

The icon of the occult book is first found in "The Statement of Randolph Carter" (1919), not otherwise considered a Mythos tale. Here we find a learned scholar who has come upon what his friend, the narrator, calls a "fiend-inspired book...written in characters whose like I never saw elsewhere" (*At the Mountains of Madness* 300). This description makes it clear that this book cannot be the celebrated *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred; that tome was first cited in "The Hound" (1922), although the author and his "unexplainable couplet" ("That is not dead which can eternal lie, / And with strange aeons even death may die") were first mentioned in "The Nameless City" (1921). Lovecraft himself did not create many more imaginary tomes, but very quickly his colleagues fashioned an entire library of them: the *Liber Ivonis* or *Book of Eibon* (invented by Clark Ashton Smith); *Cultes des Goules* by the Comte d'Erlette (not invented by Derleth, as its author's name might suggest, but by Robert Bloch); *Nameless Cults* by von Junzt (the German title of which, *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, was devised by a group effort by several of Lovecraft's colleagues); *Mysteries of the Worm* by Ludvig Prinn (invented by Bloch; Lovecraft devised the Latin title, *De Vermis Mysteriis*); and so on. Lovecraft lent his imprimatur—after a fashion—to these titles by citing them in his own stories along with the *Necronomicon*, and made the game more entertaining by citing genuine works of occult lore (the *Demonolatreia* of Remigius) or of scholarship (*The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* by Margaret A. Murray) that could well have been imaginary, and that were in fact taken to be imaginary by several generations of readers.

We should not be surprised that so bookish a man as Lovecraft—who, as a child, absorbed in secret the eighteenth-century books found in the attic of his home in Providence—should come to find such power in the written word. While he himself only scorned conventional occultism and found actual occult treatises dull and unimaginative, his imaginary books suggest that words can have a *direct* impact upon human and cosmic existence, through the efficacy of spells and incantations—just as, in his own life, several key books directly inspired both his fiction and his evolving philosophy.

What has, however, not been widely recognized is that Lovecraft's own conception of the *Necronomicon* and other invented tomes changed quite radically over the years, and from tale to tale. As Robert M. Price has shown,

the *Necronomicon* can be variously seen as a grimoire (a book "containing recipes and prescriptions for spells"), a demonology ("a guidebook to heretical beliefs, to be used in suppressing them"), and a scripture ("Genres in the Lovecraftian Library" 14–15); it can be seen from this that the purposes to which the *Necronomicon* and other titles are put vary widely from one story to the next, and in some cases it is not clear whether the *Necronomicon* is actually advocating the return of the "gods" it describes or warning readers against them.

Some, perhaps much, of this ambiguity may have to do with the fact that those "gods" themselves undergo radical change throughout the last decade of Lovecraft's life, when his most representative fiction was written. Although the first "god" invented (or, in this case, adapted) by Lovecraft was the ancient Philistine god Dagon in "Dagon" (1917), it was only in "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926) that the Cthulhu Mythos, as such, can (retroactively) be said to have come into genuine existence; for it was only here that all the four subsidiary icons—topography, occult lore, gods, and cosmicism—are first conjoined into a coherent whole. In this mesmerizing tale, a professor unearths evidence that a race of extraterrestrial entities, led by a creature called Cthulhu, came to earth from the depths of space millions of years ago, building a geometrically bizarre city called R'lyeh. A sculptor fashions a statue of Cthulhu in his dreams; later the professor's nephew, the story's narrator, describes the object: "If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human creature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing" (*Dunwich Horror* 127). R'lyeh sank under the sea, somewhere in the South Pacific; but a cult member captured in Louisiana testifies to the core of his beliefs:

> They worshipped, so they said, the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died. This was that cult, and the prisoners said that it had always existed and always would exist, hidden in distant wastes and dark places all over the world until the time when the great priest Cthulhu, from his dark house in the mighty city of R'lyeh under the waters, should rise and bring the earth again beneath its sway. Some day he would call, when the stars were ready, and the secret cult would always be waiting to liberate him. (*Dunwich Horror* 139)

R'lyeh does rise—not because "the stars are ready," but as the result of an earthquake (an actual event that occurred on February 28, 1925); and although some hapless sailors witness the event and actually catch a glimpse of Cthulhu: "A mountain walked or stumbled" (*Dunwich Horror* 152). But R'lyeh falls back into the ocean, taking Cthulhu with it. The world is safe—for now.

It is difficult to convey in short compass the extraordinarily complex texture of ''The Call of Cthulhu,'' with its multiple shiftings of perspective and its suggestion of a horror that threatens not only our tiny planet but the entire universe. The story was too imaginatively advanced for Farnsworth Wright, editor of the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, where most of Lovecraft's stories up to this point had appeared; he rejected it when it was first submitted to him. But, in the summer of 1927, at the urging of Donald Wandrei, Wright asked to see the story again, and Lovecraft accompanied it with an important letter outlining his literary principles:

> Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form—and the local human passions and conditions and standards—are depicted as native to other worlds or other universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. *These* must be handled with unsparing *realism,* (*not* catch-penny *romanticism*) but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown—the shadow-haunted *Outside*—we must remember to leave our humanity and terrestrialism at the threshold. (*Selected Letters* 2.150)

There may be some exaggeration here: it is difficult to see that *all* of Lovecraft's stories up to this point had exemplified the principles he outlines. The element of cosmicism—which we now recognize as his signature conception—is evident only in a small number of tales, notably ''Dagon'' (in which a hideous aquatic entity emerges from the depths of the Pacific after a land mass has suddenly arisen—a clear anticipation of ''The Call of Cthulhu''), ''Beyond the Wall of Sleep'' (in which an ignorant denizen of Catskill mountains is psychically possessed by a cosmic entity from outer space), and a very few others.

The Thing cannot be described—there is no language for such abysms of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled. God! What wonder that across the earth a great architect went mad, and poor Wilcox raved with fever in that telepathic instant? The Thing of the idols, the green, sticky spawn of the stars, had awaked to claim his own. The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident. After vigintillions of years great Cthulhu was loose again, and ravening for delight.

H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Call of Cthulhu''

In any event, Lovecraft appears to be fashioning a manifesto for the kind of fiction he wished to write in the future, and by and large he fulfilled it in the tales of his final decade of writing.

By the time ''The Call of Cthulhu'' was resubmitted to (and accepted by) *Weird Tales*, Lovecraft had already written a tale that perhaps exemplifies his cosmic perspective better than any other single work. ''The Colour out of Space'' is not generally considered a tale of the Cthulhu Mythos, because it does not cite any of the cosmic entities that have become its chief defining trait, but in its suggestions of stupendous cosmicism, in its sensitive etching of a haunted New England landscape, and in its overall artistry, it may stand preeminent in Lovecraft's oeuvre. Here a hapless farmer ''west of Arkham'' (*Dunwich Horror* 53) finds his life changed when a meteorite lands on his property. It exhibits extraordinarily bizarre chemical characteristics (Lovecraft's early enthusiasm for chemistry is put to good use here), and it would appear that some entity or entities were embedded in the meteor and have now escaped, subtly corrupting both the landscape and the human beings who occupy it. Plants turn gray and brittle, and the farmer and his family also decay, mentally, psychologically, and finally physically. In a riveting climactic scene, the entities shoot back into space from the well where they have apparently been dwelling.

Here again a summary or synopsis utterly fails to convey the subtlety of the tale. In fact, we know neither the physical nor—more importantly—the psychological properties of the entities involved. We do not know whether they are material or otherwise, or whether they are actuated by hate, fear, malice, self-preservation, or any other of the traits conventionally attributed to human beings. It is in this tale, preeminently, that Lovecraft has dispensed with ''such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind.'' Even Cthulhu is once described as ''ravening for delight'' (*Dunwich Horror* 152), which suggests a quasi-human psychology of hatred and revenge; but of the entities in ''The Colour out of Space,'' no such emotion can be attributed.

Lovecraft unfortunately regresses in his next major tale, ''The Dunwich Horror'' (1928). Largely an evocation of the rural region of central Massachusetts that Lovecraft visited in the summer of 1928 in the company of an old friend, Edith Miniter, this tale reads almost like a parody of itself—or a parody of the hundreds of unimaginative Cthulhu Mythos tales that would be written in its wake. A librarian of Miskatonic University, Henry Armitage, is highly suspicious of a clan of farmers named Whateley, living in Dunwich, especially when one of them, Wilbur, the child of Lavinia Whateley, attempts to steal the *Necronomicon* from the library after Armitage refuses him permission to borrow the rare book. Wilbur dies in the attempt, and his body, which virtually disintegrates upon death, shows that ''he had taken somewhat after his unknown father'' (*Dunwich Horror* 176). But worse is to come: some strange creature is ravaging the countryside around Dunwich. Armitage—after spending days

deciphering an encrypted diary by Wilbur—ascertains that Wilbur had envisioned ''some plan for the extirpation of the entire human race by some terrible elder race of beings from another dimension'' (*Dunwich Horror* 185). Whateley's death had forestalled the plan, but clearly some entity that he had evidently called out of space was on the loose and must be stopped. So Armitage and two colleagues, muttering spells at the creature, manage to send it back into space. Only at the end do we learn that the creature was Wilbur's twin brother, the spawn of Lavinia Whateley and the cosmic entity Yog-Sothoth.

''The Dunwich Horror,'' in some sense, made the rest of the Cthulhu Mythos—at least as envisioned by August Derleth and his successors—possible in its naïve portrayal of a good-vs.-evil scenario in which human beings and their fate are at the center of the picture. Armitage delivers a number of self-important lectures on the subject, concluding that ''We have no business calling in such things from outside, and only very wicked people and very wicked cults ever try to'' (*Dunwich Horror* 197). One would like to think—and it has been so argued—that this story was meant as a deliberate parody and that Armitage is to be taken as a kind of pompous buffoon, but Lovecraft confessed in a letter that during the writing of the story, ''[I] found myself psychologically identifying myself with one of the characters (an aged scholar who finally combats the menace) toward the end'' (letter to August Derleth, [September 27, 1928]). Donald R. Burleson (''The Mythic Hero Archetype in 'The Dunwich Horror' '') makes the valid point that a lengthy quotation from the *Necronomicon* early in the story—''Man rules now where they [the Old Ones] ruled once; They shall soon rule where man rules now'' (*Dunwich Horror* 170)—suggests that Armitage's ''victory'' is a fleeting and ineffectual one, to be overturned by the ultimate triumph of the Old Ones; but the final impression of the story does leave a strong suggestion that human beings can at least hold the Old Ones in check for a time. Clearly, this story does not embody the moral neutrality that Lovecraft felt such cosmic narratives ought to have.

''The Dunwich Horror'' is the only tale that puts the entity Yog-Sothoth at center stage. First cited in passing in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927), this creature is never actually seen in the tale, and we can only gain some idea of his physical attributes by the fleeting glimpse of his offspring as revealed at the end of the story, and effectively conveyed in the ignorant patois of a Dunwich denizen:

> ''Bigger'n a barn . . . all made o' squirmin' ropes . . . hull thing sort o' shaped like a hen's egg bigger'n anything, with dozens o' legs like hogsheads that haff shut up when they step . . . nothin' solid abaout it—all like jelly, an' made o' sep'rit wrigglin' ropes pushed clost together . . . great bulgin' eyes all over it . . . ten or twenty maouths or trunks a-stickin' aout all long the sides, big as stovepipes, an' all a-tossin' an' openin' an' shuttin' . . . all gray, with kinder blue or purple rings . . .'' (*Dunwich Horror* 194)

As with Cthulhu, one can only appreciate the richness of Lovecraft's imagination in fashioning an entity so different from the ghosts and vampires and werewolves of conventional supernatural fiction.

With "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930) things are a bit better. A wondrous evocation of the landscape of rural Vermont, this substantial narrative richly exemplifies the documentary style that has been so widely used in other Cthulhu Mythos tales. Virtually an epistolary tale, "The Whisperer in Darkness" tells, by the exchange of letters between a professor at Miskatonic, Albert N. Wilmarth, and an intelligent but rustic denizen of Vermont, Henry Wentworth Akeley, how the floods that had devastated New England in November 1927 (a real event) washed down strange creatures—"a sort of huge, light-red crab with many pairs of legs and with two great bat-like wings in the middle of the back" (*Dunwich Horror* 211)—from the remote hills where they apparently dwelt. Akeley concludes that these creatures come from another planet—very likely the planet Yuggoth, on the rim of the solar system (to be equated with the recently discovered Pluto)—and that they have come here to mine a certain substance they cannot find on their native planet. Akeley calls them the "fungi from Yuggoth," because their physical constitution appears to be a mix of what would conventionally be considered animal and plant characteristics. They are capable of tremendous intellectual and scientific feats, notably the science of surgery; in fact, they have fashioned a way to extract the brain of any living creature, preserve it in a canister, and take it on cosmic voyagings throughout the universe.

It is at this point that Wilmarth—and perhaps Lovecraft—begin to draw back in apprehension. In the essay "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" (1933), Lovecraft stated that one of his chief goals was to "achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which forever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis" (*Miscellaneous Writings* 113). This is exactly what Wilmarth says at one point as he imagines what it might be like to go on disembodied voyages through space: "To shake off the maddening and wearying limitations of time and space and natural law—to be linked with the vast *outside*—to come close to the nighted and abysmal secrets of the infinite and the ultimate—surely such a thing was worth the risk of one's life, soul, and sanity!" (*Dunwich Horror* 243). But in fact Wilmarth becomes horrified at the prospect, especially when he learns (or suspects) that his friend Akeley has been replaced by one of the fungi—or perhaps by the leader of the fungi, the shape-shifting cosmic entity Nyarlathotep.

The figure of Nyarlathotep is perhaps the most interesting—at any rate, the most exhaustively developed—of any of the "gods" of the Cthulhu Mythos as created by Lovecraft. First appearing as a mysterious, pharaoh-like creature in the prose poem "Nyarlathotep" (1920), he returns in vivid form in the dreamland fantasy *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1926–1927), as

the archenemy of Randolph Carter, who searches throughout dreamland for the "sunset city" that haunts his dreams. In "The Whisperer in Darkness" he is avowedly worshipped by the fungi from Yuggoth, who state that "To Nyarlathotep, Mighty Messenger, must all things be told. And He shall put on the semblance of man, the waxen mask and the robe that hides, and come down from the world of Seven Suns to mock" (*Dunwich Horror* 226). Nyarlathotep will make one more vivid appearance in a Lovecraft story.

By this time Lovecraft himself was aware that he was fashioning something new and innovative. Even though he never devised the term "Cthulhu Mythos," he was becoming gradually cognizant that his tales were building upon one another and developing some kind of pseudomythological framework. Many commentators have been puzzled by Lovecraft's comment, in the autobiographical sketch "Some Notes on a Nonentity" (1933), that it was Lord Dunsany "from whom I got the idea of the artificial pantheon and myth-background represented by 'Cthulhu', 'Yog-Sothoth', 'Yuggoth', etc." (*Miscellaneous Writings* 561), but the influence of Dunsany, when properly understood, was critical. Dunsany's early books of short stories, *The Gods of Pegāna* (1905) and *Time and the Gods* (1906), established an entire cosmogony of gods, demigods, and worshippers, all set in the imaginary realm of Pegāna. Pegāna is not, as is often believed, a dreamworld; there is in fact some suggestion that it is set in the distant past of the real world. But clearly we are dealing with a land quite remote from the present day. The gods of this realm are by no means as terrifying in appearance or in action as Lovecraft's; they are, to be sure, powerful, imposing, and occasionally vengeful, but they are on the whole remote, interfering in human affairs only when some lowly human being develops sufficient hubris to challenge the gods and their prerogatives.

Lovecraft produced a dozen or more blatant imitations of Dunsany during the period 1919–1921, but relatively few of these dealt with the kind of gods that populate the Pegāna pantheon. Only one, "The Other Gods" (1921)—a classic tale of hubris where Barzai the Wise seeks to climb Mount Hatheg-Kla and catch a glimpse of the gods of earth, only to learn that these "mild" gods are in fact protected by "other" gods far more powerful and baleful than they, and who exact suitable vengeance on Barzai (*Dagon* 131)—can be said to duplicate the Dunsany mythos. Lovecraft's great innovation was to remove these cosmic but remote entities from the never-never-land of fantasy and thrust them boldly into the real world, making also a genre shift from pure fantasy to supernatural horror. The Nyarlathotep in the dreamland fantasy *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, while indimidating, can nonetheless be dealt with, even reasoned with; and in the end Carter bamboozles him and returns to the "sunset city" he sought (which proves to be his memories of the very real New England landscape of his boyhood). In "The Call of Cthulhu" and other Mythos tales, the "gods" are much less easily handled, and rarely can humanity score even a partial victory over them.

THE LATER LOVECRAFT MYTHOS

While he was writing "The Dunwich Horror" Lovecraft noted that it was part of the "Arkham cycle" (*Selected Letters* 2.246). This is one of the first indications that Lovecraft was becoming gradually aware of the internal coherence of his Mythos. While it is abundantly clear that Lovecraft did not plan the Mythos in advance, and in fact rarely felt bound by the data of previous tales in effecting innovations to the Mythos in later tales, it is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to say, as George T. Wetzel has done, that Lovecraft's "Mythos stories should actually be considered not as separate works but rather the different chapters of a very lengthy novel" (79). Lovecraft himself flippantly referred to his myth-cycle as "Cthulhuism & Yog-Sothothery" (letter to August Derleth, May 16, 1931). In a more significant passage in a long letter to Frank Belknap Long, written in February 1931, Lovecraft wrote as follows:

> I really agree that 'Yog-Sothoth' is a basically immature conception, & unfitted for really serious literature....But I consider the use of actual folk-myths as even more childish than the use of new artificial myths, since in employing the former one is forced to retain many blatant puerilities & contradictions of experience which could be subtilised or smoothed over if the supernaturalism were modelled to order for the given case. The only permanently artistic use of Yog-Sothothery, I think, is in symbolic or associative phantasy of the frankly poetic type; in which fixed dream-patterns of the natural organism are given an embodiment & crystallisation....But there is another phase of cosmic phantasy (which may or may not include frank Yog-Sothothery) whose foundations appear to me as better grounded than those of ordinary oneiroscopy; personal limitation regarding the *sense of outsideness.* I refer to the aesthetic crystallisation of that burning & inextinguishable feeling of mixed wonder & oppression which the sensitive imagination experiences upon scaling itself & its restrictions against the vast & provocative abyss of the unknown. (*Selected Letters* 3.293–94)

This passage is not easy to interpret. What Lovecraft appears to mean by the first phase of cosmic fantasy ("symbolic or associative phantasy of the frankly poetic type") is the Dunsanian Pegāna pantheon, where the gods are manifestly symbols for various phenomena in the human world. The second phase of cosmic fantasy seems to be what Lovecraft believes himself to be writing. This discussion occurred in the course of a debate, inspired by Joseph Wood Krutch's *The Modern Temper* (1929), regarding the validity of art in an age of science. Krutch had maintained that many previous artistic attitudes—specifically romanticism—were now outmoded because, after the work of Darwin, Freud, and others, the sources of romanticism were too clearly understood to be based upon false perspectives to be usable in serious art. Lovecraft himself was wrestling with the validity of conventional supernatural fiction in an age that had banished the ghost, vampire, werewolf, and other standard

entities to the dustbin of intellectual history. What could be done? His answer was Yog-Sothothery, or the expansion of the scope of supernaturalism to the unknown cosmos, where scientific disproof would be more difficult:

> The time has come when the normal revolt against time, space, & matter must assume a form not overtly incompatible with what is known of reality—when it must be gratified by images forming *supplements* rather than *contradictions* of the visible & mensurable universe. And what, if not a form of *non-supernatural cosmic art,* is to pacify this sense of revolt—as well as gratify the cognate sense of curiosity? (*Selected Letters* 2.295–96)

In other words, supernatural fiction had to become more like science fiction (a genre officially begun with the establishment of *Amazing Stories* in 1926), so that it could retain credence in a skeptical world. The entities in "The Colour out of Space" (a tale published in *Amazing Stories*) came from such remote depths of space that the laws of matter that we know in our corner of the universe apparently did not apply to them; so, too, apparently, with Cthulhu, who has the unique ability to recombine disparate parts of himself.

Lovecraft's letter to Long was written at the time he was writing one of his most significant stories, the short novel *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931). Here a radical revision of the Mythos occurs. An expedition to the Antarctic finds evidence of large barrel-shaped entities conforming to no known species in the earth's history. The narrator, William Dyer, and his colleague, Danforth, discover that these entities—apparently corresponding to what the *Necronomicon* calls the "Old Ones"—had come from the depths of space and established cities all over the earth millions of years ago, including an immense city in the Antarctic. The Old Ones had fashioned slaves out of protoplasm called shoggoths to do the manual labor of building these titanic cities, but over the course of time the shoggoths had developed semi-stable brains and waged intermittent wars of rebellion against their masters; it would seem that in one such rebellion they had triumphed. This would all be bad enough, but Dyer and Danforth learn—by interpreting the extensive historical bas-reliefs in the Old Ones' cities—that the Old Ones had created all earth life, including "a shambling primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land dwellers, whose vaguely simian and human foreshadowings were unmistakable" (*At the Mountains of Madness* 65). This delightful touch of misanthropy—this attribution of a degrading or contemptible origin of our species—only underscores the "indifferentism" that Lovecraft professed as central to his philosophy:

> I am *not a pessimist* but an *indifferentist*—that is, I don't make the mistake of thinking that the resultant of the natural forces surrounding and governing organic life will have any connexion with the wishes or tastes of any part of that organic life-process. Pessimists are just as illogical as optimists; insomuch as

both envisage the aims of mankind as unified, and as having a direct relationship (either of frustration or of fulfilment) to the inevitable flow of terrestrial motivation and events. That is—both schools retain in a vestigial way the primitive concept of a conscious teleology—of a cosmos which gives a damn one way or the other about the especial wants and ultimate welfare of mosquitoes, rats, lice, dogs, men, horses, pterodactyls, trees, fungi, dodos, or other forms of biological energy. (*Selected Letters* 3.39)

This dovetails nicely with the programmatic intention, expressed in the "Call of Cthulhu" letter, to avoid the "local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind" when writing cosmic horror fiction.

What *At the Mountains of Madness* makes clear, as Robert M. Price has pointed out, is that Lovecraft was undertaking a systematic course of "demythologizing" his "gods" so that they become nothing more than extraterrestrials. In fact, as Price notes, this demythologizing had been going on all along, but it only becomes explicit with this novel. What this also means is that the various human cults who had worshipped these "gods" and sought to foster their return to earthly dominance—and this would include Alhazred of the *Necronomicon* and other authors of occult lore—are grotesquely mistaken as to the true nature of these entities, who really care little about humanity or the earth at large, and whose occasionally catastrophic encounters with human beings are tantamount to our casual encounters with an ant-hill on the sidewalk. It is true that Lovecraft is not always quite as thorough in embodying this "indifferentism" in his stories—as we have seen, "The Dunwich Horror" paints a very different picture, and even in "The Whisperer in Darkness" the fungi from Yuggoth wage somewhat comical gun battles with the doggedly struggling Akeley—but Lovecraft's principle is now clear, and *At the Mountains of Madness* exemplifies it brilliantly.

From this tale to "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1931) would appear to be an immense leap from the cosmic to the mundane; but powerful elements of cosmicism are nonetheless present under the surface. Here the decaying Massachusetts port of Innsmouth is seen by a lonely protagonist, Robert Olmstead (never named in the story but named in Lovecraft's story notes), to be the gateway to an immense undersea world populated by the Deep Ones, hybrid entities that are the hideous result of miscegenation between alien fish-frogs and the human inhabitants of the town. Their characteristic fishy expression—branded by locals as "the Innsmouth look"—is a harbinger for a much more profound physiological and psychological change that will render them virtually immortal and able to dwell forever in their undersea cities. In a stunning climax, Olmstead discovers that, through heredity, he is himself related to the Deep Ones; in a pungent parody of the Twenty-third Psalm, he overcomes his horror of them and maintains that he and a cousin "shall swim out to that brooding reef in the sea and dive down through black abysses to Cyclopean and many-columned Y'ha-nthlei, and in that lair of the Deep Ones

we shall dwell amidst wonder and glory forever" (*Dunwich Horror* 367). Here again it is difficult to capture in a synopsis the all-pervasive atmosphere of claustrophobic gloom and decay that Lovecraft has fashioned through his richly evocative prose.

The rest of Lovecraft's fiction-writing career, marred by a lack of self-confidence and a sense of frustration with the course of his work, is somewhat uneven. "The Dreams in the Witch House" (1932) is an overwritten and predictable story in which the witch Keziah Mason, living in a peculiarly angled house in Arkham, seeks to transport her victims to "the mindless entity Azathoth, which rules all time and space from a curiously environed black throne at the centre of Chaos" (*At the Mountains of Madness* 282). Azathoth—first cited in a fragment, "Azathoth" (1922), and then in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and other tales—appears to be the chief "god" of Lovecraft's pantheon, but the above description suggests that he is nothing more than a symbol for the mysteries of an unknown universe. Nyarlathotep figures in this story as a variant of the "black man" of the traditional witch cult. "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1933) is another disappointing story in which Asenath Waite, a woman from Innsmouth, is able to exchange her mind with that of her husband, the weak-willed Edward Derby, even after Derby has killed her. Aside from the setting in Arkham, there is relatively little in this story to connect it with the Mythos, although at one point Derby suggests that the shoggoths are in league with the Deep Ones.

Much more must be said of "The Shadow out of Time" (1934–1935). Just as *At the Mountains of Madness* suggested the immense vortices of space, so does this novella etch the incalculable gulfs of time whereby all human history is merely a minuscule point amid the endless stretches of infinity. A professor of Miskatonic, Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, suffers amnesia for five full years. When he returns to his own self, he has recurring dreams that his body had been captured by the mind of a species called the Great Race. This species had "conquered the secret of time" (*The Shadow out of Time* 48) by its ability to thrust its minds forward and backward in time and space, possessing the bodies of any creatures it came upon and forcing the extruded minds to occupy the bodies of their displacers. At the time of Peaslee's "amnesia," the Great Race was occupying the bodies of a race of large cone-shaped beings in the Australia of 150,000,000 years ago. In the body of his mental captor, Peaslee was compelled to write the history of his own time for the Great Race's archives. This is the substance of Peaslee's dreams; but those dreams become hideous reality when an archaeological expedition to Australia uncovers traces of the Great Race's city, now largely destroyed and submerged under the sands. In a mad rush through the city one night, Peaslee comes upon what he most fears: the history he had written 150,000,000 years ago.

Lovecraft's final original tale, "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), is a lesser work but still compelling in its depiction of an "avatar of Nyarlathotep" (*Dunwich Horror* 114) that, while trapped in a darkened belfry tower in a

Providence church, manages to establish psychic contact—and ultimately psychic union—with a harried writer, Robert Blake. When it escapes from its confinement and is winging its way to Blake, it and Blake are simultaneously killed by a bolt of lightning. Chiefly an evocation of Lovecraft's affection for his native city, "The Haunter of the Dark" is a compact and satisfying tale, and by no means an unfitting end to his "artificial mythology."

THE DERLETH MYTHOS

At this point it is imperative to examine the early development of the Cthulhu Mythos by Lovecraft's friends and colleagues, during and just after his lifetime. The first "addition" to the Mythos was Frank Belknap Long's story "The Space-Eaters" (*Weird Tales*, July 1928). This rather ungainly tale—obviously autobiographical in its postulation of two protagonists, named Frank and Howard, battling mysterious entities that are eating their way through space—is related to the Mythos only in regard to its epigraph from "John Dee's *Necronomicon*" and in its purported suggestions of the cosmic. Lovecraft would later cite Dee as the English translator of the *Necronomicon* in one of his own stories as well as in his "History of the *Necronomicon*" (*Miscellaneous Writings* 52–53), a tongue-in-cheek account of the writing and dissemination of the dread volume. Long then wrote "The Hounds of Tinda-los" (*Weird Tales*, March 1929), which introduces those curious canines who move through the angles of space to harass hapless dreamers. Long's short novel *The Horror from the Hills* (*Weird Tales*, January–February and March 1931) may be his most significant contribution to the Cthulhu Mythos, in spite of the fact that he incorporated directly into the story a lengthy passage from a Lovecraft letter of 1927 recounting a bizarre dream of horrors in the ancient Roman province of Hispania (Spain). Here we are introduced to the baleful entity Chaugnar Faugn, the elephant god of Tsang. At one point a character engages in a fascinating discourse regarding the morality of Chaugnar:

> "Don't imagine for a moment that Chaugnar is a beneficent god. In the West you have evolved certain amiabilities of intercourse, to which you presumptuously attach cosmic significance, such as truth, kindliness, generosity, forbearance and honor, and you quaintly imagine that a god who is beyond good and evil and hence unnameable to your 'ethics' can not be omnipotent.
>
> "But how do you know that there *are* any beneficent laws in the universe, that the cosmos is friendly to man? Even in the mundane sphere of planetary life there is nothing to sustain such an hypothesis." (22)

This is reasonably close to Lovecraft's "indifferentism"—not surprisingly from one who largely shared Lovecraft's religious skepticism.

Long's addition to the growing bibliography of Mythos books was picked up by Robert E. Howard, who invented von Junzt's *Nameless Cults* as well as Justin Geoffrey, a mad poet who died in Hungary. These elements are cited in Howard's ''The Black Stone'' (*Weird Tales*, November 1931), but it is not entirely clear whether they were so cited as an homage to Lovecraft; indeed, they became incorporated into the Cthulhu Mythos only because Lovecraft, in turn, cited them in his own stories. A more interesting case along the same lines is that of Clark Ashton Smith. In ''The Tale of Satampra Zeiros'' (*Weird Tales*, November 1931), Smith invented the toad-god Tsathoggua. But because this story, written in late 1929, was initially rejected by *Weird Tales*, Lovecraft got the credit for the first citation of Tsathoggua in print in ''The Whisperer in Darkness.'' A few years later, noting how many other writers had cited his creation, Smith made the pregnant comment: ''It would seem that I am starting a mythology'' (letter to August Derleth, December 24, 1932). This suggests that Smith conceived himself to be working independently of Lovecraft in fashioning gods, books (*The Book of Eibon*), and other elements that would later be co-opted into the Mythos only by virtue of Lovecraft's citing them in his own stories. Lovecraft, indeed, made a game of citing others' ''contributions'' to his myth-cycle in ''The Whisperer in Darkness,'' when he rattles them off in bewildering fashion:

> I found myself faced by names and terms that I had heard elsewhere in the most hideous of connexions—Yuggoth, Great Cthulhu, Tsathoggua, Yog-Sothoth, R'lyeh, Nyarlathotep, Azathoth, Hastur, Yian, Leng, the Lake of Hali, Bethmoora, the Yellow Sign, L'mur-Kathulos, Bran, and the Magnum Innominandum—and was drawn back through nameless aeons and inconceivable dimensions to worlds of elder, outer entity at which the crazed author of the *Necronomicon* had only guessed in the vaguest way. (*Dunwich Horror* 223)

Here Lovecraft is not only paying his own homage to Smith's, Howard's, and other colleagues' ''additions,'' but tipping the hat to such predecessors as Dunsany (Bethmoora), Robert W. Chambers (the Yellow Sign), Bierce (Hastur, the Lake of Hali), and others. Lovecraft repeatedly received queries from fans and writers regarding the reality of his pantheon and of the occult books cited in his tales; several fans wished Lovecraft to write the *Necronomicon* himself.

It was, however, August Derleth who, from as early as 1931, became fascinated, even obsessed, with the Mythos and, especially after Lovecraft's death, took it in directions that Lovecraft would emphatically not have approved. The exact degree of Derleth's culpability in so doing is debatable, but we can see that he made three central contentions in regard to the Mythos, all of which are plainly false: (1) that the ''gods'' of the Mythos are elementals; (2) that the ''gods'' can be differentiated between a beneficent group of ''Elder Gods,'' who are on the side of humanity, and a group of evil and maleficent

"Old Ones," who seek to destroy humanity; and (3) that the Mythos as a whole is philosophically akin to Christianity.

Exactly how Derleth came to this interpretation is difficult to fathom; perhaps more difficult to fathom is how so many other writers and critics blandly accepted his disfigurement of the Mythos as a sound interpretation of Lovecraft's writing. Derleth became fascinated with elementals (entities that embody the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water) through his reading of Algernon Blackwood, whose powerful tale "The Wendigo" can be seen as a depiction of an air elemental. In "H. P. Lovecraft and His Work" (1963) he maintained that Cthulhu was a water elemental and that Nyarlathotep was an earth elemental. This is already problematical, especially since Cthulhu is said to have come from the stars and is *imprisoned* under water, making it unlikely that that is his natural element. But Derleth was faced with the awkwardness of dealing with such gods as Azathoth and Yog-Sothoth, who do not seem to be elementals in any sense, and with the fact that there are no gods in Lovecraft corresponding to air and fire elementals, forcing Derleth himself to invent Hastur (mentioned only in passing in the above passage in "The Whisperer in Darkness" and derived from random mentions in Ambrose Bierce and Robert W. Chambers) as an air elemental and Cthugha, "corresponding to the fire elemental Lovecraft failed to provide" (xiv). But if Lovecraft was working steadily on the Cthulhu Mythos for the last decade of his life, and if he envisioned his "gods" as elementals, how could he have committed the gaffe of "failing" to provide two of the four elementals?

Still worse is Derleth's fashioning of benign "Elder Gods" out of whole cloth. They exist nowhere in Lovecraft, and the motive for their invention by Derleth appears to be merely to shield himself from the bleak, amoral cosmic vision at the heart of Lovecraft's work. A devoutly religious man, Derleth could apparently not face the atheistic purport of Lovecraft's "artificial mythology," and so he deliberately distorted it so that it more closely corresponded with his own world-view. To bolster his interpretation of the Mythos, Derleth produced the following passage that he claimed to derive from a Lovecraft letter:

> All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again. ("H. P. Lovecraft and His Work" xiii)

In spite of its superficial resemblance to Lovecraft's "Now all my stories . . ." quotation, the import of this passage is antipodally different. In his later years, as skepticism regarding Derleth's interpretation of the Mythos began to develop, he was asked to produce the original of this passage; he reportedly became angry and refused. As David E. Schultz has pointed out, this is not

because Derleth literally fabricated the quotation; it was that he had obtained it from a letter by a brief correspondent of Lovecraft, Harold S. Farnese, who sent this passage to Derleth and claimed that it was a paraphrase of a Lovecraft letter; in fact, Farnese had made up the passage himself (see Schultz, "The Origin of Lovecraft's 'Black Magic' Quote"). In any case, this passage was the cornerstone of the Cthulhu Mythos for decades.

The central points in what has come to be called "the Derleth Mythos" were apparently embodied in the first draft of Derleth's "The Return of Hastur," written in 1931 and sent to Lovecraft. At this time Derleth proposed to Lovecraft the name "The Mythology of Hastur," but Lovecraft demurred, recognizing that Hastur (which Lovecraft may not even have envisioned as an entity, much less as a "god" and a "half-brother to Cthulhu," as Derleth imagined) was a relatively minor element in his mythology. After Lovecraft's death, Derleth coined the term "Cthulhu mythology" (first in the article "H. P. Lovecraft, Outsider"), later modified to Cthulhu Mythos. Derleth also cited a letter written by Lovecraft after *Weird Tales* had rejected "The Return of Hastur"—"I *like* to have others use my Azathoths & Nyarlathoteps—& in return I shall use Klarkash-Ton's Tsathoggua, your monk Clithanus, & Howard's Bran"—as representing Lovecraft's "permission" for Derleth to elaborate the Mythos; but he should have paid greater attention to the previous sentence: "The more these synthetic daemons are mutually written up by different authors, the better they become as general background-material" (letter to Derleth, August 3, 1931). For Lovecraft never wrote a story "about" the Cthulhu Mythos, all these mythological elements were indeed "background-material" for tales that had strong philosophical and aesthetic underpinnings. What Derleth and his followers did was to write tales in which the whole point—if indeed there is a point—is merely the expounding of the Cthulhu Mythos. As such, these tales are philosophically vacuous; they are merely stories.

"The Return of Hastur," as published (*Weird Tales*, March 1939), expounds the entirety of the Derleth Mythos:

> . . . its beings are of two natures, and two only: the Old or Ancient Ones, the Elder Gods, of *cosmic good,* and those of *cosmic evil,* bearing many names, and themselves of different groups, as if associated with the elements and yet transcending them: for there are the Water Beings, hidden in the depths; those of Air that are the primal lurkers beyond time; those of Earth, horrible animate survivals of distant eons. Incredible ages ago, the Old Ones banished from the cosmic places all the Evil Ones, imprisoning them in many places; but in time these Evil Ones spawned hellish minions who set about preparing for their return to greatness. (*The Mask of Cthulhu* 11)

There is considerable confusion of terminology here, for in later stories Derleth referred to the "Old Ones" as the "evil" gods. How exactly any

entities can represent "cosmic" good and evil, since these conceptions are so bound to human society, is not easy to answer. But the end result of this distortion is that most of the writers of the Cthulhu Mythos unwittingly ended up imitating Derleth rather than Lovecraft.

Derleth is culpable, not so much on the grounds of departing from Lovecraft's conception of the Mythos, as in attributing his own interpretation of the Mythos to Lovecraft, as he did repeatedly in introductions to collections of Lovecraft tales, and in his misconceived "posthumous collaborations" with Lovecraft (now collected in *The Watchers out of Time and Others*), in which he chose random plot germs from Lovecraft's "commonplace book" and fashioned whole stories (most of them Mythos tales) from them and deemed them works "by H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth." (Some unscrupulous publishers have reprinted these stories and left Derleth's name off of them altogether.) But the true heinousness of Derleth's misinterpretation is the imaginative impoverishment it entails: in nearly all the Mythos stories that he himself wrote, and in a substantial number of those written by others, a basic scenario is repeated over and over again: "minions" of the Old Ones seek to return the gods to power over earth, but are foiled at the last moment by valiant protectors of humanity. This stale idea quickly led to the devolution of the Mythos into a hackneyed formulism, and it is not surprising that such critics as Edmund Wilson and Damon Knight condemned both Lovecraft and his followers for poor writing and for imaginative sterility.

A few writers, including some of Lovecraft's closest colleagues, held out. Whether we are to regard Donald Wandrei's *Dead Titans, Waken!* (written in 1929–1931 and published many years later in a revised form as *The Web of Easter Island*) as a contribution to the Mythos is debatable: it mentions no actual god or book from Lovecraft's stories. But in its documentary style, in its learned protagonist—Carter E. Graham, "curator of the Ludbury Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology" (14)—in its suggestion that disparate events are interconnected pieces of a broader horrific tableau (reminiscent of "The Call of Cthulhu"), and especially in its hints of cosmic menace, it is very much in the spirit of Lovecraft.

Robert Bloch benefited from having corresponded with Lovecraft for the last four years of the latter's life, so that his early writings reveal a dynamism and originality far beyond what one might expect. He effected a coup when he wrote "The Shambler from the Stars" (*Weird Tales*, September 1935), in which an unnamed figure manifestly based upon Lovecraft (he is a writer, he lives in Providence, and so forth) appears—and in fact is killed at the end of the tale. It was this piquant tale that inspired Lovecraft to respond with "The Haunter of the Dark," in which Robert Blake is killed off. Only many years later did Bloch complete the trilogy by writing "The Shadow from the Steeple" (*Weird Tales*, September 1950). In another story, "The Dark Demon" (*Weird Tales*, November 1936), a character named Edgar Gordon is another transparent stand-in for Lovecraft.

It was with "The Faceless God" (*Weird Tales*, May 1936) that Bloch began his decades-long fascination with the icon of Nyarlathotep. Bloch retains the Egyptian background of Nyarlathotep in this story and in several others, notably "Fane of the Black Pharaoh" (*Weird Tales*, December 1937), in which a pharaoh named Nephren-Ka (a name randomly cited in Lovecraft's "The Outsider" [1921]) is said to be a worshipper of Nyarlathotep. But Bloch's most noteworthy use of Nyarlathotep occurred decades later, as we shall see.

Still more imaginative are the contributions of Fritz Leiber, a late correspondent of Lovecraft who clearly learned the master's lessons well. The first draft of Leiber's novella, "Adept's Gambit," read and appreciated by Lovecraft, made mention of some elements of the Mythos, but the published version excised them. Other stories in Leiber's first collection, *Night's Black Agents* (1950), reveal strong Lovecraftian influence—but just as strongly do they reveal a thorough assimilation of that influence in tales that remain Leiber's own. Consider "The Sunken Land" (1942), which speaks of a sunken continent, Simorgya, that has just risen out of the sea, exactly as in "The Call of Cthulhu." "Diary in the Snow" deftly uses the theme of interplanetary mind-exchange as expounded in "The Shadow out of Time," while "The Dreams of Albert Moreland" strikingly echoes one element in "The Dreams in the Witch House" (a physical object from the dreamworld is brought back by the dreamer into the waking world) while retaining powerful originality of conception in other regards.

But the dominant figure in the Cthulhu Mythos in the generation after Lovecraft's death was August Derleth—understandably so, as he was Lovecraft's publisher (he had formed the publishing firm of Arkham House solely in order to issue Lovecraft's works in hardcover, although he subsequently published much other supernatural work by leading writers of the period) and self-styled interpreter. Derleth wrote sixteen "posthumous collaborations" with Lovecraft, including the novel *The Lurker at the Threshold* (1945), two collections of Cthulhu Mythos tales, *The Mask of Cthulhu* (1958) and *The Trail of Cthulhu* (1962), and edited the landmark anthology *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos* (1969). His collected Mythos tales have now been issued, appropriately enough, under the title *In Lovecraft's Shadow* (1999).

What Derleth—and many others who followed in his, rather than in Lovecraft's, wake—failed to realize was the aesthetic futility of merely mimicking Lovecraft's dense and at times flamboyant prose style and rewriting the plots of Lovecraft's own stories. Where Derleth and others did strike out in new directions, they generally did so blunderingly. Several of Lovecraft's stories were apparently great favorites of Derleth's, and he repeatedly effected only the slightest variations upon them: "The Whippoorwills in the Hills" is a slight rewrite of "The Dunwich Horror"; "The Sandwin Compact" and "The Watcher from the Sky" echo "The Shadow over Innsmouth"; "The Gorge Beyond Salapunco" is heavily reliant on "The Call of Cthulhu." Derleth repeatedly made the mistake of setting his tales in New England (a region he did

not know well) out of a belief that Mythos tales must originate in this locale. His one meritorious Mythos story, "The Dweller in Darkness" (*Weird Tales*, November 1944), is wisely set in Derleth's native Wisconsin, and the topographical atmosphere is impressively convincing. Although marred by Derleth's misinterpretation of the Mythos—Elder Gods, elementals, and the like—the tale, in spite of its heavy debt to "The Whisperer in Darkness," effectively makes use of the Nyarlathotep icon.

One interesting case is C. Hall Thompson, who was not a member of the "Lovecraft circle" but who wrote an impressive novella, "Spawn of the Green Abyss" (*Weird Tales*, November 1946). Set in the town of Kalesmouth, in New Jersey, the story is a clever variant of "The Shadow over Innsmouth" in its portrayal of a man, Lazarus Heath, who stumbles upon an undersea city whose architecture was "all wrong" (a deft borrowing from "The Call of Cthulhu"), mates with the empress of the city, bears a child, and returns with it to his home. The child, Cassandra, herself appears to mate with the god Yoth Kala. All this sounds like lurid pulp trash, but the prose is skillful and the characterization surprisingly sensitive—a weak point with many Cthulhu Mythos tales, by Lovecraft and others. Derleth was reportedly incensed by this "outsider" making use of the Mythos, and he demanded that Thompson write no more such stories.

THE MODERN MYTHOS

By the 1960s, especially with the republication of Lovecraft's stories by Arkham House after a period when they were out of print, a new generation of Lovecraftians seemed ready to take the Mythos into new directions. One surprising contribution was from James Wade, a musical composer who wrote the novella "The Deep Ones" (*Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*). Although using a modified version of the "Derleth Mythos," Wade produced a richly textured work set in hippie-filled California that relies somewhat on "The Shadow over Innsmouth" and "The Call of Cthulhu" but retains originality. Also surprising was Colin Wilson, the British novelist and critic who wrote harshly of Lovecraft in *The Strength to Dream* (1961), a book that so angered Derleth that he dared Wilson to write his own Cthulhu Mythos story. Wilson complied with at least two works. The novella "The Return of the Lloigor" (*Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*) is impressive but ultimately disappointing, as it depicts entities called the Lloigor (invented by Derleth) who have come from the stars and descended into the earth, but who from time to time erupt with destructive results. Wilson has returned to Lovecraftian roots by creating an explicitly *philosophical* horror: the Lloigor are the universe's greatest pessimists:

> . . . the Lloigor, although infinitely more powerful than men, were also aware that optimism would be absurd in this universe. Their minds were a unity, not

compartmentalised, like ours. There was no distinction in them between conscious, subconscious and superconscious mind. So they saw things clearly all the time, without the possibility of averting the mind from the truth, or forgetting. . . . The Lloigor *lived* their pessimism. (227–28)

What makes this conception interesting is that it is exactly the kind of conception that would terrify Wilson, whose own philosophy of life and society is based upon an optimistic belief in humanity's infinite intellectual and psychological progress. Just as Lovecraft's tales depict what to him was most cataclysmically frightening—a perception that the materialism of modern science may be a misconstrual of the true nature of the universe—so Wilson has here drawn upon *his* fears (not Lovecraft's) as the basis of a tale, using Cthulhu Mythos elements only as a framework and springboard. The development of the idea in "The Return of the Lloigor" is sketchy, however.

Very different is Wilson's novel *The Mind Parasites* (1967). Set in the near future—the year 2007—it tells the tale of a band of archeologists who discover the remains of an ancient city two miles underground in Turkey, far antedating any known human civilization; journalists name it Kadath. This discovery is in fact a red herring to distract humanity from the invasion of nebulous entities named mind parasites, who are attacking the intelligent and creative members of the species. The protagonist, Gilbert Austin, presents a fascinating case that the mind parasites have been at work since at least the early nineteenth century—for it was exactly at that time when a deep strain of pessimism, misanthropy, and neurosis appears to have entered into the aesthetic and cultural products of Western civilization. This extraordinarily clever premise allows Wilson to write a thrilling and fast-paced novel, even though nearly all the "action" occurs within the characters' minds. Here again Wilson has produced a genuinely original contribution to the Cthulhu Mythos: not content merely to rewrite one of Lovecraft's own stories, and disdaining the attempt to imitate Lovecraft's style, he has utilized Lovecraftian elements as the basis for a novel whose conception and execution derive strictly from his own aesthetic and philosophical concerns. Wilson's two sequels to this novel—*The Philosopher's Stone* (1971) and *The Space Vampires* (1976)—owe much less to Lovecraft and are rather less compelling.

Another British writer, Ramsey Campbell, would do somewhat similar things with the Mythos, even though in a less explicitly philosophical way. Fascinated with Lovecraft from childhood, he produced a collection of Mythos stories, *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants* (1964), published by Arkham House when he was eighteen. Derleth had read drafts of several of these tales years earlier, and made one important suggestion to Campbell: do not set the stories in New England (where Campbell had never been), but in your native England. Campbell did exactly that, and therefore utilized the Lovecraftian icon of topography to depict a haunted England centered upon several fictitious cities—Brichester, Temphill, Goatswood—in

the Severn Valley. The tales in *The Inhabitant of the Lake* are hardly worth discussing, even though they are written with a verve and enthusiasm that sets them apart from many other such imitations. Very shortly after he completed the volume, however, Campbell began developing his own distinctive voice, and in *Demons by Daylight* (1973) he almost single-handedly ushered in a new mode of weird fiction—crisply written in contemporary prose, sexually explicit, with the supernatural phenomena delineated with subtlety and ambiguity, and serving as metaphors for modern-day social and political concerns. He did not entirely abandon the Lovecraftian idiom, however, and in "Cold Print" (*Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*) and "The Franklyn Paragraphs" (*Demons by Daylight*) he effected two of the most ingenious riffs on the "forbidden book" icon. "Cold Print" transfers the idea into the realm of violent pornography, as a seedy individual comes to Brichester—now manifestly an echo of Campbell's native Liverpool—to find the sadistic pornography he seeks, but finds something much more ominous when he stumbles upon a copy of the *Revelations of Glaaki*. "The Franklyn Paragraphs" is a masterful adaptation of Lovecraft's "documentary style," in which letters, newspaper articles, telegrams, and the like are cited to augment the tale's verisimilitude. The writer Errol Undercliffe has come upon a rare volume, Roland Franklyn's *We Pass from View*, but is horrified to discover that Franklyn's soul has been trapped in the book, so that the words on the page rewrite themselves as Franklyn cries out for help. Campbell went on to write a few other Lovecraftian tales, and also edited the anthology *New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos* (1980).

Far less impressive is the work of Brian Lumley, who has accepted the "Derleth Mythos" wholesale and, in his prolific writings, taken it to extremes of absurdity and bathos that even Derleth would have been unable to imagine. An early novel, *Beneath the Moors* (1974), introduces the novelty of tying the Lovecraftian dreamworld (from *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and other stories) into the Cthulhu Mythos. Here a professor discovers the ancient city of Lh-yib, the sister city of Ib (from Lovecraft's "The Doom That Came to Sarnath"), which worshipped the lizard-god Bokrug. Lumley, however, commits the gaffe of bringing Bokrug on stage and having it give a sober lecture to the professor as to the origin of his race.

With *The Burrowers Beneath* (1974), Lumley begins a six-book cycle that featured members of what he calls the Wilmarth Foundation, who are devoted to the gallant mission of protecting humanity from the evil machinations of the Old Ones. These creatures are collectively referred to as the CCD (Cthulhu Cycle Deities), and Lumley uncritically makes much use of star-shaped soapstone objects (cited by Lovecraft in *At the Mountains of Madness* as the fossilized footprints of the Old Ones in Antarctica) as talismans to protect its bearer from attack by the Old Ones. This dubious invention of Derleth's is taken to grotesque extremes by Lumley. There is scarcely any

reason to examine in detail the plots of the remaining novels—*The Transition of Titus Crow* (1975), *The Clock of Dreams* (1978), *Spawn of the Winds* (1978), *In the Moons of Borea* (1979), and *Elysia: The Coming of Cthulhu* (1989)—save to note that Lumley has unsuccessfully attempted to render the essentially intellectual conceptions of Lovecraft's Mythos into action-adventure tales in which human beings, Elder Gods, Old Ones (including such entities as Ithaqua and Nyarlathotep), and lesser creatures all do battle with one another. *The Clock of Dreams* makes such heavy use of the dreamworld of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* as to be a virtual rewrite of it. Mercifully, Lumley has now abandoned the Cthulhu Mythos to write equally preposterous science fiction vampire novels.

In recent years much has been made of Fred Chappell's novel *Dagon* (1968). Written by a distinguished mainstream novelist and poet who had little or no connection with the Lovecraft circle or the Lovecraft fan movement, this extraordinarily grim chronicle of a scholar's gradual degradation through sexual obsession in rural North Carolina certainly draws upon Mythos elements: the scholarly protagonist (he is writing a treatise on *Remnant Pagan Forces in American Puritanism*), the occasional citation of the god Dagon (seen here as a symbol for unbridled sex), and the evocation of horrors latent in a backwoods locale. Whether this novel constitutes a true "contribution" to the Cthulhu Mythos, or should be deemed merely "influenced" by the Mythos will have to be determined by the individual reader.

With the death of August Derleth in 1971, interesting things began to happen. First, a new generation of scholars began examining Lovecraft's life and work with greater care and scholarly attention; among them, Richard L. Tierney ("The Derleth Mythos") and Dirk W. Mosig ("H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker") systematically demolished the Derlethian conception of the Mythos and explicated Lovecraft's own bleak cosmic vision. In the course of time, this scholarly work achieved its result in more cogent and sophisticated utilizations of the Mythos and its various icons. An early example was Karl Edward Wagner's masterful tale "Sticks" (*Whispers*, March 1974), an homage to the artist Lee Brown Coye, who illustrated several Lovecraft editions from Arkham House in the 1960s. Making use of the stick-lattice figures that Coye made his signature, "Sticks" speaks of these figures as glyphs designed to summon the Great Old Ones. Less successful is Stephen King's "Jerusalem's Lot" (in King's *Night Shift*, 1978), which, although deft in its use of the documentary style and of the occult tome *De Vermis Mysteriis*, fundamentally boils down to a story about a giant worm. The influence of "The Haunter of the Dark" is evident throughout the tale.

One of the most curious developments in recent Mythos fiction is that Lovecraft himself has become a leading icon. The traditional view of Lovecraft—as an "eccentric recluse" closeting himself away in his Providence garret, only venturing out at night, beset by phobias and neuroses, and writing down his

bizarre conceptions for an unappreciative public—is itself largely a myth, but that has not stopped it from becoming a powerful incentive to the creation of both historical and supernatural tales. We have seen that such of Lovecraft's colleagues as Frank Belknap Long and Robert Bloch already made use of Lovecraft-figures in tales written in Lovecraft's lifetime. Derleth and others frequently cited Lovecraft by name in their Mythos tales, as a writer who *thought* he was writing fiction about the Old Ones but was in fact unwittingly revealing the truth about them.

The use of Lovecraft as an icon divides between those who depict him as an historical figure and those who incorporate him in manifestly fictional, and usually supernatural, escapades. In the first camp the most notable proponent is Peter Cannon, a leading Lovecraft scholar who in such deft works as *Pulptime* (1984)—about Lovecraft, Frank Belknap Long, and other members of the "Lovecraft circle" teaming up with an aged Sherlock Holmes—and, even more impressively, *The Lovecraft Chronicles* (2004)—a kind of alternate-world fantasy in which Lovecraft becomes a successful writer, moves for a time to England, then returns in his old age to Providence—has drawn upon his exhaustive knowledge of the facts of Lovecraft's life and work to paint a convincing picture of the writer and his milieu. Less successful is Richard A. Lupoff's *Lovecraft's Book* (1985), which implausibly has Lovecraft becoming unwittingly involved with American Nazis in the early 1930s. As for the second camp, we have an unfortunate example in Gahan Wilson's "H. P. L." (in *Lovecraft's Legacy*, edited by Robert E. Weinberg and Martin H. Greenberg [1990]), in which a dying Lovecraft appeals to his own gods and is saved from death by cancer, and later is carried off to heaven in the arms or tentacles of one of the deities he has invoked. But this mediocre tale is a masterwork as compared to *Shadows Bend*, by David Barbour and Richard Raleigh (2000), a ludicrous narrative of Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard in New Mexico.

In the 1970s and 1980s some veteran writers made sterling contributions. Fritz Leiber wrote the substantial novella "The Terror from the Depths" to Edward Paul Berglund's *The Disciples of Cthulhu* (1976). A loose sequel to "The Whisperer in Darkness," it depicts the elderly Albert N. Wilmarth—who bears striking similarities to Lovecraft himself—seeking to save his friend George Reuter Fischer (who shares several traits of Leiber's personality) from becoming enmeshed in the cosmic forces that dwell underneath his southern California home. Leiber, while drawing upon several of Lovecraft's tales, provides a degree of psychological analysis that Lovecraft never included in his own work. Robert Bloch's novel *Strange Eons* (1978) is a grand synthesis of Lovecraftian themes and conceptions, centering around the figure of the Reverend Nye (in reality Nyarlathotep) to engender the destruction of the world and perhaps the universe. Fred Chappell, in "The Adder" (in *More Shapes Than One*, 1991), ingeniously develops the forbidden book icon by depicting the *Necronomicon* as capable of rewriting the texts of other works by merely coming into physical contact with them.

A dynamic new voice in weird fiction is Thomas Ligotti, who burst on the scene with the scintillating collection *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (1986). Ligotti has occasionally adopted the Lovecraftian idiom in tales that expound his own nightmarish vision while adhering to central Lovecraftian conceptions. "The Last Feast of Harlequin" (*Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, April 1990) is dedicated to Lovecraft and is clearly indebted to "The Festival" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth." "Vastarien" is a searching exploration of the forbidden book theme, while "Nethescurial" is an extraordinary subtle— perhaps even unconscious—adaptation of "The Call of Cthulhu." Like Lovecraft's tale, it is divided into three sections, and it tells of the existence of a mysterious island named Nethescurial as the haven of "an absolute evil whose reality is mitigated only by our blindness to it" (*Grimscribe* 75).

T.E.D. Klein shares, with Ligotti and Campbell, preeminence in artistic weird fiction, and his one Mythos contribution, "Black Man with a Horn" (*New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*), shares with his other work a deftness of prose style, a subtlety in the build-up of a horrific climax, and a deep understanding of the psychological effects of horror. Here a distant member of the "Lovecraft circle" (clearly modeled upon Frank Belknap Long, with whom Klein was well acquainted) stumbles upon evidence that Lovecraftian horrors are true. Behind this simple scenario is a sense of the overwhelming effects of the realization that horror lurks behind the placid surface of everyday life. Veteran horror wrier F. Paul Wilson has skillfully transferred the icon of haunted New England to the pine barrens region of New Jersey in "The Barrens" (*Lovecraft's Legacy*).

Other writers having little connection with the core Lovecraft circle or its later disciples have also produced meritorious work. Almost unclassifiable is the novel *Résumé with Monsters* by William Browning Spencer (1995), a long and complex novel whose plot is difficult to summarize. Its protagonist, Philip Kenan, thinks he is cursed by the Old Ones. Initially we are led to believe that this is a purely psychological dilemma, the result of indoctrination by his father, a passionate Lovecraft reader; but gradually we learn that Philip's concerns are all too real. Lively, pungently written in a modern idiom, and full of piquant plot twists, the novel is one of the most imaginative treatments of the Cthulhu Mythos ever written. This could certainly not be said for Joseph Pulver's *Nightmare's Disciple* (1999), which seeks to fuse the serial-killer novel with the Mythos, with grotesque and at times bathetic results. Appallingly prolix, the novel seeks to cite nearly every single Mythos name or entity ever devised, and wearies the reader with surfeit. Wilum Pugmire, gifted with a richly evocative prose style, has produced noteworthy short specimens in such works as *Dreams of Lovecraftian Horror* (1999) and *The Fungal Stain* (2006). And mention must be made of Ann K. Schwader's *The Worms Remember* (2001), which deftly renders the Cthulhu Mythos into verse, following Lovecraft's own example in his sonnet cycle *Fungi from Yuggoth* (1929–1930).

The Cthulhu Mythos, with its potential for flamboyance and extravagance, has always been potentially the object of parody and even derision. As early as 1940, the science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke produced the harmlessly amusing ''At the Mountains of Murkiness,'' poking fun at Lovecraft's dense prose style—this in spite of the fact that such of his novels as *Childhood's End* (1953) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) could be said to utilize the Lovecraftian idea (expressed in ''The Shadow out of Time'') that human development has been fostered by intervention by a more advanced alien race. Specific parodies of the Mythos include such items as Peter Cannon's gorgeous *Scream for Jeeves* (1994), in which P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster and his butler Jeeves become involved in Lovecraftian adventures, and Mark McLaughlin's *Shoggoth Cacciatore and Other Eldritch Entrees* (2000), whose title speaks for itself. Some of the actual ''scholarship'' on the Mythos—whether it be such popular tracts as Lin Carter's *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos* (1972) or the more rigorous *The Necronomicon Files* by Daniel Harms and John Wisdom Gonce III (1998) or Harms's *Encyclopedia Cthulhuiana* (1994)—have their elements of parody, but also contain much useful information.

A Chronology of the Cthulhu Mythos

1926   H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Call of Cthulhu''

1928   H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Dunwich Horror''; Frank Belknap Long, ''The Space-Eaters''

1930   H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Whisperer in Darkness''

1931   H. P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, ''The Shadow over Innsmouth''

1935   H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Shadow out of Time''

1945   August Derleth, *The Lurker at the Threshold*

1948   Donald Wandrei, *The Web of Easter Island*

1950   Fritz Leiber, *Night's Black Agents*

1958   August Derleth, *The Mask of Cthulhu*

1962   August Derleth, *The Trail of Cthulhu*

1964   Ramsey Campbell, *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants*

1967   Colin Wilson, *The Mind Parasites*

1969   August Derleth (ed.), *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*

1978   Robert Bloch, *Strange Eons*

1980   Ramsey Campbell (ed.), *New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*

1995   William Browning Spencer, *Résumé with Monsters*

THE MYTHOS IN THE MEDIA

In the past several decades the central icons of the Cthulhu Mythos have seeped into the media, with interesting if mixed results. Adaptations of Lovecraft's stories into film have been almost uniformly unsuccessful; representative is *The Dunwich Horror* (1970), in which the Old Ones are depicted as hippies dancing in a drug-delirium. More successful is *The Curse* (1987), in which the haunted New England of "The Colour out of Space" is transported effectively to the rural South. Of Stuart Gordon's self-parodic "Reanimator" films it is difficult to speak without a smile. *Re-Animator* (1985) and *Bride of Re-Animator* (1991) are certainly delightful send-ups of Mythos conventions as well as the conventions of schlock horror films; Gordon's more serious *Dagon* (2001)—in reality an adaptation of "The Shadow over Innsmouth"—has moments of atmospheric effectiveness. In reality, films that do not purport to adapt a specific Lovecraft story have been far more successful than the actual Lovecraft adaptations. Consider Peter Weir's masterful *The Last Wave* (1977), a film that brilliantly utilizes such Mythos icons as ancient gods dwelling under the earth, their influence on human beings through dreams, and the like. Set in Australia, the film comprises a magnificent, if loose, adaptation of "The Shadow out of Time," although Weir has never explicitly identified Lovecraft as a source. John Carpenter has frequently acknowledged his admiration for Lovecraft, and his *The Thing* (1982) borrows heavily from *At the Mountains of Madness*. His more recent *In the Mouth of Madness* (1994) features a character who combines the traits of Stephen King and Lovecraft, with predictable shambling underground horrors making an appearance. More distinctive is the HBO television film *Cast a Deadly Spell* (1991), which, during production, was called *Lovecraft*. Set in an alternate-world Los Angeles, it ingeniously combines the Mythos with hard-boiled detection in its portrayal of a tough private eye, H. Phil Lovecraft, on the hunt for the Old Ones. While not directly based on a specific Lovecraft story, it captures the essence of the Cthulhu Mythos surprisingly well.

In 1982 Chaosium introduced the "Call of Cthulhu" role-playing game, and has subsequently issued dozens of guidebooks and supplements to it. Set in the 1920s, the game involves, among other piquant details, the need for characters to preserve "sanity points" in order to shield themselves from the cosmic horrors surrounding them. Chaosium has also issued a popular Mythos card game.

The Cthulhu Mythos remains a popular venue in literature and the media. Since the 1980s Robert M. Price has been a kind of August Derleth redivivus in publishing a dozen or more anthologies of Cthulhu Mythos tales by writers old and new, and other editors such as James Turner (*Cthulhu 2000* [1995]; *Eternal Lovecraft* [1998]), Stephen Jones (*Shadows over Innsmouth* [1994]; *Weird Shadows over Innsmouth* [2005]), and John Pelan and Benjamin Adams (*The Children of Cthulhu* [2002]) continue to issue anthologies of Mythos tales, good, fair, and middling.

While the Cthulhu Mythos is largely a literary phenomenon, there is some evidence that it is seeping out into wider realms of media and society. Every so often one hears of teenagers or other individuals committing criminal acts under the inspiration of the *Necronomicon*. (Matters have not been helped by the fact that at least four books have been issued that purport to be the *Necronomicon*; most of these are obvious parodies, but one takes itself quite seriously as an occult sourcebook.) Jason Colavito has recently made a bold argument for an even broader incursion of the Mythos into pop culture. He presents convincing evidence that such proponents of the theory of extra-terrestrial visitation as Erich von Däniken and Graham Hancock were directly or indirectly inspired by Lovecraft's tales, interpreting their fictional premises of alien manipulation of human minds as actually occurring. If this is so, then the Cthulhu Mythos has entered the popular consciousness far more profoundly and disturbingly than its self-deprecating creator could ever have imagined.

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The Curse

by Alan Warren

INTRODUCTION

Curses, whether laid down by tribal law or cast by vengeful sorcerers, are one of supernatural fiction's most enduring subgenres. To be sure, a curse, particularly one that approaches fulfillment only after a considerable span of years, has about it the inexorable force an approaching cataclysm from which escape is impossible.

In its most basic form, a curse is simply an invocation or magic spell placed upon people with the obvious intention of harming them, and are reputed to be the most dreaded form of magic. The curse itself is simply the expression of desire to cause harm to a particular person, and purportedly anyone can lay such a curse; but tribal belief insists that the greater the authority of the person who lays the curse, the greater the danger, hence the supremacy of such entities as priests, priestesses, royalty, or persons who have no other recourse to justice, such as the poor or destitute and—particularly—the dying (deathbed curses are said to be the most potent, as all the curser's vital energy goes into the curse).

Curses were a feature of ancient cultures, perhaps as a way to explain and even justify manifest injustices; when suffered by blameless persons it seemed easier to attribute it to some ancestral malediction—a variant of the concept of original sin. Lack of tangible results does not seem to have reduced belief in such superstition, as witness the fact that the evil eye still has its adherents. Most intriguingly, according to tradition the most propitious time for laying on or breaking curses is during the waning of the moon. But to particularize curses is, in a sense, to rob them of their power, for the tendency to avenge oneself for a presumed wrong is universal, and the casting of the curse—in effect revenge without the physicality or criminality of the act—is a universal fantasy like unlimited wealth or invisibility.

As expected, curses have a literary pedigree; The Old Testament is a virtual litany of curses, and Plato mentions them in the *Republic*: "If anyone wishes to injure an enemy; for a small fee they [i.e., sorcerers] will bring harm on good or bad alike, binding the gods to serve their purposes by spells and curses." Various masterworks of literature contain curses of one variety or another. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798) is perhaps the most distinguished of these. An aged sailor detains a wedding guest to tell his story of how he left home and sailed southward to the equator, only to encounter a storm. When an albatross flew overhead the crew welcomed it as a good omen and made a pet of it. But one day the Mariner killed the albatross with his crossbow, and the sailors knew that bad luck would surely follow. The ship drifted toward the equator, where it lay becalmed for days. The sailors, blaming the Mariner, hung the dead albatross around his neck, a symbol of his crime. A skeleton ship approached; on the deck Death and Life-in-Death were casting dice, and when Death won the two hundred crew members dropped dead. Life-in-Death had won the Mariner; he was cursed with immortality. But one night, observing the beauty of water snakes, the Mariner blessed them in his heart, and the spell was broken. The albatross fell from his neck, though he remained cursed, compelled to continue on and on, recounting his story.

Improbable as it now seems, the poem was poorly received upon its initial publication: Coleridge's friend, the poet Southey, in the *Critical Review* for October 1798 opined: "Genius has here been employed in producing a poem

of little merit." Even Wordsworth was dismissive, commenting that "the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it" (cited in Lefebure, 326). These opinions have of course been superseded by time: today it is recognized as Coleridge's finest poem. The inspiration arose from a dream: a friend of the poet's recounted a dream he had experienced of a skeleton craft worked by a ghostly crew. Wordsworth supplied a few lines and suggested an albatross as the victim of the Mariner's crime. Coleridge had never been to sea, but had read accounts of voyages around Cape Horn and elsewhere; this accounts for the sharpness of the prosaic details, which are prominent in the poem's detail: the warping of the ship's deck in the calm, the thin, sere sails. It is only when the Mariner shoots the albatross that we enter the domain of the supernatural, and from there the Mariner suffers the agonies of the damned, including an intolerable thirst, and the experience of death-in-life.

Critical exegesis has been the fate of the poem since its initial publication; Coleridge himself complained that it was not properly understood. It would be presumptuous to "explain" such a masterwork, but the most plausible interpretation to modern ears is that Coleridge, like many of the Romantics, was attracted to neoplatonism, which evinced a reverence for all living things; thus, he believed, with other Romantics, that humans were united with all living things.

This interpretation, while eminently satisfactory on many levels, hardly accounts for the stature of the poem, or the richness of its metaphoric properties. Appropriately, the Mariner became a symbol of the eternally cursed and tragic figure, and the albatross the metaphorical weight such a figure must carry.

In Charles Robert Maturin's masterpiece and perhaps the high-water mark of the Gothic novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the curse of eternal damnation hangs over Melmoth. A scholar who has made a contract with the Devil for his soul in exchange for longevity and power, Melmoth becomes a world-weary wanderer, seeking a victim who will take the burden from him. George Saintsbury in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* (1907–1921) admitted the book's flaws: "A worse constructed book hardly exists: for it is a perfect tangle of stories within stories." Lovecraft, a more sympathetic critic, noted that "the framework of the story is very clumsy; involving tedious length, digressive episodes, narratives within narratives, and labored dovetailing and coincidence"; nevertheless, he allowed that "there is felt a pulse of power undiscoverable in any previous work of this kind" and felt that the work represented "an enormous stride in the evolution of the horror-tale" (31). And William F. Axton averred that "[w]hile *Melmoth* embraces all the conventional machinery of Gothic romance, it is lifted above the artistic level of the blood-and-thunder school by its compelling statement of the grand theme of perverted faith that so haunted Maturin's imagination in the last

years of his life'' (xiv). Despite its manifest faults, *Melmoth the Wanderer* is at once the apotheosis and the culmination of the Gothic novel and Melmoth himself remains the virtual definition of the Gothic hero-villain.

Likewise, The Wandering Jew is a mythic figure that serves as the embodiment of a curse. The Jew, also known as Ahasverus or Buttadaeus, was cursed with immortality by Jesus Christ: as Christ was carrying his cross from Pilate's hall to his place of crucifixion, Ahasverus, a porter in Pilate's Service, struck and mocked Christ for walking slowly. Christ, in return, told him to wait for his return—in short, the Second Coming. (In other versions Ahasverus is an officer of the Sanhedrim; in others, he is merely a shoemaker with a short temper.) It would require a sensational novel to accord the Wandering Jew literary myth-status.

In Eugène Sue's novel *The Wandering Jew* (*Le Jaif errant*, 1844–1845) the Jew is sentenced to eternal damnation and causes an outbreak of cholera to erupt wherever he walks. This endlessly digressive novel, though popular enough in its day, has few adherents now; nonetheless, the Wandering Jew subtheme has proved an especially durable one, culminating in variations such as Bernard Capes's ''The Accursed Cordonnier'' (1902), in which the Jew renews his youth every century, and is a form of the Antichrist. In Christopher Blayre's ''The Man Who Killed the Jew'' (1932), he manages to find eternal rest at the hands of a quack doctor. The notorious pro-Nazi author George Sylvester Viereck and Paul Eldridge collaborated on two novels, the first being *My First Two Thousand Years: The Autobiography of the Wandering Jew* (1928) with, as E. F. Bleiler notes, ''a libidinized version of the fantasy theme of lion-hunting via immortality.'' Their second volume, *Salome, the Wandering Jewess* (1930), is simply a female version of the Wandering Jew.

Humorous variations on the Wandering Jew crop up occasionally; Robert Bloch's ''The Traveling Salesman'' (*Playboy*, February 1957) is probably the most amusing of these: a lament for the traveling salesman of all the ribald jokes who laments the weight of his briefcase, which contains bricks, since the traveling salesman of all those jokes never sells anything! Mary Elizabeth Counselman's ''A Handful of Silver'' (1967), in which the Wandering Jew turns up at Joe's Bar, unable to pass on his thirty silver coins, signaling that the Wandering Jew cannot rest—even the grave has rejected him. The story is an amusing concoction, even if, as E. F. Bleiler points out, Counselman has confused the legend of the Wandering Jew with that of Judas. But it was left to John Blackburn, who rather specialized in updating classical legends and half-truths to give us seemingly the last word on the Wandering Jew—*Devil Daddy* (1972) shares with his other works a fascination with the retelling of ancient myth.

Finally, though but dimly remembered today, Frederick Marryat's novel *The Phantom Ship* (Henry Colburn, 1839) was influential in its day. The story of Philip Vanderdecker, who discovers that his father is the Flying Dutchman, is endlessly digressive and all but unreadable. As with the Wandering Jew, the concept of the ship fated to sail forever is the stuff of

myth; but cut loose from its textual moorings, it is also remote and unpersuasive.

THE AFRICAN CURSE

Of all curses, the African variety, usually centering around a blasphemy committed on native soil, is by necessity the most archetypal as well as the most primeval and compelling, possessing as it does the counterpoint between European and African culture. The sociological implications are obvious, and the racial divide gapes wide. Symbolically, it might be argued that the European or American, in attempting to flee from the witch doctor's revenge, is powerless to escape, since all life originated in Africa; hence, despite his attempt to flee, he is drawn back to maternal soil. The lesson learned seems to be that the victim of the curse, aided by science, psychotherapy, and the various paraphernalia of the great indoors, is ultimately hoist by an older and more pervasive religion—superstition routing rationalism, or, put more crudely, ignorance trumping science—a rather doubtful argument but one that has acquired the patina of ritual. (The jungle, however, is not *always* triumphant: the fillip at the end of *Curse of the Voodoo*, a low-budget film with some fresh ideas, reverses the pattern: the cursed Great White Hunter, prostrate and on the verge of physical and mental collapse, refuses to accept his fate stoically and makes the long trek back to Africa where he locates the tribal chieftain who inflicted the curse and runs him down with his jeep, lifting the curse. Sweet revenge, indeed!)

Stories featuring African curses are legion; H. G. Wells's "Pollock and the Porroh Man" (*New Budget*, May 23, 1895) is perhaps the best known. Pollock makes the mistake of shooting a Porroh man, the local witch doctor, but fails to kill him. Feeling the effects of his curse—rheumatic pains, bad dreams, and the usual accompaniment of voodoo drums—Pollock bribes a local Mehdi rough to seek out and kill his enemy. When the Mehdi returns he throws the severed head of the Porroh man down before Pollock—a nightmarish image worthy of Lovecraft. But Pollock is haunted by the crime: he sees the head everywhere he goes despite his frenzied efforts to be rid of it, but no one else does. Is it real, or simply guilt-induced hallucination? Wells, ever the conscientious artisan, preserves a skillful measure of ambiguity throughout. Ultimately, Pollock seeks solace in suicide, yet Wells never tips his hand: even as he raises the razor to his throat Pollock himself is sure it is a hallucination. As with Lord Dunsany's *The Curse of the Wise Woman* (1933), we are never sure whether we are in the presence of the supernatural or not.

No such ambiguity pervades Edward Lucas White's "Lukundoo" (written 1907), perhaps the most shuddersome of all African curse stories. In any event, the story is not dependent on ambiguity or evasiveness. White, who claimed the ideas behind his stories came to him in dreams, adopts the accepted convivial

style—a relaxed, clubbish atmosphere, a raconteur of the "and I alone escaped to tell thee" variety, amid the "hasty and furtive lighting of fresh cigars." In this cozy atmosphere Singleton recounts the story of Stone, a hunter deep in the tropical jungle who has disgraced a sorcerer, bringing down the expected curse on his head. When found, Stone is said to be suffering from carbuncles, but he will not show these to anyone. He continues to slice these off, "clear down to flesh level", and is heard speaking in two distinct voices, one voice answering the other. When Singleton and the others hear these, "both jabbering at once like the voices of two people quarreling and trying to talk each other down," they enter Stone's tent and find a horrifying sight: a human head has broken through the flesh. Most hideously, the little head "mewled and screeched at us." One man slices it off with a razor, but next day, the swelling has again broken and another head appears, "miauling and spluttering." Stoic to the end, Stone begs to be allowed to die in peace, and the story ends. (Even here, Eurocentrism rears its head, as the head has "hideously Negroid lips.")

As powerful and authentic in its particulars as could be imagined—as T.E.D. Klein notes, White had a gift for "near-obscene touches" (462)—"Lukundoo" is perhaps the supreme example of the African curse tale. Despite its lack of ambiguity and avoidance of artistic pretense, White has the subtlety to allow some measure of consideration to accrue to the afflicted protagonist: an unsympathetic character throughout, having betrayed the promise of his young manhood by descending into near-debauchery, he is the embodiment of Afrophobic resentment, having broken the fetish-man's whistle and invited the curse; yet even so, he retains some measure of respect through his stoic acceptance of his own death and his own possible posthumous redemption.

There is a distinct echo of "Lukundoo" in Henry S. Whitehead's "The Lips" (*Weird Tales*, September 1929), right down to the ritual invocation of "l'kundu" by the woman who bites the captain of a slave ship on the neck. The wound is treated; but by the time of the voyage home it has mutated into a mouth, and the final horrifying image vouchsafed us is "a pair of blackish-purple perfectly formed, blubbery lips; and as he gazed appalled, horrified, the lips had opened in a wide yawn, exposing great, shining African teeth, from between which . . . a long, pink tongue had protruded and licked the lips" (377); Afrophobia can be carried little further. The captain throws himself over the rail.

One of Whitehead's most powerful and evocative stories, drawing on his knowledge of the West Indies, "The Lips" embodies his overriding principle that African superstitions have a basis in fact and invite an older, more primeval retribution that culminates in the Eurocentric intruder left chastened—or, as here, dead. The influence of White's story is obvious, and although there is no framing device the narrative could be recited over a campfire: the horror is painted in broad strokes and the captain is a rough caricature; even so, there are subtle adumbrations of doom—for example, the first mate throws a shaving-mirror over the side, so that the captain cannot see his reflection; and

in one scene reminiscent of "Lukundoo," the hears someone talking in the captain's cabin—"a thick voice, like one of the negroes, but very faint; thick, guttural, but light; a voice like a young boy's or—a woman's" (374).

Finally, as if to complete a triad of stories featuring the jungle curse motif, "It Will Grow On You" by Donald Wandrei (*Esquire*, April 1942) takes the premise a step further. The story has a suitably atmospheric beginning—a man in a swagger coat entreating a doctor to operate on him. The patient, a seaman, explains that a native girl he impregnated has cursed him, saying she was now part of him. And when he removes the coat and unwinds his bandages there is a perfect figurine no more than a foot tall, an idiot who can only twitter mindlessly, attached to his flesh. The doctor performs a distinctly unclinical operation with the aid of an axe. But to no avail: the figurine then transfers itself to him. The story, despite its obvious debt to "Lukundoo," works as a gruesome simile, and the image of the bluebottle fly buzzing about the doctor's laboratory while he prepares to perform the operation is a notably unsettling, unsanitary detail.

Just as "The Lips" echoes "Lukundoo," "The Lips" itself is roughly caricatured in Bryce Walton's "The Devil Doll," an urbanized update of both stories, with the jungle settings transposed to Manhattan. When Greenwich Village artist Earl Gleason attempts to leave his girlfriend, voodoo practitioner Crita, she kisses his shoulder, leaving red marks. When he tears off his coat and shirt a living figure is visible, dancing on his shoulder, laughing and saying, "I'll not go way. I'll not go way. Not until you come back to Crita" (250). When his new paramour arrives the doll whispers, "You've got to kill her, Earl—quick!" (252). He complies, strangling her, but when he rushes to Crita's apartment he finds her body hanging from the rafters. Afterward, the police find him with a doll in his hand and a peculiar birthmark on his shoulder that resembles the imprint of a woman's lips. Despite these impedimenta the police psychiatrist determines that Earl is sane. Although crudely told, as befits its pulp origins (the story originally appeared in *Dime Mystery* in 1947), the story has a kind of feverish energy. It's hardly the most polished or subtle treatment of the theme, but its brevity—it runs a scant nine pages—somehow works in its favor and it is quite undeserving of its relative obscurity; Bill Pronzini unearthed it for his Arbor House anthology *Voodoo!* (1980).

Charles Beaumont's "The Jungle" (*If*, December 1954), despite its futuristic setting and appurtenances ("He strode to the high-speed walkway, halted it, and stepped on") reiterates the conflict between tradition and progress. In the twenty-second century Richard Austin is beset by an ancient Bantu shaman who has cursed the intruders who wish to convert a jungle into a suitable modern setting. Meanwhile, Austin's wife is dying at home, a victim of a curse. Austin's walk through the city, menacing shadows all around him, is eerie and evocative. He arrives at home, only to find a lion feeding on his wife's body. (The story was effectively filmed, omitting the futuristic setting, as an episode of the original "Twilight Zone.")

By 1959 the plot elements of the prototypical "African curse" tale had sufficiently congealed to allow for a fresh updating of the theme. Just as Pauline Kael noted the topical slant in *The Haunting of Hill House* in that the doctor was an anthropologist, Richard Matheson proved equally forward-looking. In "From Shadowed Places" (*F&SF*, October 1960) Peter Lang lays dying from a curse placed on him by a Zulu witch doctor; his wife and doctor, unable to help, call in a colleague, a black female anthropologist. She recognizes the symptoms and promptly announces, "It's juju," and prepares to effect a cure. Dr. Howell strips to the waist, "garbed below with a skirt composed of several colored handkerchiefs knotted together," and conducts voodoo rites in the privacy of Peter's apartment, complete with drumbeats. She draws out the curse and leaves the mystified doctor to contemplate the poetry of Countee Cullen, making this perhaps the first politically correct horror tale (before the term had even been invented!). Although it may seem quaint and even old-fashioned by contemporary standards, at the time of publication it was considered an exceptionally daring story because of the tabu against interracial sex.

Most of these tales have a folkloric quality—one can imagine them being told around a campfire with suitable relish. Not so *The Dreamers* (1958), by Roger Manvell, which may be the apotheosis of the African curse story and perhaps the first consciously Afrocentric treatment of the theme. It is also one of the subtlest, most compelling and oddly convincing accounts. As such it enjoyed favorable critical reaction: the Manchester *Evening News* called it "[a]n astonishing book," and poet Louis Untermeyer noted that "[i]t's a long time since I read anything so eerie, ominous, off-beat and, at the same time, so convincing. *The Dreamers* is what every suspense story tries to be: a unique thing. It is a murder mystery in which the mystery is literally magic and in which the murderer is murdered. The situation is, by all reasonable standards, impossible; but the actions—and reactions—are completely plausible. The mixture of racial antagonism and psychological violence gives the book an added dimension, and the fact that the writing is literate doesn't make it less lively" (quoted on the dust jacket).

The plaudits are well deserved. From the outset it is apparent we are in the hands of a careful, conscientious artist not given to easy sensationalism or pyrotechnical displays. When five different denizens of a small English village have the same dream, in succession, the first victim finds herself physically ill until she describes it to the second victim, who then experiences the dream herself—which is significantly more horrifying. When it is passed on to Morgan, a doctor who practiced in Africa and has a loathing for blacks, his friend Desoutter summons an African doctor, Amenu King. As expected, the curse originated in the dark continent, where Morgan was responsible for the death of a woman, whose husband cursed him. Somehow this revelation comes as no surprise: Africa has been present throughout the story, albeit in subtle diminuendo.

Dr. King tells Desoutter of an African witch doctor who had induced a hypnotic dream in a man's mind, only to turn the man into a dream-carrier. There is no time to spare: the fifth dream is the one to be feared most—and

this will be experienced by Morgan, who has endured sleeplessness for days. The only way he can be saved is for King to take the dream upon himself, which he does. Dr. King survives, and the witch doctor, who has secretly entered England, is found nearby, dead.

The thankfully literate prose of the book is a joy to read:

> His body folded and he lay face downward as if in the clinging soft-faced clay. He was conscious only that he was upside down, his body pressed into the side of the house, the ground receding below. His face was embedded in the soft glass of the window, looking opaquely into the darkness of a formless room. The glass clung about his face, tugging the skin painfully from his eyes and blearing his vision. Then he began to slide slowly down into the soft cavity of the window, his arms pulled tighter beside him. The nails parted from his fingers and peeled from his toes. His penis left his body with a painless tug, and he entered the womb of the house sexless, a conscious being bounded by the flesh of a human being, neither man nor woman. He hit a bare wooden floor with his shoulder and the glass peeled away from his body as he was given the power of action for the first time. He pulled his legs down and sat on his haunches, his nailless hands clasped to the memberless fork of his body. There he waited the timeless, soundless interval until he should be claimed. (35)

The careful prose of the book—it has a handmade quality—mirrors the subtlety and sophistication of the characterization: there are no villains or heroes here, merely fallible human beings, and the motivations behind each character's actions are quietly plausible: even Morgan's ostensible racism has a believable explanation. Likewise, there are insights into the origins of racial prejudice which, while hardly original, are not dwelt upon. Thoughtfully written, with no lapses into melodrama, and with the inevitable racial tensions simmering just beneath the surface, *The Dreamers* represents a high water mark in this subgenre, a small, sustained minor classic. As a horror tale, it is virtually a mainstream novel, with its attendant strengths and drawbacks. In some ways, it anthologizes and apotheosizes the frissons felt in "Lukundoo" and "The Lips," among others, employing them in a less overtly horrific but more subtly disturbing manner.

The Dreamers was optioned for filming several times, and Ray Bradbury reportedly wrote a screenplay, but not surprisingly no cinematic adaptation resulted. It is altogether too subtle and polished a treatment of the theme to be vulgarized. *The Dreamers* may not supply the final word on the African curse, but it does provide a suitable coda for this curious subgenre.

THE EGYPTIAN CURSE

After the African curse, the Egyptian variety is perhaps the most pervasive in supernatural fiction. The concept of an Egyptian curse has an undeniable

fascination, and here real-life events play a significant role. In ancient Egypt curses were comparatively rare, as they could only be pronounced by Pharaohnic decree. Nonetheless, the idea survived down through the years, in part because of the renewed interest in Egyptology in the 1920s occasioned by the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb on November 4, 1922. When, on February 17, 1923, the main chamber of the tomb was opened and the mummy of Tutankhamen discovered, Lord Carnarvon, half of the Carter-Carnarvon expedition team, returned to Cairo while Howard Carter stayed on at the site of the tomb. Two months later Lord Carnarvon was dead, victim of a supposedly undiagnosed illness. Over a period of time other members of the excavation team died, apparently under questionable circumstances, and the "curse of King Tut's tomb" received much play in the press—although disappointingly enough the "mystery curse" proves, upon examination, about as malefic as that of the Devil's Triangle. In truth, Lord Carnarvon had come to Egypt because of poor health and was very frail; another member of the expedition suffered from bouts of pleurisy contracted long before the tomb was discovered, but was reported as dying of "a mystery illness." And a workman in the British Museum was said to have died while labeling objects from the tomb; but no objects from the tomb were ever housed in the British Museum! Moreover, Howard Carter, who was the head of the expedition and would logically have been the primary target of such a curse, lived until 1939, dying at the age of sixty-six. So much for historical verisimilitude. Clearly, Egyptian curses are best left to writers of fiction.

Robert Bloch, whose early fiction was centered on Egyptology, was naturally attracted to curses, usually as retribution meted out to tomb-looting. "I became interested in Egyptology through childhood visits to museums and art galleries in Chicago—starting as soon as I was able to walk," Bloch later recalled. "I am still interested, and a lot more knowledgeable: much of what I wrote regarding Egypt was inaccurate, due to limited source material" (quoted in Larson 20). Bloch was also heavily under the influence of Lovecraft, though, as Sam Moskowitz noted, "[t]he author seemed unaware that in the majority of his later writings Lovecraft had abandoned the supernatural in explaining his horrors and had leaned with increasing weight on science. Bloch was actually writing pastiches of early Lovecraft" (115).

In some early stories Bloch sought to intermingle Egyptian mythology with the Cthulhu Mythos. His non-Mythos Egyptian stories include "The Opener of the Way" (*Weird Tales*, October 1936), "Brood of Bubastis" (*Weird Tales*, March 1937), "The Secret of Sebek" (*Weird Tales*, November 1937), and "The Eyes of the Mummy" (*Weird Tales*, April 1938). "Beetles" (*Weird Tales*, December 1938), one of the most horrifying of these, shows Bloch beginning to move away from the influence of Lovecraft—the young writer's early fiction was marked by adjectivitis and an avoidance of dialogue, traits totally at odds with the later, word-playful Bloch.

Arthur Hartley, after returning from Egypt, is a stranger to his friends. Increasingly antisocial, he tells the narrator he has bought insecticide to defeat the Powers of Evil. It transpires that he stole the mummy of a temple virgin. The narrator, ever given to psychological rationalization, hypothesizes that the guilty conscience of a tomb-looter might cause a hallucination of retribution, and fetches a handy psychiatrist; but when they arrive at Hartley's apartment they find him dead with no signs of violence and the mummy-case in another room. There is a great cavity in the mummy's stomach—the beetles were *within* the mummy. The narrator rushes back to Hartley's body only to see the chest rise and fall, the twisted features move. To his horror the mouth then gapes open, "allowing a rustling swarm of *black Scarabæus beetles* to pour out across the pillow." It's a startling, almost surreal image, and of course makes nonsense of the glib psychiatric explanation the narrator has been evolving.

In "The Secret of Sebek," the narrator, footloose in New Orleans during Mardi Gras, meets Henricus Vanning, a wealthy local, and follows him to his mansion where a party is in progress, the guests festively costumed. Vanning shows him a mummy case containing the body of an Egyptian priest of the fertility god Sebek, a god with the body of a man, the head of a crocodile. But just at this point he is attacked by a reveler wearing the mask of a crocodile. The stranger buries his teeth in Vanning's throat, killing him; when the narrator wrestles with the intruder he feels beneath his fingers not a mask but living flesh.

"The Opener of the Way" recounts the story of Sir Ronald Barton, who has stolen the parchment and Anubis, the Opener of the Way. Sir Ronald's son Peter has doubts about his father's sanity, particularly when he finds him in the sands at night sacrificing a goat. But he tells him the secrets of the ancients, including death rays, will be his if he can somehow get past the statue. But a human consciousness must animate the statue. In a somewhat confused ending Peter finds his father dead and when he attempts to enter he also falls victim to the statue, and when he stares into the stone face of Anubis he sees his father's tortured eyes.

Finally, "The Faceless God" (*Weird Tales*, May 1936) focuses on Dr. Carnoti, an opportunist, adventurer, and smuggler not above using torture to get information from his hirelings. (The story commences with one of the pulp era's classic opening lines: "The thing on the torture-rack began to moan.") When a statue of Nyarlathotep, the God of the Desert, is found projecting from the Egyptian sands Carnoti hears of it and naturally seeks to possess it for reasons of gain. The natives will not touch the statue. But during the night the natives desert, leaving Carnoti alone, without weapons or water. Trudging through the blazing desert sands, he sees a circle behind him; but finds he has only circled back to his own camp and dies, and upon the idol's featureless countenance "there was the faintest hint of a monstrous hidden smile."

The leper halted in the front porch for a moment and we jumped out on him with the sticks. He was wonderfully strong, and we were afraid that he might escape or be fatally injured before we caught him. We had an idea that lepers were frail creatures, but this proved to be incorrect. Strickland knocked his legs from under him, and I put my foot on his neck. He mewed hideously, and even through my riding-boots I could feel that his flesh was not the flesh of a clean man.

He struck at us with his hand and feet-stumps. We looped the lash of a dog-whip round him, under the arm-pits, and dragged him backwards into the hall and so into the dining-room where the beast lay. There we tied him with trunk-straps. He made no attempt to escape, but mewed.

Rudyard Kipling, ''The Mark
of the Beast''

In all these stories the message is plain: if you plunder a tomb you may expect supernatural retribution. Sometimes this retribution exceeds anything one may reasonably expect, and the result is accordingly horrific; but more often the law of diminishing returns sets in: the curse is predictable, as is the retribution visited upon the tomb-looters. The curse of staleness is indeed a terrible thing.

Bloch's Egyptian stories are recognizable today as the mere apprentice work of a Lovecraft acolyte. He seems to have come across Nyarlathotep in one of Lovecraft's later sonnets in *Fungi from Yuggoth* (1929–1930), but seems totally unable to develop this God satisfactorily or even to manipulate it into an active role in the narrative; nevertheless, the Egyptian stories represent a definite phase in his career that would end with Lovecraft's death.

It should not be inferred that *every* story involving a curse ends in tragedy. Sax Rohmer's "The Curse of a Thousand Kisses" (1920) is a charming fable, set in then-modern-day Cairo. Saville Grainger, a confirmed misogynist, tells the story of running into a hideously old woman in Cairo. So struck by her ugliness is he that he kisses her on the brow—a startlingly uncharacteristic act. Afterward, a native hands him a package; inside is a heart of lapis, bearing three Arabic letters—a love token. The letters signify the number one thousand. In flashback we learn that during the reign of Khalif El-Mamûn—a son of Hárûn el-Rashid and brother of the prototype of Beckford's *Vathek!*—Scheherazade was the most beautiful maiden in the land. Ahman, thwarted in love, visited upon her the most terrible curse, calling down upon her ''an ugliness beyond that of humanity, until one thousand compassionate men shall each have bestowed a kiss upon thee'' (205). She returned to Cairo, and bestowed on each man a heart of lapis with the number of the kiss engraved in gold. The story ends as expected, with Grainger meeting her again, and bestowing on her the thousand and *first* kiss—at which point the manuscript discreetly ends.

Rudyard Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (*Pioneer*, July 12 and 14, 1890) is in some ways the archetypal curse story. The setting is India. When, after a riotous night, Fleete profanes the monkey god Hanuman by grinding a cigar butt in the forehead of a statue, the Silver Man, a leper, drops his head on

Fleete's breast. When Fleete and his friends are ejected from the temple, a priest ominously intones: "Take your friend away. He has done with Hanuman, but Hanuman has not done with him." The curse works swiftly: Fleete smells blood in the temple, horses rear and scream at his approach, and there is a mark over his left breast. From then on he becomes progressively more bestial, demanding raw meat and snarling—"and his snarls were those of a wolf, not of a man." A doctor arrives and diagnoses hydrophobia; Fleete appears doomed. But his friends capture the Silver Man—a leper whose face has been eaten away, and, in a scene as grisly as anything in contemporary horror fiction, torture him into removing the curse.

Kipling, much admired in his day, has himself fallen victim to a curse—that of political correctness—with the unsurprising result that much of his work is currently undervalued; he survives mainly on the strength of his children's stories, principally *The Jungle Book*. "The Mark of the Beast," though ostensibly a throwback to pukka-sahib days, stands as arguably his finest supernatural story: legitimate horror at the brutality of the curse and its savage counterpoint should not be inveighed against the enterprise—it could even be convincingly argued that the torture of the Silver Man (involving a red-hot rifle barrel) is far more bestial than anything Fleete is capable of. In his perceptive article, "Rudyard Kipling's Apocalyptic Vision of Empire," Paul Battles, correctly noting that Kipling is "more of a critic than apologist for imperialism," notes the hysteria felt by Fleete's friends: "Their hysteria articulates a sense of the destruction of their identities; they are no longer truly 'English,' for on the basis of their actions they have lost all claim to the moral (national, racial) superiority for which 'Englishness' stands. The role of the binary English/Indian (with its attendant binaries Man/Beast, Rational/Emotional, and so on) have collapsed; difference has been destroyed. Like Fleete, Strickland and the narrator learn that the Beast lies within themselves, not in the Indians." He also notes that "The Mark of the Beast" "represents one of [Kipling's] most forceful critiques of Empire: as an allegory of the relationship of British colonizer and Indian colonized, it deserves a place alongside such stories as 'The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes' and 'The Man Who Would Be King'" (333).

Political (and polemical) issues to one side, the deterioration of man into beast is skillfully handled through Kipling's use of telling detail, and although Peter Penzoldt contended that Kipling's use of colloquialisms ruined the effect of much of his supernatural fiction, it would seem the matter-of-fact narration and judicious use of colloquialisms enhances the effect rather than detracting from it. Whatever the future verdict is on Kipling—and the critical pendulum may well swing back in his favor—his short stories remain models of form and content. We have W. Somerset Maugham's word for this: "He is our [i.e., England's] greatest story writer. I can't believe he will ever be equalled. I am sure he can never be excelled."

Other times, other customs: In M. R. James's classic "Casting the Runes" (1911) the sorcerer Karswell is an adept in the classic tradition—a person of

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Twelve Important Short Stories about Curses

Rudyard Kipling, ''The Mark of the Beast'' (1890)

H. G. Wells, ''Pollock and the Porroh Man'' (1895)

Edward Lucas White, ''Lukundoo'' (1907)

M. R. James, ''Casting the Runes'' (1911)

H. Russell Wakefield, '' 'He Cometh and He Passeth By!' '' (1928)

Henry S. Whitehead, ''The Lips'' (1929)

Zealia Bishop [and H. P. Lovecraft], ''The Curse of Yig'' (1929)

Lord Dunsany, ''The Curse of the Witch'' (1934)

Margaret Irwin, ''The Book'' (1935)

Robert Bloch, ''Beetles'' (1938)

Donald Wandrei, ''It Will Grow on You'' (1942)

Richard Matheson, ''From Shadowed Places'' (1960)

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wealth, an alchemist—and when Edward Dunning is instrumental in having his scientific paper rejected Karswell passes him the Rune—a strip of thin light paper with Runic inscriptions. With time running out, Dunning and Henry Harrington, whose brother was likewise destroyed by Karswell, join forces in an attempt to thwart the sorcerer, and when Karswell attempts to leave by boat train they slip the Rune into his ticket case. Karswell's death shortly afterwards by a falling stone is ruled an accident.

James stage-manages the unfolding narrative with considerable dexterity: there are gaps, awkward transitions, phonetic dialogue, and an idiosyncratic narrative voice; yet, withal, the story is handled with considerable subtlety and ambiguity. As S. T. Joshi points out (*The Weird Tale* 135), it is the one James story in which the victim not only attempts to counteract the supernatural agency but actually succeeds in doing so; yet in other respects it is virtually an amalgam of Jamesian motifs: the past, here represented by the acquisition of arcane knowledge, is a deadly trap; the dog motif mentioned by Joshi gets a look in; and Karswell, a misanthrope in true Jamesian manner, is unsparing with children—at one point he shows them some magic-lantern slides with frightening images of snakes, centipedes, and creatures with wings, causing several of them to be hurt in the general stampede which follows.

Another James story involving a curse is perhaps his most admired and accomplished. ''The Ash-Tree'' (1904) has a rather different emphasis: when mysterious deaths occur to guest staying in the west chamber of an old house, outside of which stands an ash-tree. When the tree burns they find enormous spiders, the legacy of a witch who was hanged in 1690. Here the curse is

merely the pretext for mysterious occurrences, though the story is developed with such power and sureness that although the emphasis is on the mystery behind the deaths and the significance of the ash-tree, the final revelation of the curse at back of what has been happening is handled with suitable cunning.

Like "The Ash-Tree," Joseph Payne Brennan's celebrated "Canavan's Back Yard" (1958) deals in part with a curse weathered by age. Canavan, an antiquarian book dealer (how could he be otherwise?) lives in New Haven in a large house with a most curious back yard. The narrator notes its aspect: overgrown with brambles and brindle-colored grass, decayed apple trees, broken wooden fences. But Canavan spends much of his time staring out at it, unaccountably fascinated. The narrator himself comments: "After I had stood looking out at it for a few minutes, I experienced the odd sensation that its perspectives were subtly altering. Neither the grass nor the trees changed and yet the yard itself seemed to expand its dimensions" (83). When the narrator arrives one day to find no sign of Canavan he ventures into the yard—only to become hopelessly lost. When he locates Canavan the book dealer has been reduced to a bestial stage, and lunges at him. The narrator barely escapes with his life. Later, after an abortive police investigation during which they hear the barking of an unseen dog, he finds the ground was once cursed by a witch named Goodie Larkin, who was torn to pieces there by savage dogs to utter the curse: *"Let this lande I fall upon lye alle the way to hell! And they who tarry here be as these beasts that rende me dead!"* (93). As with M. R. James the source of the evil lies buried in the past.

Although the curse forms only the solution, "Canavan's Back Yard" may well be Brennan's most imaginative story. His noted characteristics—the New Haven setting, the antiquarian bookseller, and the plainspoken narration—are all present, combining with the mad geometry of Lovecraft causing a temporal dissociation in time and space.

Finally, there is the disparity between the offense and retribution. H. Russell Wakefield's powerfully conceived " 'He Cometh and He Passeth By!' " (1928) deserves a more prominent niche in the pantheon of weird fiction. Arguably Wakefield's finest story, its antagonist is as a decadent, a particularly specious exemplar of the worst excesses of *fin de siècle* aestheticism. Young Philip Franton is ruined by his association with Clinton, a drug-abusing, cheerfully amoral yet seemingly superhuman figure clearly modeled on Aleister Crowley—though the outline also fits Oscar Wilde. Clinton is highly psychic, with great natural hypnotic power, and is the high priest of a satanic cult. When Philip cuts Clinton off, the sorcerer sends him a painted paper pattern rune; Philip is subsequently haunted by an omnipresent shadow. He seeks help from his friend Edward Bellamy, but before Bellamy can take a hand Philip is killed by the shadow. Seeking revenge, Bellamy acquires psychic insight and insinuates himself into Clinton's company, and Clinton is delighted to let Bellamy pay his expenses. But Bellamy is merely biding his time; gaining the upper hand, he

presses the rune to Clinton's forehead and compels him to recite the talismanic credo—"he cometh and he passeth by!"—after which Clinton crashes to the floor, and is overtaken by a shadow.

It may seem like quibbling to find flaws in such a powerful story; yet, despite Wakefield's strenuous efforts to make Clinton seem the very embodiment of evil, he remains oddly worthy of respect: a litteratéur of some note, he is also able to project astral images of himself in previous incarnations—surely a more worthy accomplishment than contributing to the *Yellow Book!* Bellamy, in contrast, is a simple bourgeois, working for the law courts, which reduces his stature considerably. What renders Clinton ultimately conventional is that he seems content to squander his undoubted talents for so little profit. Even so, it's an unconventional and even subversive story for the otherwise conservative Wakefield, due in part to the aura of seductive evil which wraps around Clinton—though his sexual affronts remain, unlike Wilde's, resolutely heterosexual.

CURSES IN OTHER REALMS

The West Indian variety of voodoo gets a look-in in Cornell Woolrich's "Papa Benjamin" (*Dime Mystery*, July 1935), originally published as "Dark Melody of Murder." The original title, with its pulpish flavor, gives fair warning: Woolrich is, to put it kindly, a problematic writer. Although many of his plots were intriguing (and provided Hollywood with rich material that Hitchcock, among others, made good use of), his clumsy handling of plots and heavy-handed effects negated the genuinely intriguing ideas he more or less stumbled upon. Although this "twentieth century Poe" has his defenders (most notably Francis M. Nevins, Jr., author of an adulatory biography), he represents pulp writing at its worst: a shameless use of coincidence, long unbroken passages of purple prose, and a view of the world and the long arm of fate so relentlessly dark that it becomes unintentionally comic. His shortcomings are so numerous they make his *oeuvre* seem beyond the reach of critical rehabilitation, yet Nevins makes a plausible case for his work while acknowledging most of his faults.

All these faults are writ large in "Papa Benjamin," the story of orchestra leader Eddie Bloch. The story opens with Bloch having shot to death Papa Benjamin, a local voodoo chieftain. We learn of his involvement through flashbacks: he happens to be concealed from view when one of his musicians retrieves a severed chicken's claw; for no apparent reason, Eddie follows him, coincidentally taking with him his music sheets, some of which happen to be blank; when his friend disappears from view he hears voodoo music and despite a knife at his throat infiltrates a private religious sect; overhearing the voodoo music he jots down musical notes on the sheets he fortuitously brought along. But then he is unmasked as an outsider by the cult, and sworn to

secrecy. Of course he disregards this and incorporates the forbidden music into his act, only to feel the effects of the voodoo curse—a pin sticking him, pains spreading downward: he is dying on his feet. He leaves New Orleans, but is aware of "another mind *thinking,* wishing, ordering him dead, night and day." Finally, in an attempt to have the curse lifted, he returns to see Papa Benjamin, only to wind up killing him. But the curse remains in place, and when Eddie plays the music again he falls to the floor, dead. Despite its evocative New Orleans setting and the skillful use of local color, the story sinks under the weight of its own absurdities. ("Papa Benjamin" was adapted, minus the coincidences, as a an episode of television's "Thriller" in 1961.)

It should not be inferred that all stories featuring a curse are inevitably grim or frightening: "The Trouble with Water" by H. L. Gold (*Unknown*, March 1939) posits an amusing case: Greenberg, out fishing, hooks the hat of a water gnome, and in a fit of pique tears it to pieces. The gnome, properly incensed, places a curse: water will stay away from Greenberg. Disbelieving, he can only stare as his fishing rod hovers in mid-air. At home he attempts to shave and bathe, all without success. A friendly policeman proposes a bribe: water gnomes love sugar, he explains. But it dissolves in water. The solution? Cellophane. Mollified, the gnome removes the curse and Greenberg splutters and flounders, suddenly underwater. Though no more than a trifle, it's an inventive, playful story, the kind the much-lamented *Unknown* was publishing by the score—and, for that reason, indistinguishable from many others.

Gold's "Warm, Dark Places" (*Unknown*, October 1940), though in the same vein of Jewish humor, is rather more effective because it touches upon a more common dread. Ira Kaplan, a tailor, is visited by Salindrath, a yogin who demands to see how his washing machine works. When Kaplan refuses he curses him: whenever Kaplan reaches in the pockets of newly pressed clothes he will encounter cold, clammy things. Though shaken, Kaplan refuses to show fear, and Salindrath intensifies the curse: now Kaplan feels the vermin in his own pockets, burrowing restlessly or "pulsing contentedly against his skin." When he goes to bed "[h]undreds of pulsing vermin . . . instantly snuggled against him when he was covered." Defeated, he begs the yogin to lift the curse, but he cannot: Kaplan now feels vermin burrowing in his shoes and beneath his hat.

Far grimmer is C. Hall Thompson's "Clay" (*Weird Tales*, May 1948), an effective story set in an insane asylum. Jeremy Bone, who seems to be schizophrenic, tells the doctors his other self—named Oliver—wishes him to kill; the head of the asylum is skeptical, but Dr. Peter Gaunt has remarkable success in treating Jeremy because he believes in his obsession. But when Dr. Gaunt is discovered murdered, the others try to find Jeremy: he is in the belfry, having hanged himself. They peel off the gloves he habitually wore, to find clay—proof of an ancestral curse. Despite the story's rough edges, it imparts an authentically grisly, even claustrophobic atmosphere at times.

"The Curse Kiss," by Theodore Roscoe (*Weird Tales*, February 1930), betrays its primordial pulp origins, but despite its whiff of antiquity delivers a

salutary chill. The story of one Edouard Proust (!) who bets Lars Issracket that he will not journey with him to gaze upon Lot's wife; the legend is that whoever kisses her will free her from 3,000 years' sleep but be turned to salt himself. Issracket takes the bet, with the expected result—when Issracket kisses the statue he feels his lips burning with thirst, and his body slowly turning to salt. Surprisingly enough, Issracket survives, and is nursed back to health. The kicker is that when someone asks him to pass the salt at the dinner table he nearly faints. (The well-traveled Roscoe also dealt with this same theme in his well-remembered story, "On Account of a Woman.")

The incomparable Lord Dunsany allowed his spirited raconteur Jorkens to recount at least three stories dealing with curses: in "The Curse of the Witch" (1934), while walking through Spain, Jorkens spends a night at an inn where he hears dogs howling mournfully. He learns it is coming from Casa Viljeros, there has been a curse for ten generations laid on by a witch, and as the American owners wait, "as the night went on the curse grew stronger and darker, as though the witch that had anciently laid upon that house were forcing it down on it with both hands" (27). The Americans left the house with the hounds in the library to show what they think of Spanish curses. Jorkens himself says of the hounds, "Something was there that they knew of and told to the night, and too much book-learning and living in towns had blunted my ears to the sense of it" (28–29).

In "The Pale Green Image" (1947) Jorkens comes upon an Egyptian object, a queer little image of duck's-egg green, but the Arab is reluctant to sell it; when Jorkens presses him he explains that a curse went with the image: it dominated your life and never let go, and the only way to be free was to sell it, or to kill the man you bought it from. Jorkens takes the Bishop of Britchester to see it, confident that no spells could affect an English bishop, but he underestimates the strength of the spell.

In "Jorkens in Witch Wood" (1947) Jorkens recounts an Irish wood said to be cursed by a witch so that anyone in it at night will lose his way. Jorkens bets his friend that he can make it through the wood at night, and of course becomes hopelessly lost. The charm of Dunsany's storytelling, combined with that of the Irish countryside, is evident, though the story itself is slight.

A. E. Coppard's "Cheese" (1946) is an altogether different, and less satisfying, story. Eddy Errick, a salesman who sells cheese, swindles a gypsy out of a formula for cheese, and by magic he is imprisoned in a cage, a piece of cheese hanging from a hook, and a tiger outside the bars. Somehow he escapes—although Coppard doesn't bother explaining how—and finds himself somehow out of time, during the reign of George IV where he winds up in an Asylum of Natural Wonders. Hardly Coppard's (or anyone's) best story, "Cheese" is jovial enough but unnecessarily prolonged, with a narrative style more annoyingly intrusive than clever or sophisticated, the author divulging information or withholding it, seemingly at will. John Collier might have made something special of the premise; Coppard seems unwilling to.

"The Book" by Margaret Irwin (1935) is a powerfully developed tour-de-force of mounting horror. When Mr. Corbett seeks a suitable book to peruse at night, he sees something objectionable in every author and finally settles on a mysterious tome from his late uncle's library, in Latin, with obvious magical powers enabling him to make some shrewd investments, but also ultimately with the power to compel him to commit crimes, including the murder of his small daughter and the family dog. He is finally found dead, presumably a suicide—but the medical report defines the cause of death as strangulation. The sense of brooding malevolence felt throughout is apparent from the first when Mr. Corbett rejects authors—"Dickens struck him in a different light. Beneath the author's sentimental pity for the weak and helpless, he could discern a revolting pleasure in cruelty and suffering"—to the mysterious gap that in the second shelf that mysteriously fills up when he goes back, and which the children dismiss as inconsequential, to the scene in which Mr. Corbett repels them with his appearance—the print of a finger on his forehead that he refuses to acknowledge. All this is handled in masterly fashion, and the story is a small classic of its kind.

"The Curse of Yig" (*Weird Tales*, November 1929), although ostensibly by Zealia Bishop, was in fact extensively revised by H. P. Lovecraft: he himself described it as "about 75% mine" (quoted in Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Life* 440), despite its unfamiliar setting of Oklahoma (Bishop was at that time a resident of the state). It is lurid, conventional, but undeniably effective. It has an intriguing opening in which a visitor to an asylum ominously opines: "I had always felt, from well-defined under tones of legend and archeology, that great Quetzalcoatl—benign snake-god of the Mexicans—has had an older and darker prototype." The story concerns the fate of Walker and Audrey Davis. Walker has a fear of snakes that amounts to a phobia, and when his wife kills a nest of newborn rattlesnakes he fears the curse of Yig, the snake-god. During the night Audrey awakens to find the floor of their cabin a seething mass of snakes; her husband gets up to stamp them out, but falls, apparently dead. Sometimes later she hears what she fears is the sound of her husband's body bursting open popping from snake venom and when a figure appears that she identifies as Yig she attacks it with an axe. The next morning a neighbor discovers the bodies of their dog and her husband, unbitten but dead from axe-wounds. Bleiler seems to think the spirit of Yig entered into and possessed Walker, but this seems implausible ("It is very tragic and very horrible, but that is all. I refuse to consider it anything supernatural," the doctor at the asylum says) and the intrusion of a supernatural element seems unnecessary. What ultimately mars and conventionalizes the story is Walker's habit of speaking in dialect: "[T]his here's some varmints come in outen the cold—not crickets, I calc'late, but summat like 'em. I orter git up and stomp 'em out afore they make much headway or git at the cupboard."

Finally, "The Candidate" (*Rogue*, 1961), by the ever-ingenious Henry Slesar, supplies perhaps the last word in "curse" stories. Burton Grunzer receives a

letter from the Society for United Action; mystified, he agrees to meet with the secretary, who informs him that certain people are unfit to live. Grunzer agrees. The secretary then extolls the power of voodoo and explains how a group of individuals wish someone dead, with devastating results—so far, their score is 104 persons dead out of 229. By now thoroughly convinced of the curse's efficacy, Grunzer is contemplating eliminating a particularly nettlesome enemy when the man calmly explains that Grunzer's own death wish began at noon that day.

Novels dealing with curses, *The Dreamers* excepted, have a harder time of sustaining the premise due to reasons of length and the suspension of disbelief. Stephen King's derivative *Thinner* (1984), originally published under his Richard Bachman pseudonym, fails dismally, though it begins effectively—a gypsy touches Billy Halleck's cheek and mysteriously intones the word "thinner," after which Halleck begins losing weight. The curse is invoked after Halleck kills the gypsy's wife by accident with his car; unable to stop losing weight, suspecting the ultimate horror in King's universe—cancer—until he finally admits the truth, Halleck retaliates by having a Mafioso chum attack the gypsy's family. All this is handled reasonably well, but then King defeats his own purposes and destroys all credibility by tacking on a *deus ex machina* ending in which Halleck effects détente with the gypsy, who then hands him a throbbing pie. Whoever eats it, he explains, will absorb the curse. Seeking revenge on his own wife for inadvertently causing the accident, Halleck leaves the pie for her, clearing the way for a final twist—as ludicrous an ending as any in contemporary horror fiction.

As always, King spoils his own best effects through overemphasis and repetition: Halleck recalls that a lascivious judge once felt his wife's breast; it's a nice detail, but King repeats it half a dozen times. And King is so emphatic about evoking the middle-class milieu that atmosphere is sacrificed under the dubious rationale of "normalizing" everything and everyone. (And finally, to illustrate the comic book origins of much of King's fiction, the entire plot is lifted without credit from an old *Journey into Mystery* comic story by Stan Lee entitled "I Must Find Korumbu!")

Somewhat better is King's short story "The Man Who Would Not Shake Hands" (1981), in which the protagonist suffers the curse of an Indian holy man so that his very touch means death. Despite the patent artificiality of the tale—King's remarkably unsure handling of different times and customs lays bare his manifest limitations—it builds to a satisfactorily grisly climax in which the man is found dead, clasping his own right hand.

The Curse of the Wise Woman (1933), which S. T. Joshi (*Supernatural Literature of the World* 376) considers Lord Dunsany's finest novel, is set entirely in Ireland, a fairish leap from Africa; but curses are not circumscribed by geography. It is narrated by one Charles Peridore, who recounts the loss of his father due to the latter's political involvement. Peridore develops a friendship with a young Irishman whose mother is a "wise woman," that is, a

witch. Eventually the plot thickens: the Peat Development Company has plans to drain the bog and construct a mill. Despite the geographical dissociation we have not left Africa very far behind; whenever cherished associations are threatened, the atavistic will arises: "And when Mrs. Marlin had come running out to ask him what he was doing, he had spoken of huts and Camry and so much Progress, that it had seemed to her that all the blight that there was in civilization, threatened those willowy lands. She must have felt as a townsman would feel if he learned that brambles and bracken were about to cover his pavements" (176).

The Wise Woman invokes a curse on the workmen; not surprisingly they scoff, but soon a violent storm rises, causing the cliff to collapse upon the workmen. Just as in his Jorkens stories, Dunsany does not insist on the actuality of the curse; we are free to interpret it as coincidence, just as we choose. Along the way, we learn much about shooting snipe, riding to hounds, Irish politics, and other subjects that have little or nothing to do with curses, but are nonetheless on Dunsany's mind. No matter; one indulges Dunsany's whim for unhurried storytelling and its consequent *longueurs*. And every now and then there is a touch of true Dunsany magic, as when the narrator writes:

> "And somehow I felt there was music in the moon, all those years ago when I was not yet seventeen. And I said to Marlin: 'Does it make music?'
>
> "And Marlin stared towards it in the hushed evening; then shook his head again, and said: 'Not for us.'" (149–50)

Many critics consider Dunsany's novels to be less successful than his stories, and modern readers are less inclined to accept digressions such as the ones that periodically crop up in *The Curse of the Wise Woman*. As for its supernatural aspects, Joshi remarks that "the supernatural is reduced to the vanishing point, and may not come into play at all" ("Introduction" to *In the Land of Time and Other Fantasy Tales,* xx). In a sense, it does not particularly matter whether the supernatural is involved; Dunsany finds magic enough in the everyday life of Ireland.

Slaves of Sleep by L. Ron Hubbard (1948) involves a curse, although here the theme is treated with high humor characteristic of *Unknown*, where the novel first appeared. One of several Hubbard stories directly based on the *Arabian Nights*; it is a story of parallel worlds—evidently one of the first in modern fantasy. When a jinn is released from a jar he curses Jan Palmer, a wealthy but weak-willed bookworm who is condemned to "eternal wakefulness" and imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. Palmer is living in two worlds: on Earth, he is a prisoner, but in the land of the Jinn, he is known as "Tiger," a swashbuckling rogue. "Tiger's" adventures involve seizing the Ring of Solomon and becoming ruler of the dream world. Like much of Hubbard's work of that period, the novel is reasonably entertaining but because of its episodic structure involves some glaring inconsistencies. But in a sense this

criticism is beside the point—*Unknown* was meant to entertain, not to stand up to rigorous critical analysis. In any event, as with H. L. Gold's "Trouble with Water," the curse is more of a plot lever than the novel's central concern.

If the African curse involves a clash of civilizations, the interfamilial curse, passed down through generations, suggests that time, rather than the great healer, may be a more malefic factor than previously thought. Significantly, one of the most horrible of curses was that of childlessness, or death to the heirs, so that the family lineage died out. But the family curse does not seem to have interested writers as much as the other varieties. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* (1851) features a hereditary curse pronounced by a wizard executed for practicing witchcraft, but those seeking a more extensive of the curse subtheme will be disappointed by Hawthorne's scant use of the curse motif and, indeed, of Gothic trappings altogether.

At least two novels by E. F. Benson deal in part with family curses. *The Luck of the Vails* (1901) tells of a golden goblet that comes accompanied by a curse that plagues the Vail family over the generations, but the emphasis is distinctly on the mystery elements of the plot rather than the supernatural trappings. *The Inheritor* (1930) is a more problematic case. A curse hangs over the house of Gervase. The heir is to be born with horns and hoofs; but Steven Gervase, the current heir, is physically normal. The curse has taken on a spiritual dimension: Stephen is incapable of love and embodies the spirit of Pan. The physical manifestation of the curse is repeated when a misshapen son is born to him. All of this sounds promising, and indeed portions of the novel are powerfully developed, but the mainstream aspects of the novel—mainly university life at Oxford—take precedence over the supernatural, which remains largely in the background.

British author Edith Pargeter achieved widespread popularity under her Ellis Peters pseudonym for her Brother Cadfael mysteries and is better known for her mysteries than her sparse supernatural offerings; thus *The Assize of the Dying* (Heinemann, 1958) is a definite disappointment if considered as a "curse" novel. It has an intriguing premise involving a man convicted of murder who makes use of an ancient Spanish curse invoked by those unjustly sentenced to die. As might be expected, those involved in the man's conviction begin to die; but in an ending as ludicrous as can be imagined, it develops that the supernatural is not involved at all—a flesh-and-blood malefactor is the culprit. The novel was adapted for the screen, but the result, a long-forgotten film, *The Spaniard's Curse* (1958), was anemic.

Finally, if the term "instant classic" were not a self-canceling phrase, such an accolade might accrue to Robert Irwin's *The Arabian Nightmare* (1983; rev. ed. 1987), certainly the most erudite and accomplished of recent novels dealing specifically with curses. The narrative begins with the Proustian invocation: "For a long time I use to go to bed early." Balian suffers a dream from which he awakens with his mouth full of blood. It soon becomes apparent that he is suffering from the Arabian Nightmare. But what *is* the

Arabian Nightmare? Apparently a dream-curse, transmitted from one person to another by sleeping close together. Although it seems an eternity of agony, the sleeper, awakening, remembers nothing of the dream.

The novel resists synopsizing and, in a sense, literary analysis as well. The setting is Cairo in 1486 and the plot has something to do with an English pilgrim named Balian of Norwich who is on his way to the shrine of St. Catherine and attempts to spy on the activities of the Mameluke court; but he is pursued through the city and his dreams spied upon, presumably by the Father of Cats. Irwin's use of sensory detail, pervades the narrative; like *The Dreamers*, it is concerned with the world of dreams, but the novel's real subtext is the power of the storyteller, and the timeless, oneiric narrative is so bewildering that at time we lose track of what is real, what is dream—doubtless the author's intention. There are literary allusions, stories within stories, dreams within dreams, intertextual references, and conscious similarities to Borges and Thomas Pynchon (particularly *V*). Despite this heady mixture, the author carries it off with considerable style, delighting in his densely worded prose:

> Bending over the floating box, he became aware of something squelching and poking in his eardrum. He stuck his finger in his ear. Whatever it was, his finger seemed to have driven it further in. His next thought was of the worm and that thought was devoured by sharp, excruciating pain. The pain spread and ate away at all his thoughts. All that he knew was offered to the worm. It was his thought that it grubbed away in the carrion of his brain-pan and rendered it charnel liquor—and that thought too was swiftly consumed. The pain was behind his left eye now. Something pierced the eyeball an sucked at it like a raw egg. Now the vision of his left eye and his right eye warred with one another. The right eye saw his hand shaking over the box in the empty cell. The left eye saw the worm in the head, saw it swimming in the liquors of the brain towards a box that floated on those waters. The box opened and a second worm which had been nestling in the box heaved itself up over the edge to join its brother. (122)

"*The Arabian Nightmare* is a guide to the Orient of the mind," the blurb on the book states. This seems a fair summation. For the present it can stand as the most literate novel dealing specifically with curses. Best of all, it does what it does so successfully—and so beguilingly—that one has the feeling no other book quite like this one need be written.

CURSES IN FILM

Films have been notably less successful in depicting the ambiguity and mounting terror of curses; perhaps it was felt that a storyline centering on this theme was too thin to support a film of feature length, but the justly celebrated *Night of the Demon* (1957; released as *Curse of the Demon* in the

United States) is the exception. M. R. James's story "Casting the Runes" was adapted with considerable leeway by Charles Bennett, who elaborated on the story. (The choice of James was somewhat anomalous, considering horror cinema's avoidance of Machen, Blackwood, and the like, right up to the present day.) The veteran Bennett had written screenplays for several of Hitchcock's early British films (including *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *The Thirty-nine Steps*—key films in the Master's *oeuvre*) as well as major Hollywood mainstream efforts, and his script, originally entitled *The Haunted*, was a witty, literate treatment of the theme. But the film's real coup was the selection of Jacques Tourneur, a protégé of producer Val Lewton, as director. Tourneur had directed *Cat People* (1942), *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), and *The Leopard Man* (1943) for Lewton's production unit at RKO, as well as the *noir* classic *Out of the Past* (1947); he was a man of taste and restraint, and proved an inspired choice: he surpassed his work with Lewton, and it is largely due to his efforts that *Night of the Demon* emerged as a classic.

The film was produced in England. Bennett was reasonably faithful to his source, but inevitably certain dissonances were noticeable: the imposition of a fading American actor (Dana Andrews as John Holden) and actress (Peggy Cummins) on an otherwise-all-British cast, and, less defensibly, the intrusion of a love interest; more sensibly, the character of Karswell, deliberately left vague and undefined in the story, was filled out by Irish actor Niall MacGinnis in a standout performance that far outshines Andrews's rather stolid hero, and in this regard the film improves on its source. MacGinnis's Karswell is a bravura creation: a powerful, ruthless yet polished ogre, with something of an Oedipal complex. (Here the influence of Hitchcock is evident.) The depth of characterization is illustrated by his dressing in tattered clothes and clown makeup and frolicking with the children ("I used to make my living like this years ago," he tells Holden. "You see before you Doctor Bobo the Magnificent!"). And something of James's misanthropy comes through: the magic-lantern slides, a nasty and suggestive detail in the story, have been replaced by a cyclone that Karswell conjures up in the midst of the children's party—not as beastly, perhaps, but one appreciates the nod to the source material.

As with his Lewton films, the film demonstrates Tourneur's skill at handling set pieces. The sequence depicting the walk to the Houmfort in *I Walked with a Zombie* is one of the most poetic and graceful passages in the horror genre; likewise, Holden's walk across a forest to reach Karswell's manor house demonstrates Tourneur's sense of *mise-en-scène:* the journey is fraught with unseen danger, and Ted Scaife's monochrome black and white cinematography throughout this night-for-night sequence is unparalleled; there is even a Lewtonesque "bus" (named after a sequence in *Cat People*) when a fir branch springs up in Holden's face. The onset of the demon is superbly handled: Holden looks up and sees a cloud of fire and smoke beginning to materialize. Likewise, the invisible demon leaving smoking footprints in the ground is profoundly unsettling: a perfect example of "unseen" horror. Though he

survives the night, Holden is profoundly shaken and the imminence of the supernatural has finally penetrated his profoundly skeptical mind.

The film's celebrated Clapham Junction finale is similarly dynamic: as the time for his death draws nigh, Holden accosts Karswell on a train and manages to pass the runes back to him. At the appointed moment he is ripped to shreds by the demon he has summoned. The sequence is a model of pacing and sustained tension—and not the least reason for the film's classic status.

Since its release the film has been much criticized for tipping its hand by showing the demon in the opening sequence, thus removing whatever ambiguity might have been created, due to the producer's crass wish to "show the monster." Originally, the plan was for the demon to remain unseen but for the cloud of smoke that pursues Holden through the woods. When executive producer Hal E. Chester demanded a visible demon, one was constructed to resemble the medieval woodcut illustration seen in the film, an impressive enough bit of special effects, but totally at odds with the mood the film is trying to create (and showing the demon so early destroys whatever suspense might be built up regarding its appearance). Bennett was enraged by this (unfortunately far from common) bit of cinematic *gaucherie*, noting that "I had to sit by while Chester made the biggest balls-up of a good script that I have ever seen...[taking] a major movie down to the level of crap." Less charitably, he added that "as far as I'm concerned, if [Chester] walked up my driveway right now, I'd shoot him dead."

Although largely unnoticed at the time of its release, over the years the film attained classic status. In *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, Carlos Clarens noted that "[Tourneur's] experience with Val Lewton shows to a new advantage, and *Night of the Demon* abounds in prosaic situations turning implacably into nightmares. Every flourish is a touch not underlined but understated, ellipsed and just suggested. Unfortunately, the film's producers could not see that this was enough: against Tourneur's wishes, they inserted some atrocious shots of a demon at the very outset of the picture. It is a tribute to the director's skill that his move survives such a monumental blunder" (144–45). David Pirie in *A Heritage of Horror*, who saw the film as "an elegant addition to the ghost story genre or 'Radcliffian' mode which had spawned *Dead of Night*," provided perhaps the most objective commentary: "The reason why *Night of the Demon* was hampered by the special effects is not because they break any general aesthetic rules, but because the film is an exercise in a particular *kind* of horror, namely the Victorian ghost story ... and this confusion has led to a number of hasty accusations, as for example when Carlos Clarens called the opening special effects 'atrocious' which on a basic technical level is quite unjustified. Properly incorporated into a film they could have worked quite well, but here they were simply imposed upon a carefully balanced structure and failed to mesh with it" (44).

Whatever its flaws, *Night of the Demon* remains, doubtless for all time, the definitive "curse" movie. Best of all, it represents skilled artisans working at

their peak without a trace of condescension to produce a literate, intelligent horror film, something of a rarity then as now. (Tony Earnshaw's excellent study of the film, *Beating the Devil: The Making of "Night of the Demon,"* was published in 2005.)

Compared to *Night of the Demon*, other "curse" films have revealed their limitations. The aforementioned *Curse of the Voodoo* (1964), despite its low budget and attendant crudities (down to its awkward American title; it was released in England as *The Curse of Simba*), has some effective moments and deserves at least a modicum of approval for attempting something slightly different. Mike Stacey (Bryant Halliday), a big game hunter in modern-day Africa, kills a sacred lion on Simbasa territory and is cursed by the tribe who revere lions as gods. Although Stacey flees to England he is wracked by unexplained fevers and pursued by ghostly Simbasa warriors who run him down on Hampstead Heath. But do these warriors exist, or are they phantasmal beings of his imagination? There is some room for doubt. In one effective scene Stacey hears the growling of big game cats while walking back to his hotel, and throughout the film there is a disturbing and omnipresent sense of unseen menace. Ultimately Stacey returns to the dark continent (the film begins and ends in Africa) and kills the witch doctor responsible for evoking the curse.

Despite a somewhat obtrusive musical score by Brian Fahey, the film has some effective Val Lewtonish *frissons*—director Lindsay Shonteff knows the full value of a sudden, unfamiliar face at the window—and succeeds despite its basically exploitive nature of the material. Attacked as racist by politically correct film mavens—the film is not p.c. by today's rigorously enforced standards—it nonetheless succeeds, mainly through conscious understatement and solid acting: Halliday, an underrated performer, fares well in the basically unsympathetic leading role, and the cast includes the always dependable Dennis Price. The film's makers had obviously studied the Lewton classics and perhaps inferred that the basic African revenge motif had become somewhat shopworn, requiring a fresh, or at least unconventional, approach. (Certainly, it is in some ways the closest films have gotten to "Pollock and the Porroh Man.") These virtues outweigh its faults, and *Curse of the Voodoo* deserves better than its current obscurity.

Other films have used curses as a starting-point or as a convenient rationale for supernatural occurrences. Mario Bava's stylish Italian-made *La maschera de demonio* (*Mask of the Demon*, released in America as *Black Sunday* [1960]), easily the best of his twenty-odd features, features a curse placed on the descendants of a witch. Loosely based on Gogol's "Vij," the film opens with a legendarily brutal sequence in which the Princess Asa (Barbara Steele, in the first of two parts) and her lover have been accused of worshiping Satan and practicing witchcraft and are sentenced to death. The witch curses the Grand Inquisitor (who happens to be her brother) and vows revenge on his descendants before the mask of Satan—lined inside with sharp spikes—is nailed onto her face. Two centuries pass; her corpse is found by two doctors.

In an extraordinarily unnerving scene one of them cuts himself and a drop of his blood reanimates the corpse. The witch's great-granddaughter, Princess Katia (Steele), meets the young Dr. Gorobec (John Richardson), and they fall in love, a relationship complicated by the fact that Asa has begun stealing Katia's life and youth, transferring it to herself.

Told with unrelenting force, the events unfolding at the pace of a nightmare, this exquisitely photographed film signaled a new direction in cinematic horror: henceforth, the polite films of an earlier day would yield to a more Continental approach to horror, one with its roots in the Grand Guignol: graphic violence, including facial mutilation, and explicit sexuality were now *de rigueur*. This trend would prove detrimental in the long run, but here, with Bava's eye for composition (abetted by Ubaldo Terzano's superb monochrome cinematography), the truly international horror film seemed to open new vistas to the genre. As a result of the film, Steele became a noted horror star—the only female to be accorded this curious honor—yet curiously never worked with Bava again.

Critical acclaim for *Black Sunday* was not universal: Ivan Butler (in *The Horror Film*) wrote that the film "appears to combine horror, beauty and the ludicrous in about equal proportions" (157). Others were more charitable: Carlos Clarens wrote that "the quality of the visual narrative was superb— the best black and white photography to enhance a horror film in the past two decades" (158). And Phil Hardy (*The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies*) had some interesting if not particularly persuasive commentary: "The movie derives its lyrical force and indeed its sense of horror from the knowledge that a woman's sexuality cannot be eliminated and will return, bearing the scars of the violence with which it was repressed, to challenge the order of things. The ultimate threat, according to the movie's narrative logic, is signaled at the end: the possible merger of Asa and Katia into one single image. Only religion (the cross) and cutting keep the two apart. Rarely has guilty sexuality, transformed into a fascinating fear of women, been represented as explicitly" (133). (Hardy may well be the mountebank of horror film criticism, as witness his eccentric, Freudianized, and sometimes downright impenetrable critiques of such relatively inoffensive films as *The Gorgon* and *The Haunting* [both 1963].)

Other films, other curses. The British-made *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors* (1964), the first and best of Amicus's omnibus films, suffered from the usual unevenness endemic to such multipart films, but the voodoo segment, starring Roy Castle as a musician who steals the natives' music and uses it in his act, only to find himself marked for death by the cult, is a witty-send up of "Papa Benjamin," juxtaposing voodoo and modern jazz; in some scenes it anticipates (or parallels, since both were made at the same time) *Curse of the Voodoo*, and, like that film, has been decried as "racist" by politically correct film reviewers with no sense of humor. In its brief running time it showed wit, visual style, and a sly sense of humor and, perhaps most importantly, did not

have enough time to wear out its welcome. The scene in which Castle begins performing the forbidden music, only to incite a tempestuous storm out of nowhere, smashing windows, chasing away patrons, and ultimately bringing the performance to a halt, is simultaneously humorous and chilling.

The Abominable Dr. Phibes (1971), one of the more outrageously campy films of that era, presented Vincent Price as Anton Phibes, who visits the nine curses of Egypt on the nine doctors he thinks killed his beloved wife. The clever script by James Whiton and William Goldstein featured each murder inspired by the biblical account of the plague God wrought upon Pharaoh during the period of the Exodus, which included graphic deaths committed by bats, rats, bees, frogs, and locusts. And Phibes himself is a memorably grotesque character, horrendously disfigured in an auto accident and able to speak only through a mechanical device implanted in his neck. Price had a field day with the role, ably abetted by an excellent cast which included Joseph Cotten, Hugh Griffith, Terry-Thomas, and a youthful Caroline Munro.

Best of all, the film was good to look at. Robert Fuest, who had directed television's *The Avengers*, had a stylish visual sense and a sense of camp and made maximum use of Brian Eatwell's elaborate sets. Indeed, the film would seem to have had something for everyone, but Phil Hardy as usual saw little fun in the endeavor: "Brian Eatwell's lavish and expensive art deco sets are wasted by the picture's crassly undergraduate approach, going for easy laughs rather than exploring the potential of the grotesque variations of generic clichés which the script and casting seem to promise" (228). David Pirie was even less impressed, calling it "[p]erhaps the worst horror film made in England since 1945" (175). Film critics are not a happy lot. But then, you can't please everyone.

Television in the 1960s took up some of the slack from films, but only a few of the horror/science fiction series were notable. NBC's "Thriller," hosted by Boris Karloff, was probably the best of these, adapting many stories from *Weird Tales*, most notably Robert E. Howard's "Pigeons from Hell." Revue Productions paid Cornell Woolrich four thousand dollars for the rights to three of his stories, but "Papa Benjamin" (broadcast March 21, 1961) was the only one with significant horror content. Unfortunately, this was not one of "Thriller's" more notable episodes. It has its strengths: notably the casting of John Ireland, a much underrated actor, in the leading role of Eddie Wilson (the name was changed from Bloch, for obvious reasons), but overall it remained stubbornly unimaginative under Ted Post's unadventurous direction. The milieu (the Caribbean, rather than New Orleans, as in the original story) was convincingly evoked, and the voodoo rites, what we see of them, were competently staged, but the final result is tepid rather than frightening. (In one sense, the television version is an improvement: John Kneubuhl's adaptation of the Woolrich story removed the absurd coincidences that moved the story's plot along.)

More recently the Japanese film *Ringu* (1998), based on the novel by Kôji Suzuki, and the American remake *The Ring* (2002) involve a cursed videotape as a transmitter of death. But curses do not seem to excite the imagination of current filmmakers, who seem more interested in pyrotechnical displays or gratuitous special effects. The curse is too primal to require such visual aids.

Curses will no doubt continue to be a recurrent motif in supernatural fiction and films. The basic appeal and consequent promise of the theme is simply too well suited to the tale of terror to be ignored. The hope is that writers in future can treat the theme with sufficient imagination to be worthy of the work that has gone before.

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The Devil

by Darrell Schweitzer

The belief in demons is as old as mankind, and certainly the Judeo-Christian Satan or Devil—the familiar horned, tailed, winged fallen angel who rules over Hell and works for the damnation of mankind—has his roots in earlier cultures. Obvious antecedents or sources include Tryphon, Set, and other sinister deities of the ancient Egyptians, and certainly the Persian dualistic system, which posits an evil spirit, Ahriman, in cosmic opposition to the benevolent Ahura Mazda. These ideas must have greatly influenced the ancient

Hebrews during their sojourn in Egypt and especially during the Babylonian Captivity.

The Devil is, however, curiously absent from the Bible, mentioned in the Old Testament only as the serpent of Genesis (identified with Satan in Revelation 12:9); as the "Lucifer, Son of Morning," reported fallen from Heaven in Isaiah 14:12; in such puzzling, fragmentary passages such as 1 Chronicles 21:1, in which the Devil seems to have inspired the first national census ("Satan stood against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel"); and as the "Adversary" who functions as God's prosecuting attorney in Job. Satan, in a more familiar form, does famously tempt Christ in the New Testament, but it was only in early Christian times that the Church fathers worked out that the Old Testament mentions all refer to the same entity and that this is a fallen angel, the opponent of human salvation. The Devil, then, may be safely said to be a product of the first few centuries of the Christian era, essentially an early medieval invention. Some of his attributes and legend may stem from select passages of Revelation, others from the apocryphal Book of Enoch, which gives lists of the fallen angels. His traditional physical appearance is essentially that of a degraded Pan or a satyr, with perhaps some deliberately insulting allusion to the Horned God of the Celts.

For centuries, most literary accounts of demonic activities occurred in saints' legends, for the Devil seems to have devoted vast and futile energies toward virtually every notable on the liturgical calendar, most famously St. Anthony, whose ordeal in the desert, confronted by monstrous shapes, inspired so much later art. (Where St. Anthony patiently endured, St. Dunstan is reported to have turned the tables and seized the Devil by the nose with red-hot tongs.)

Nevertheless, some of the most familiar parts of the myth, such as Satan's role as emperor of Hell with an elaborate court hierarchy, were established quite late. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) declared once and for all that devils are indeed fallen angels. Satan may have acquired his pitchfork much later still, in nineteenth-century poster art.

The Devil makes his debut in English literature in Anglo-Saxon poetry, with an account of the Fall of the Angels in what scholars refer to as Genesis B, and in a similar poem, "Christ and Satan," both from about the ninth century. Genesis B strikingly prefigures John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, although it is very doubtful that Milton ever read the work of his anonymous predecessor. The Satan of Genesis B is a heroic Anglo-Saxon war-chief, of "unconquerable will," defying God with "the courage never to submit or yield." Perhaps seeing that their still half-pagan flock was not quite getting the right idea, Anglo-Saxon poet-monks next produced "Christ and Satan," in which a sorrowing Devil, rebuked by his followers for his rashness, yearns to return to Heaven. A later section of the same poem recounts the legend of the Harrowing of Hell, in which Christ, during the interval between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, descends into Hell to overpower Satan and rescue the souls of those righteous

folk who had accumulated there between the Fall of Man and Christ's redemption of mankind on the cross. (This was a popular theme in later medieval art.)

During the centuries in which the Devil commanded universal belief and dread, his appearances in literature were few and far between. In medieval romance we read that King Arthur's wizard Merlin was the son of a devil (though not *the* Devil necessarily), but nevertheless redeemed, although retaining an uncanny nature. Devils went scurrying across the stage in mystery plays of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, and certainly appeared in painting and sculpture, doing their worst to sinners. The gateway to the infernal regions was often depicted as a literal Hellmouth, like the mouth a large fish or dragon, flames and frolicking demons within, toothy jaws gaping wide to devour the wicked. But certainly the most original and memorable image of Satan to come out of the Middle Ages is the brooding, grotesque, winged giant of Dante's *Inferno*, frozen waist-deep in a lake of ice, trapped at the Earth's core, forever grinding the worst of human traitors (Brutus, Cassius, and Judas Iscariot) in his jaws. This image was brilliantly rendered by the French artist Gustave Doré, who illustrated Dante in the nineteenth century.

. . . If he were beautiful
As he is hideous now, and yet did dare
To scowl upon his Maker, well from him
May all our misery flow. Ph, what a sight!
How passing strange it seem'd, when I did spy
Upon his head three faces: one at the front
Of hue vermilion, the other two with this
Midway each shoulder join'd and at the crest;
The right 'twixt wan and yellow seem'd; the left
To look on, such as come from whence old Nile
Stoops to the lowlands. Under each shot forth
Two mighty wings, enormous as became
A bird so vast. Sails never such such I saw
Outstretched on the wide sea. No plumes had they,
But were in texture like a bat; and these
He flapp'd i' th' air that from him issued still
Three winds, wherewith Cocytus to its depth
Was frozen. At six eyes he wept: the tears
Adown three chins distill'd with bloody foam.
At every mouth his teeth a sinner champ'd,
Bruised as with ponderous engine; so that three
In this guise were tormented.

Dante, Inferno *35.32–53 (trans. Henry Francis Cary)*

There are traces of the Devil in late medieval folk ballads, such as those collected by James Francis Child, with some sinister hints (as in "Tam Lin") that Fairyland is a tributary to Hell and that kidnapped mortals are sacrificed to Satan as every seven years a "tithe." The riddle song "The False Knight on the Road" consists of a series of questions and answers in which the "knight," obviously the Devil, attempts to trick a clever boy, who gets the best of him in the end:

> "I think I hear a bell,"
> said the false knight on the road.
> "And you can go to Hell,"
> said the wee boy and still he stood. (Child 3)

The Devil, it seems, is a very literal, legalistic spirit, who is often tripped up by careful wordplay. In future centuries he would get into a great deal of difficulty that way.

The Evil One fares somewhat better in "The Demon Lover" (called "House Carpenter" in most American versions), in which a woman's sailor boyfriend returns after many years, only to find her married. He promises her riches and convinces her to abandon her husband and child and sail off with him. But soon she begins to miss her child and repent her folly. It is too late. In some versions, the ship merely sinks. In others, it wasn't really her lover after all, but a demon in disguise, who now assumes his gigantic, demonic form and breaks the ship over his knee.

The ending is suitably bleak:

> What hills, what hills, are those my love,
> those hills so dark and low?
> Those are the hills of Hell my love,
> where you and I must go. (Child 243)

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for all their artistic and intellectual flowering, were a reactionary period, in which the established Church struggled to retain control against a proliferation of heretics, and the witch-burning mania was at its height. This was the Devil's heyday. When, about 1230, Friar Roger Bacon performed an experiment with light, demonstrating the colors of the spectrum, and the onlookers fled in terror, Bacon never faced the fate of Giordano Bruno, or even of Galileo. Had Bacon lived 300 years later, he might not have been so lucky. In 1530, he would have been one more toasted wizard or heretic among thousands.

It would seem that such widespread belief actually induced some people to attempt Satanism, as in the case of the notorious Gilles de Rais (or de Retz), the Marshal of France, comrade-in-arms of Joan of Arc, and inspiration for the Bluebeard legend, who attempted to support his extravagant lifestyle

through genuine Satanic activities, including sacrifices, conjurations, and the serial murder of hundreds of children. Shakespeare may have made the connection when, in *Henry VI, Part 1*, with all due English patriotism, he depicts Joan of Arc as a witch and demonolater.

With the Reformation, the Devil underwent a major evolution, becoming much more human, even at times a personable companion. Some have remarked that Protestant devils were handsomer than Catholic ones, those of medieval art being more often grotesque and beast-headed, horned, spiked, and clawed. (Satan certainly did not tempt only Catholic saints; Martin Luther is reported to have hurled his inkpot at him.)

As Hamlet observes, the Devil "hath the power to assume a pleasing shape," and it is as the more familiar, dashing but slightly sinister gentleman that Mephistopheles appears to Faust.

The real Johannes Faust sees to have been a predecessor to Cagliostro, a charismatic charlatan who flourished in Germany in the early sixteenth century. He performed tricks, gained a reputation for prophecy, and claimed that his powers came from the Devil. The best proof of his supernatural ability might be that he somehow escaped the stake. His claims of demonism were taken at face value, and, as soon as he was dead, fanciful publications called *Faustbuchs* began to appear relating his adventures. Many stories formerly told about Roger Bacon, or about Gerbert, the noted intellectual who became Pope Sylvester II at the end of the tenth century, were now told about Faust, including the one in which he builds a brazen head that can speak and foretell the future.

The main elements of the Faust legend are readily familiar: that Faustus, a scholar of Wittenberg (the very university where Luther taught), desiring more knowledge and power than he could obtain by conventional means, made a pact with the Devil, whereby all his wishes were to be granted for twenty-four years, after which the Devil would claim him. Faustus may have gained knowledge and wealth, but he also spent much of his time frivolously, playing jokes on the Holy Roman Emperor and on the pope, riding a barrel up out of a cellar, flying through the air, and resurrecting Helen of Troy. In the end, he meets a hideous doom within earshot of other scholars, who, when they break into the room, find only bloody traces.

The story is most familiar to English readers through *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe (1594), which may be truncated from a longer version than is now extant, as it has wonderful poetry at the opening and close, but not much in the middle. There is, as is demonstrated by later versions, an inherent problem in the structure of the story itself: once Faust has signed the pact, he is damned. Mephistopheles then acts as his companion and mentor, guiding him through life, the world, and even a preview of the afterlife, but incident only piles upon incident, without much bearing on the key issue of whether or not Faustus can get out of the deal and be redeemed. The story may thus be padded or shortened as the author wishes.

Its obvious allegorical structure makes it ideal for moralism and for satire, as in the whole subgenre of "Satanic tours," which emerged later. Marlowe is at least brief and to the point: the pact, hijinks, and an intensely dramatic damnation scene. In the early nineteenth century, the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe managed to elaborate the story enormously (*Faust*, in two parts, 1808 and 1832), adding a love sub-plot, and Faust's eventual redemption.

Both versions of the Faust story have proven enormously popular and influential over the years. The myth itself is integral to the whole condition of Western, scientific man, with its question of the limits of knowledge. It has been used allegorically by writers as diverse as Thomas Mann (*Doctor Faustus*, 1947) and Thomas M. Disch (*Camp Concentration*, 1968). Michael Swanwick's *Jack Faust* (1997) is a notable modern rendition. Swanwick's devil is, perhaps, an extra-cosmic entity devoted to the extermination of mankind, but the results are pretty much the same, save that the damnation for this Faust is external, and involves the whole world. As the "demon" gives Faust more scientific knowledge, human progress is accelerated. The sixteenth century has somehow become the twentieth at Faust is now Hitler or someone very much like him. With a hint of an atomic holocaust to come, the book ends, without hope of salvation, in a universe without a God, where Hell is what Faust has made on Earth.

After the Faust legend, the most notable product of the Renaissance and reformation period, as far as deviltry is concerned, is John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667). This attempt to "justify the ways of God to man" is one of the great works of English literature, and recounts the story of the War in Heaven and the Fall of Man in considerably more detail than anywhere in Scripture. Some of Milton's inventive touches have a satirical edge, as when the rebel angels, as an ultimate expression of wickedness, invent gunpowder.

Of primary interest is Milton's conception of Satan, who is the antihero of the work, with a manner almost prefiguring Byron. Milton the poet must have sensed that evil is more dramatic than good. His Satan gets all the good lines. He is an intelligent, proud rebel of considerable nobility. Because of Milton's close association with Oliver Cromwell's government, it is unlikely that any of Milton's fellow Puritans took him to task for it, but he was Hell's best public-relations man for centuries. In many ways, the effect of *Paradise Lost* is to justify the Devil's ways to man.

Milton's is a distinctly Protestant Satan, not the bestial creature of the Middle Ages. He is a revolutionary, who at times must have reminded readers of John Hus or Martin Luther defying the pope or of Cromwell defying the king. When cast into Hell, the Miltonic Satan finds a certain solace:

> . . . Here at least
> We shall be free; the Almighty hath not build here
> for his envy; will not drive us hence:

> Here we may reign secure; and in my choice
> To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:
> Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.
> (1.258–63)

The world of the Renaissance and Reformation was one of spirits and magic amplified by the greater articulation of rediscovered classical learning. A period that can produce *Paradise Lost*, massive religious warfare, and tens of thousands of witch-burnings can only be described as the Devil's finest hour.

In this context, something must be said about the Salem witch panic of 1692 and Cotton Mather. The Salem trials were, even for their time, an anachronism, but almost inevitable because of the Massachusetts colony's unique status, after the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, as the last redoubt of hardcore Puritanism, which caused Mather and other leaders of the colony to assume a particularly paranoid world-view. They saw themselves as the only upholders of righteousness and truth, surrounded by a wilderness of evil, literally ruled, the New Englanders believed, by Satan himself, whom the Native Americans worshipped in orgiastic rites. While this milieu produced little that could be called literature about the Devil, certainly nothing in the way of imaginative writing (one can presume Mather's grim disapproval of Milton's sneaking admiration for the Fallen Angel), Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) has much to say about the Devil and witchcraft. For all Mather was progressive in many ways, a natural philosopher and botanist, and an early advocate of smallpox vaccination, in his belief in witchcraft and his terror of the Devil he steadfastly clung to the past. He wrote his book at the time of the ongoing witch-panic, to justify the execution of witches on the grounds that, indeed, the Devil resented the invasion of the righteous into territories formerly ruled entirely by himself and therefore particularly desired to destroy the Massachusetts colony. The whole dark episode began American history on a somber note and greatly shaped the imaginations of later, more literary writers, particularly Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose "Young Goodman Brown" (*New-England Magazine*, April 1835; in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, 1846) specifically evokes the old Salem witchcraft panic, with its description of a secret meeting of a coven in a lonely place, where the witches (to the protagonist's dismay, townspeople he knows and respects, including his wife) worship the Black Man (Satan) and sign his book. Hawthorne's major novels, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), contain hints of the supernatural and have done much to keep the memory of New England's witchcraft era alive in American culture.

In the subsequent Age of Reason, the Devil's status declined. He often became the object of skeptical satire, often a figure of fun. Alain René Le Sage's *Le Diable boiteux* (1707, revised 1725, translated into English in 1708 as *Le Diable Boiteux, or The Devil upon Two Sticks*, sometimes called *Asmodeus, or the Devil upon Two Sticks*) is a "satanic tour" of a post-Faustian

I believe, there was never a poor Plantation, more pursued by the *Wrath* of the
Devil than our poor *New-England* . . . It was a rousing *alarm* to the Devil, when
a great company of English *Protestants* and *Puritans*, came to erect Evangelical
Churches, in a corner of the World, where he had reign'd without any
controul for many Ages; and it is a very vexing *Eye-sore* to the Devil, that our
Lord Christ should be known, and own'd, and preached in this *howling
Wilderness.* Wherefor he has left no *Stone unturned*, that he might undermine
his Plantation and force us out of our Country.

Cotton Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World *(1693)*

variety for satirical purposes. A student Zambullo, a Spanish student, escapes
out a window from an inconvenient amour, hides in a magician's workshop,
and discovers Asmodeus, the devil of the title (who is on crutches because he
was bested in a fight by a larger devil) imprisoned in a bottle. In return for
release, the devil promises to instruct the student in the ways of the world.
Zambullo frees Asmodeus and is whisked to a high place, where the devil
makes all the rooftops of Madrid disappear, and points out the various foibles
and sins of the inhabitants thus revealed. Several interrelated plots develop
from this, but in the end the magician, returning to his workshop, discovers
the devil missing and summons and binds him once more. The story is social
satire and a humorous romp. The devil here, admittedly a mere lesser devil
and not Satan himself, has no majesty and certainly inspires no dread in the
reader. This sort of "tour" reminds one of Mephistopheles conducting Faust
through the world and has been followed up in later novels, many from
Eastern Europe, most notably *The Master and Marguerita* by the Russian
writer Mikhail Bulgakov (1891–1940). This work was written in the late
1930s but lampoons the Stalinist regime and of course could not be published
at the time. It circulated underground as a *samizdat* before being published in
censored form in 1966 (translated into English, 1967). The story begins with
Satan visiting Moscow in 1935 and debating with a poet about the existence
of God and the Devil. It then turns into a "satanic tour," indicting the cor-
ruption of Soviet society.

   In the Romantic era, the Devil plays a significant role in many of the major
Gothic novels. Here, at least, Satan has regained a certain dignity, if only, one
sometimes suspects, for effect. Once more, infernal forces are the object of
fear. In Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), one demon, in the form
of a woman, seduces the title character, who departs from the path of virtue
to commit a series of outrageous crimes. Finally captured by the Inquisition,
he sells his soul to Satan in order to regain his liberty. The Fiend appears with
suitably thunderous effects and bears the monk aloft, only to drop him down
a cliffside to a painful death. Lewis wrote more for novelty and sensation-
alism than out of any serious belief, but his book was shocking, even regarded
as obscene in its day.

E.T.A. Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixir* (1816) has many plot-points in common with Lewis's novel, with a monk being led astray by the Devil in pursuit of a lover, but significant differences, including a doppelgänger motif and a happy ending. Clearly though, Satan is the evil, active agency behind all the trouble.

In James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), the Devil appears in human form (or, according to some interpretations, may be a figment of the protagonist's guilt-ridden imagination, or his doppelgänger) to cause evil, including murder and suicide. Hogg (1771–1834), a protégé of Sir Walter Scott and noted poet, wrote many supernatural tales, often based on folklore. At least two concern the Devil. "The Witches of Traquair" (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, April 1828) tells how witches offer to deliver a young man's sweetheart to him if he will sign a pact with the Devil. "George Dobson's Visit to Hell" (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, May 1827) is about an Edinburgh cab driver whose customer bids him drive all the way to Hell. Hogg was more inclined to fantasy than his mentor, Scott, although the latter did produce "Wandering Willie's Tale" as an episode in his novel *Redgauntlet* (1824), a much-anthologized story about a Scotsman who braves the terrors of Hell to get a rent receipt from his wicked (and now dead) landlord to avoid eviction.

The Devil is also a major force in one of the greatest of all Gothics, Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), a complex and episodic novel about a man who sold his soul to Satan in exchange for long life and magical powers. If he can find someone to take his place, he can yet be saved, but for centuries now, this quest has been in vain, and he has become the archetype of the Accursed Wanderer, alongside Cain and the Wandering Jew.

With the waning of the Gothic novel, the Devil's status again diminished. A few later stories took him seriously, such as William Harrison Ainsworth's *The Lancashire Witches* (1848), telling how the witches of northern England must pay for the protection of the evil one with an annual human sacrifice. But more frequently, the Devil became a figure of fun, as stories of his doings (and often how he was outwitted by mortals) appeared with increasing frequency throughout the nineteenth century.

The new attitude is particularly evident in Washington Irving's "The Devil and Tom Walker" (in *Tales of a Traveller*, 1824), which presents a suitably impressive Devil, dark, horned, and hairy, with an eerie propensity for walking down into the ground amid the ruins of an old Indian fort and the even more disquieting habit of chopping down trees with people's names on them, causing those people to die. But this same demon nearly meets his match in the title character's shrewish wife, who costs the demon several tufts of hair before her heart and liver are found wrapped in her apron, dangling from a tree. Tom Walker, a notorious miser, not particularly sorry to lose his equally greedy spouse, then strikes a deal with the Devil, that Captain Kidd's treasure, buried nearby, will be put at his disposal. But the Devil insists on terms: that

such money shall be made to do the Devil's work. When even the hard-hearted Walker refuses to invest in the slave trade, the Fiend does not insist, but is content to see him become a usurer. Tom Walker prospers, becoming wealthy, powerful, and, thinking to cheat the Devil at last, a religious hypocrite. But one day when he is foreclosing a mortgage, he is foolish enough to exclaim, "The Devil take me if I have made a farthing!" and, of course, the Devil does. All this is narrated in an extremely effective but somewhat arch manner, as an old wives' tale, or as local New England color. It is clear that Irving's attitude toward things infernal is very far removed from Cotton Mather's.

Also light-hearted is one of the classics of German Romanticism from the same period. *Peter Schlemihl* by Adalbert von Chamisso (1813) tells of a man who sells, not his soul, but his *shadow* to the Devil in exchange for a never-empty purse of gold. Throughout numerous adventures, the Devil keeps trying to trade the shadow back for Peter's soul. The story prefigures Lord Dunsany's *The Charwoman's Shadow* (1926), in which the hero sells his shadow to a magician rather than to the Devil, but with the similar result that he is regarded as uncanny by all who encounter him.

Satan is made entirely ridiculous in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Devil in the Belfry" ([Philadelphia] *Saturday Chronicle*, May 18, 1839) and "Never Bet the Devil Your Head" (*Graham's Magazine*, September 1841), both of which are minor, farcical tales. J. Sheridan Le Fanu, one of the greatest ghost-story writers of the period, treats the now increasingly familiar deal-with-the-Devil theme somewhat more seriously in "Sir Dominick's Bargain" (*All the Year Round*, July 6, 1872), but ends with a gimmick. Sir Dominick thinks himself safe when the appointed day passes without the Devil coming to collect his soul, but he has forgotten the leap year. Much more substantial is "The Haunted Baronet" (*Belgravia*, July–November 1870), which begins with a situation typical of Victorian mysteries—a feud between two families, and in wrongful hands—and ends with the villain realizing that his wealth has come from the Devil, and he has doomed himself by the bargain.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Devil most often appeared in fiction as a vehicle for satire. Richard Garnett wrote a funny, decidedly anticlerical story called "The Demon Pope" (in his 1888 collection, *The Twilight of the Gods*). The learned Gerbert, the future Pope Sylvester II, has found favor with the Devil, and his career is accelerated by Satanic influence. In return, the Devil wants a boon, which he will take instead of a soul if the Gerbert will grant it. Twenty years pass. Gerbert is now reigning as Sylvester II, and the Devil shows up, asking to be made a cardinal, so he himself can become pope eventually. His intention as pope is to enforce rigid orthodoxy, suppress knowledge, burn books (including Pope Sylvester's), and otherwise stifle the human spirit. Rather than allow this, Sylvester is ready to go to Hell, but he makes a counter-offer. If the Devil will become pope for just a few hours, he will perhaps give up all such ambitions. Satan agrees, so Sylvester works a spell, causing the demon to assume the appearance of the pope. The

real pope conceals himself, while jealous cardinals attempt to murder the Devil, thinking him Sylvester. But when they discover that the "pope" has a cloven hoof, they fall over one another in apology, since each one of them has long since sold out to the forces of darkness. Each tries to make a special deal for himself, more corrupt than the last. Even Satan is appalled after a while, and as soon as the spell wears off, he disappears through the ceiling.

Mark Twain's use of Satan in his satirical writings is a bit more substantial, including numerous sketches dealing with events in Eden, Satan's side of things, and the callousness of God, whom he regarded as a negligent and abusive parent, who did not give Adam and Eve the ability to distinguish right from wrong, and then punished them for disobeying him. "That Day in Eden" in *Europe and Elsewhere* (1923) is purportedly from Satan's own diary, and gives his side of the story, with a description of Adam and Eve in their infantile innocence, and how they were corrupted and destroyed by the worst of all curses—Moral Sense. In a sequel, "Eve's Speaks," the first Mother expresses her incomprehension at the murder of Abel and the concept of Death. Satan bleakly concludes, "Death has entered the world, the creatures are perishing; one of the Family is fallen; the product of the Moral Sense is complete. The Family think ill of death—they will change their minds." Similar satires in other volumes include "Adam's Diary," "Eve's Diary," and "Papers of the Adam Family," in all of which the Devil is treated sympathetically, even sentimentally.

Twain's most famous work in this vein is *The Mysterious Stranger*, which was published posthumously, in an adulterated version in 1916, and as the author wrote it (or as he wrote three versions, all of them fragmentary) only much later. The Satan of this story is not *the* Satan, the fallen angel, but one of that Satan's relatives, of the same name, who remained unfallen and is therefore beyond human conceptions of good and evil. He lacks the Moral Sense and plays with humans as a child might with ants. This stranger conducts the story's hero on a "tour" very much as Mephistopheles did for Faust, with disquieting results. His miracles tend to have nasty results. The angel remains completely indifferent to human suffering and reveals that life is meaningless, perhaps only a dream.

Another sentimentalized Satan of the same era, but on a much lower literary level, is that of Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895). Corelli was one of the most popular authors in English for a brief time, but a spectacularly awful writer and a legend in her own mind, whose works combined genuine spiritualist belief with narcissistic hysteria of epic proportions. Later in life she began to believe herself the reincarnation of Shakespeare and the critics to be joined in a (very likely Satanic) cabal against her. In *The Sorrows of Satan*, a promising young author unwittingly makes a pact with the Devil—a sophisticated fellow who does his tempting in English drawing rooms—exchanging his soul for good reviews and higher royalties. But when he realizes what he has done, he has an interview with God and manages to extricate himself. Corelli herself appears in the character of Mavis Clair, a

beloved and virtuous novelist hated by the evil critics. This work was so popular that it was filmed during the Silent era.

One modern work more or less in Corelli's spiritualist tradition, though pleasantly lacking her self-delusion and just plain bad writing, is Marilyn "Mattie" Brahen's *Claiming Her* (2003), in which a contemporary young mother, who has been psychic all her life and talks to spirit guides, senses a mysterious presence which turns out to be Bael, to whom she was betrothed 35,000 years ago, before the Fall of the Angels. The novel broadens into a backstory for the book of Genesis and more, containing many details and relationships which, presumably, later legends distorted. Lucifer would have been the heroine's father-in-law had not things gone awry, when Adam and Eve (who are brother and sister in this version), not the first humans at all, but "angelfolk," defied the Creator and went to Earth out of curiosity, only to find themselves stranded there and made mortal. Lucifer is jealous of the attention humans subsequently get, he leads a rebellion, and he and his son Bael are swept away. Now Bael is back, romance follows, and the heroine is directed to seek a reproachment between Heaven and Hell.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the familiar Devil, Old Scratch, the legalistic-minded gentleman who is always eager to bargain for souls but usually cheated out of them after rendering his side of the bargain faithfully, was firmly established in the popular imagination. In another of Mark Twain's humorous sketches, "Sold to Satan" (1904), it is revealed that the Devil and Hell are fueled, not by coal and brimstone, but by radium, the properties of which were then only just being explored by Madame Curie.

Twain's description of Satan's "pleasing shape" (to echo Hamlet's phrase) is interesting:

> Through the closed door, and noiseless, came the modern Satan, just as we see him on the stage—tall, slender, graceful, in tights and trunks, a short cape mantling his shoulders, a rapier at his side, a single drooping feather in his jaunty cap, and on his intellectual face the well-known and high-bred Mephistophelian smile.
>
> But he was not a fire coal; he was not red, no! On the contrary. He was a softly glowing, richly smoldering torch, column, statue of pallid light, faintly tinted with a spiritual green, and out from him a lunar splendor flowed such as one sees glinting from the crinkled waves of tropic seas when the moon rides high in cloudless skies.

By the end of the sketch, Satan has promised Twain the secret of radio-activity and his fortune is made.

It was the comic Devil like Twain's, with or without radioactivity, which had become dominant. Certainly he was not a creature to inspire fear, and for all his superficial cleverness, must have been fairly stupid, judging by the rate at which mortals got the best of him. In James Branch Cabell's *Jurgen* (1919)

''None the less,'' observes Jurgen, ''it does not behove God-fearing persons to speak with disrespect of the divinely appointed Prince of Darkness. To your further confusion, consider this monarch's industry! Day and night you may detect him toiling at the task Heaven set for him. That is a thing can be said of few communicants and no monks. Think, too, of his fine artistry, as evidenced in all the perilous and lovely snares of the world, which it is your business to combat and mine to lend money upon. Why, but for him, we both would be vocationless! Then, too, consider his philanthropy, and deliberate how insufferable would be if you and I, and all our fellow parishioners, were to-day hobnobbing with other beasts in the Garden which we pretend to desid-erate on Sundays! To arise with the swine and lie down with the hyena? – Oh, intolerable!''

Thus he ran on, devising reasons for not thinking too harshly of the Devil. Most of it was an abridgement of some verses Jurgen had composed, in the shop when business was slack.

''I consider that to be stuff and nonsense,'' was the monk's glose.

''No doubt your notion is sensible,'' observed the pawnbroker: ''But mine is prettier.''

Then Jurgen passed the Cistercian Abbey, and was approaching Bellegarde, when he met a black gentleman, who saluted him and said:

''Thanks, Jurgen, for your good word.''

James Branch Cabell, Jurgen *(1919)*

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the hero does not sell his soul, but the Devil, flattered that the pedantic Jurgen argued in his favor just for the sake of arguing, gives the middle-aged pawnbroker his youth back and sets him off on a quest for the ideal woman, which forms most of the actual of the novel. The Devil here is a fairly dim and befuddled fellow, but God is even worse. Heaven, we learn, was created to satisfy the delusions of Jurgen's grandmother. Hell, in which Jurgen sojourns for a while, can be a pleasant, albeit torrid, place, as long as one does not insist, out of masochistic pride, on being tortured. When Jurgen does not, the overworked demons are much relieved.

Cabell continued working such themes throughout his career. His last novel, *The Devil's Own Dear Son* (1949), is about a man who discovers that his real father was Red Samael, a demon of lechery. When he confronts his father, lengthy philosophical harangues result. This is nowhere near Cabell's best novel, but it ends, as most of his do, with the hero accepting his limi-tations and compromising his ideals.

Probably the most famous of all twentieth-century deal-with-the-Devil stories is Stephen Vincent Benét's ''The Devil and Daniel Webster'' (*Saturday Evening Post*, October 24, 1936), a charming, folkloristic account of how the greatest American lawyer saves a man's soul by breaking the Devil's contract in the Devil's own court, with a jury consisting of the worst criminals in Hell

and Judge Hathorne (infamous hanging-judge of Salem and an ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne) presiding. Satan, herein actually referred to as Mister Scratch, is the classic demonic gentleman, "a soft-spoken, dark-dressed stranger," from whom dogs run away howling. He collects souls like butterflies, and is considerably more sinister than Mark Twain's or James Branch Cabell's devils, but Daniel Webster defeats him by sheer eloquence.

Fantastic literature continued to abound in devils, but seldom frightening ones. In Anatole France's *The Revolt of the Angels* (1914) as in David H. Keller's *The Devil and the Doctor* (1940) we meet sympathetic devils, who argue that the Bible and other such writings are merely the propaganda of the winning side. In the France novel, an overeducated guardian angel discovers that Christianity is a fraud and that Jehovah is not the greatest of all gods, and he leads a second Revolt, armed with the tools of modern science, until Satan, who sees the futility of such an endeavor, calls it off. France also wrote a short story, "Lucifer," in which the fiend berates a medieval artist depicting him as bestial and ugly when he is not. In the Keller novel, the doctor of the title gains the Devil's protection, even friendship, when he is willing to listen to the other side of the story. According to Satan, Jehovah is the villain of the piece.

Another sympathetic Devil appears in two novels by the Irish writer Mervyn Wall, *The Unfortunate Fursey* (1946) and *The Return of Fursey* (1948). The setting is early medieval Ireland. In the great monastery of Clonmacnoise, the cell of Brother Fursey has been penetrated by devils (the grotesque, pre-Reformation kind) because he is too slow of tongue and wit to say his prayers in time. This gets Fursey thrown out into the world, where he is followed across the landscape by a great horde of demons and quite inadvertently gains a reputation as a sorcerer. (In truth, the only magic trick he knows is how to toss a rope over a rafter and pull down a mug of beer.) Much persecuted by Church and State, Fursey comes to the attention of Satan, who appears in the guise of a debonair Byzantine gentleman. By the time Fursey has escaped burning, the Devil has made a scandalous deal with the Irish Church: that if the Church will turn a blind eye to crimes of violence and vengeance, the Devil will refrain from tempting Irishmen with sex.

In the sequel, Fursey, having escaped to England on a broom, now finds no other course open to him except wickedness. He sells his soul to Satan and attempts to become the sorcerer he is alleged to be, attending a witches' sabbat, but embarrassing everybody by being too squeamish to let his long-suffering familiar suck his blood. He is as incapable of great evil as he is of great good, and longs to be back in the monastery kitchen cutting vegetables, which is where he belongs. But that is lost to him, and he has no place in the world.

The *Fursey* books are among the very best of their kind, achieving a depth of tragedy for all their comedy, not from fear of the Devil but out of appreciation of the human condition. Numerous other humorous Devil books fail to reach

The Devil's Autograph?

We've seen it in so many movies and stories. When the sorcerer is ready to sell his soul, the Devil conveniently produces an impressive document to be signed (often in blood), which he then spirits away, presumably to be filed in some bureaucratic Hall of Records in the infernal regions. He has even been known to whip out such a document later on to remind his duped victim of their bargain. In any case, all sources agree that, prior to the invention of photocopiers or even carbon paper, *the Devil kept original document.*

Nevertheless, an actual copy of such a Satanic compact was admitted as evidence in a French court in 1634. How it got there has never been clear. The document, which still exists, contains a nearly two pages of text, followed by assorted squiggles, symbols, and the alleged autograph Satan himself, plus those of witnessing devils Beelzebub, Lucifer, Elimi, Leviathan, Astaroth, and Baalbarith.

This might seem an amusing footnote to a history of human credulity, but the circumstances were decidedly unfunny. Skeptics may suspect that the unfortunate Father Urbain Grandier was set up by his personal enemy, the Canon Mignon, confessor to the Ursuline convent at Loudon. Mignon encouraged the abbess to claim that she was possessed by the demon Asmodeus. When Mignon staged a public exorcism, the abbess claimed that Grandier had sent the demon into her. Before long, at Mignon's suggestion, or by contagious hysteria typical of the times, several more nuns were possessed. The Bishop of Bordeaux suppressed the proceedings, but a couple years later trouble flared up again. Grandier was apparently a man of great charm, but with a talent for making enemies. Some of them, with political connections, involved the famous and powerful Cardinal Richelieu in the case. Grandier's doom was sealed. He was arrested for witchcraft and hideously tortured. Eleven possessed nuns were produced as evidence. Grandier's actual compact with the Devil was produced. A contemporary woodcut of Grandier's execution, possibly by an eyewitness, contains a particularly ghastly detail. Unlike most such victims, he is shown *seated* as he is burned at the stake. We know why: his legs had been crushed to jelly during his interrogation and he was unable to stand. Despite this, he maintained his innocence to the end. Even the abbess retracted her testimony, once she saw how far things had gotten out of hand. This was quickly dismissed as an attempt by Satan to save his servant, Grandier. But if Satan cared about Grandier, why did he allow the signed document to fall into the hands of the authorities? In the days of the witchcraft mania, asking logical questions like that could be dangerous. No one did.

The woodcut shows Grandier, burning, with black, winged devils among the smoke, waiting to carry off his soul. Few people at the time doubted, or dared voice doubt, regarding his guilt. So potent was the belief that, after Grandier was dead, a further attempt was made to exorcise the demons from

the possessed nuns. This was dangerous work. One of the exorcists, Father Surin, left a description of how it felt when a devil invaded his own body, as if he suddenly had ''two souls.''

And Satan left his autograph, the most ''authenticated'' specimen in human hands.

The Grandier case has been the subject of a nonfiction book, *The Devils of Loudon* by Aldous Huxley (1952), a play by John Whiting, and a film by Ken Russell, *The Devils* (1971).

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this standard. Some, like *Ladies in Hades* (1928) and *Gentlemen in Hades* (1930) by Frederic Arnold Kummer, are ephemeral satires of the Flapper Era. Douglas Wallop's *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant* (1954) is about a baseball fan who sells his soul to the Devil in order to help his team win. This is the basis for the Broadway musical *Damn Yankees*. Robert Nathan, a writer of sentimental fantasies, produced several ironic, sympathetic portraits of the Devil, most notably that in *The Innocent Eve* (1951), in which the Devil attempts to take charge of the atomic bomb and prevent the destruction of the Earth.

The brilliant short story writer John Collier (who, intriguingly, wrote a screenplay for *Paradise Lost*) turned out several memorable stories about the Devil or at least about demons, the most famous of which, ''Thus I Refute Beelzy'' (*Atlantic Monthly*, October 1940), famously manages to end on a note of gruesome shock, despite its satirical underpinnings. A child, Small Simon, plays by himself all the time, though he claims to have a playmate, Mr. Beelzy. His father, Big Simon, who is very much given to the modern way of doing things—the story ridicules psychological fads of the time—proposes to talk to his son, man-to-man, and arrive at the reasonable conclusion that Mr. Beelzy is imaginary. But underneath Big Simon's reasonableness is an old-fashioned threat of force. Underneath the boy's fantasy is an old-fashioned demon, Beelzebub, who devours Big Simon, but for one morsel, a shoe, with a foot still in it, found on the landing of the stairs. This story has been widely reprinted and is enormously influential. It is the origin of numerous demonic ''imaginary playmate'' and ''evil child'' stories, though in this case, of course, the child is merely defending himself and it is Big Simon's intellectual arrogance that brings about his doom.

In Collier's ''The Devil, George, and Rosie'' (in *The Touch of Nutmeg and More Unlikely Stories*, 1943) a misogynist is perfectly happy presiding over a Hell for women on a distant planet, until a good woman is sent there by mistake and he falls in love and is redeemed. The entire contents of Collier's 1954 collection, *The Devil and All*, consists of this sort of ironic, cosmic fantasy, most of them with the Devil present as a character; although the best overall selection of Collier stories (and much easier to obtain) is the 1951 omnibus, *Fancies and Goodnights*.

It will be noticed that very few of the Devil stories through mid-century have much to do with horror fiction, and that the writers more seriously interested in exploring frightening subject matter tended to give the Satan, Hell, and brimstone a wide berth. Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, M. R. James, H. Russell Wakefield, and many others, by and large, had little use for the Judeo-Christian mythos and its Devil in their fiction. It must be admitted that James, the most traditional of the lot, certainly produced an effective demon in his 1911 story, "The Casting of the Runes," which was memorably filmed by Jacques Tourneur as *Curse of the Demon* in 1957. James wrote much of ghosts and black magicians, but rarely touched directly the character of Satan himself. His work, excellent though it is, remains tangential to this survey.

The Devil had become trivialized, a figure of fun, sometimes used effectively, as in "The Devil and Daniel Webster" or "Thus I Refute Beelzy," or not so effectively, in the works of Marie Corelli or Frederic Arnold Kummer. The deal-with-the-Devil story became a distinct form—at least as distinct as the locked-room mystery—and also a cliché. At one point Anthony Boucher, the editor of the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* from 1949 to 1958, reported that fully 50 percent of all his unsolicited submission consisted of deal-with-the-Devil stories or "formalities of the hereafter," which as often as not involved the Devil.

Basil Davenport's 1958 anthology *Deals with the Devil* covers most of the possibilities, including "The Brazen Locked Room," in which Isaac Asimov specifically combines the deal-with-the-Devil story with a locked-room mystery, and then finds a science-fictional solution. Earlier and funnier (and also present in Davenport's selection) is Max Beerbohm's "Enoch Soames" (from *Seven Men*, 1920) which deftly satirizes the literary scene of the 1890s, and presents an amusing and imaginative vision of the future year 1997, as Soames, a mediocre poet, sells his soul to the Devil for a chance to go into the Reading Room of the British Museum a hundred years hence and look himself up, to reassure himself of his own literary immortality. But, alas, he was a nobody, remembered only for the story Max Beerbohm wrote about him.

The Davenport book contains numerous examples of clever, gimmicky stories by pulp and science fiction writers of mid-century, including Henry Kuttner, Arthur Porges, Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, Theodore Cogswell, Miriam Allen de Ford, etc. Included is "Satan and Sam Shay" by Robert Arthur, who wrote a series of clever fantasies for *Argosy* magazine in the early 1940s, most of which were reprinted in the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* a decade later. In this particular story, Sam Shay, an inveterate gambler, beats the Devil in a wager. But the Devil, in revenge, places a curse on him, that he will never win another wager. Shay seems ruined until he learns to manipulate the Devil. All he has to do is bet *against* any desired end (such as happiness, prosperity, and long life) and he will achieve it. He goes into the insurance business and is phenomenally successful.

The Davenport anthology even contains the text of an original sixteenth-century German Faust pamphlet and ends on a curious note with Bruce Elliott's "The Devil Was Sick." In the very, very remote future, when all human knowledge seems exhausted and human affairs are managed by a seemingly omnipotent and omniscient computer, a man tries to uncover an area of knowledge that has not been entirely mined out. He chooses demonology and eventually conjures up the Devil, who has not been summoned in centuries. However, it is the conclusion of the time that even as a villain is a sick hero, a devil is a sick angel. Satan is "cured" and becomes an angel again. The supercomputer shuts itself down, acknowledging that it does not know all there is to be known about God.

Lord Dunsany, the great Irish fantasist, wrote several stories about the Devil, although he, like Lovecraft *et al.*, had very little use for the Judeo-Christian mythos. He could turn out a deal-with-the-Devil story with the best of them, including one that Davenport selected, called simply "A Deal with the Devil" (*Collier's*, August 31, 1946). This is one of Dunsany's famous Jorkens stories, about the "liar" clubman, whose tales can neither be proven nor disproven. Once again, we are dealing with horse races, and a man who sells his soul for the ability to spot winners. The Devil cheats. Jorkens helps the man plead this case. This is only one of Jorkens's several encounters with the Devil, from which he always emerges, if not the winner, at least whole and sound.

Among non-Jorkens stories is "The Three Sailors' Gambit" (in *The Last Book of Wonder*, 1916), which combines a Devil story with a chess story. Three ignorant sailors obtain from the Devil a crystal ball, which shows them how to win any chess game. They defeat many noted champions, until, in a moment of hubris, attempt to win a game with only the king and a row of pawns. The crystal ball explodes, because this is a game even the Devil cannot win. "The Three Infernal Jokes" in the same volume is about a man who gains from the Devil the ability to tell three jokes so funny that the hearers will die of laughter. The problem is, it actually works. Perhaps the best Dunsanian Devil story of all is "Told Under Oath" (*F&SF*, August 1953), in which the protagonist sells, not his soul, but his ability to tell the truth. What does this make of his story?

The pulp magazines of the first half of the twentieth century contain many Devil stories, more than are worth noting, though some stand out. In "The Stranger from Kurdistan" by E. Hoffmann Price (*Weird Tales*, July 1925), the Devil, in his Yezidee form as Melek Taus, is presented as a dignified and resourceful opponent of Christ. This story was regarded as quite daring at the time. It still reads well. "The Devil in Hollywood" by Dale Clark (*Argosy*, June 20, 1936) is about an obsessive film director, obviously based on Erich von Stroheim, who makes a film so depraved that the Devil appears in it. This is more of a curio than a literary masterpiece, but it retains power and interest. Robert Bloch used the Devil as the object of farce several many times in the

pulps, as in "Left Feep Catches Hell" (*Fantastic Adventures*, January 1943), which involves Satan, Axis spies, and the hero's ingenious used of his unwittingly acquired demonic tail. "None But Lucifer" by H. L. Gold and L. Sprague de Camp (*Unknown*, September 1939) is more substantial, a novella about a man who ultimately proves so depraved that he replaces Satan in his job as lord of the damned.

Pulp-like but published in book form, the novels of Dennis Wheatley, who at least took his diabolism seriously. Once very popular, he is now almost forgotten, but is best remembered for the 1968 film version of his 1935 novel, *The Devil Rides Out*, which is a wild melodrama of black magic and demonism, in which the Devil himself does appear at a witches' sabbat. Assorted heroes including a master occultist (played by Christopher Lee in the film) must save a young woman before she is fully initiated into a devil cult and made the bride of Satan. (The American title of this film is *The Devil's Bride*.)

At about the same time as Wheatley was writing and the pulp magazines flourished, C. S. Lewis achieved wide popularity by his didactic *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), which is a serious work of theology and ethics in the form of correspondence between two devils, one of whom is assigned to lure a "patient" away from salvation. The book is a preachment, as is Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (1946; about a bus-trip to Hell), but seldom has such preaching been done so entertainingly. The Devil also figures allegorically in Lewis's "Deep Space" trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945), particularly the second volume, in which the Fall of Man is replayed (but averted) on Venus, with the role of the serpent played by the evil scientist Weston (i.e., "Western"), who it seems actually is possessed or controlled by "dark eldils," that is, fallen angels. A thorough-going reactionary who believed in the existence of angels and the literal truth of Dante's vision, Lewis equated modern science with evil, as is even more apparent in the third volume, in which the bad guys work for the National Institute for Controlled Experiments (N.I.C.E.), which is headed by a cruelly caricatured H. G. Wells. Lewis's very considerable narrative skills and brilliant imagination nearly brings all this off—but not quite.

By and large, though, if the Devil had become a joke, the joke was played out by the end of the 1950s. He was just one more pulp and television cliché. A few effective stories continued to appear, such as Charles Beaumont's "The Howling Man" (in *Night Ride and Other Journeys*, 1960), in which the mysterious prisoner in a remote monastery turns out to be Satan, but there were not many of them. The often-outwitted, rather amusing, Mister Scratch still persisted, if anyone cared about the Devil in fiction anymore. The only thing left to do was to make him frightening again.

Ray Russell's first novel, *The Case Against Satan* (1962), succeeded brilliantly, drawing loosely on the same material that later inspired William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*—the case of the alleged demonic possession of a young boy, which supposedly happened in Georgetown, a suburb of Washington,

D.C., in the 1940s. *The Case Against Satan* neatly solves the problem of making Satan frightening again to an audience raised on comic stories of shrewd mortals outwitting Mr. Scratch by not bringing Satan onstage at all. The greatest of the Devil's wiles, after all, is to convince us that he does not exist. The resultant short novel might be described as a Catholic ''Turn of the Screw.'' A modern, liberal priest who perhaps doesn't believe in the Devil finds himself confronted with what may be the genuine possession of a teenaged girl. Or is it? Each of the Devil's actions *could* be explained by natural means, even the girl's bedroom acrobatics like those in *The Exorcist*.

The Devil, when forced to speak, says that his purpose is to drive the girl to suicide. But this seems to be a lot of effort for just one soul. Can the Father of Lies be believed? Is he actually trying to destroy Father Sargent or even his bishop? Every detail of the proceedings could be part of a larger trap. Certainly the screams and voices issuing from the rectory while the exorcism is in progress endanger the priests with visits from nosy parishioners and the police. The story goes right to the core of the problem of Satan and of the supernatural. Even if one believes in God, is it possible to believe in a personal Devil, who will come to a specific place in all the cosmos and work such ill against an individual human being? Could we know it if he did? If our senses are our only source of data, how do we know we are not deceived? The story is told deftly, with considerable suspense, and builds to an effective climax. The priest depends in the end, not on reason, but gut instinct, and wins. He realizes the extent of his victory (and that his own faith has been restored) when he is casually able to say over the phone to a relative, ''She was possessed by the Devil. They drove him out. She's fine now.''

James Blish attempted, in effect, to redemonize Satan in his pair of short novels, *Black Easter* (1968) and *The Day After Judgment* (1971). In the former, a wealthy industrialist hires a black magician to let all the Devils out of Hell for one night. Of course he cannot put them back, because, as Satan announces at the end, God is dead. In the sequel, the U.S. military attempts to contain the demonic invasion of the American southwest. This book is less successful than its predecessor, beginning as satire, ending in verse, as a pastiche of Milton, when Satan realizes that he must ascend the vacant throne of God and rule the universe. Blish's approach is emotionally spare and coldly intellectual, perhaps too much so. There are some striking moments, such as when the characters realize that a demon has become pope, and the descriptions of magic ritual are very impressive, but the books did not have broad appeal.

It must be admitted that Russell's novel, brilliant as it was, fell as a seed on barren ground, and Blish's had little impact. Whether he read *The Case Against Satan* or not, William Peter Blatty completely reimagined the same material that Russell used, and captured the public imagination in a much bigger way with *The Exorcist* in 1971. Together with Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) and blockbuster films of both, *The Exorcist* made the Devil the object of fear again in popular culture and heralded, not merely a wave of

possession reports and would-be exorcisms, but also the beginning of the modern commercial Horror boom, which enabled such writers as Stephen King and Clive Barker to become bestsellers.

It may have been the film versions that made the crucial difference, particularly of *The Exorcist*.

Of course the Devil had been on the screen before, all the way back as far as the silent version of Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1926). Much more distinguished is F. W. Murnau's *Faust* of the same year, a masterpiece of German Expressionism by the director who had previously done the celebrated *Nosferatu*. The opening is somber and phantasmagorical, containing much imagery that viewers of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) will recognize in the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence. The story follows the Goethe play more or less, turning comic in places as Faust and Mephistopheles indulge in their hijinks, not to mention Faust's attempt to win Margaret. The ending, as in the Marlowe play, becomes serious again. (A 1967 *Dr. Faustus*, starring Richard Burton and based on Christopher Marlowe, was unsuccessful both critically and financially and certainly added nothing to the Devil's cinematic image.)

"The Devil and Daniel Webster" was memorably filmed in 1941 (sometimes the film is called *All That Money Can Buy*), directed by William Dieterle, with Walter Huston as the Devil. Vincent Price made a suitably impressive Devil in the otherwise silly 1957 film, *The Story of Mankind*. But by and large cinematic Devils were of the familiar deal-making, gentlemanly sort, few of them at all terrifying.

Rosemary's Baby and *The Exorcist* must be discussed together as books and films. In the popular culture, they are now as inextricable as Sherlock Holmes or Tarzan and their film versions. Both novels were bestsellers in their own right, but they worked together with their film adaptations for maximum impact.

Some argued that by the late 1960s the time was ripe for a return of the Devil. Certainly a great upsurge in occult belief manifested itself at this time, and inevitably, as the Devil began to earn big money, the floodgates were opened. It has been suggested, too, that both Levin's and Blatty's creations played deftly on the fears of the time.

Something could be made of the fact that both stories take place among the extreme upper crust of American society. Do the rich, perhaps, feel themselves under assault, perhaps out of some sense of guilt? Do the rest of us, perhaps enviously, identify with them? In *Rosemary's Baby*, we see the corruption of America's wealthy elite, as Rosemary's husband, a screenwriter, will do anything to further his career, including, apparently, arrange for his wife to be impregnated by the Devil so she will give birth to the Antichrist. Both book and film handle the paranoia of the situation effectively. In the Polanski film, Mia Farrow's subtle, finely nuanced performance greatly enhances the sense of Rosemary's helplessness, as she is slowly betrayed by

Some Cinematic Devils

Emil Jennings as Mephistopheles in *Faust*. Silent film directed by F. W. Murnau. Germany, 1926.

Walter Huston as ''Mr. Scratch'' in *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. Directed by William Dieterle. USA, 1941. Based on the short story by Stephen Vincent Benét. Alternate title: *All That Money Can Buy*.

Laird Cregar as His Excellency (Satan) in *Heaven Can Wait*. Directed by Ernest Lubitsch. USA, 1943.

Ray Milland as ''Nick Beal'' (Satan) in *Alias Nick Beal*. Directed by John Farrow. USA, 1949.

Vincent Price as The Devil in *The Story of Mankind*. Directed by Irwin Allen. USA, 1957.

Ray Walston as ''Mr. Applegate'' (Satan) in *Damn Yankees*. Directed by George Abbott and Stanley Donen. USA, 1958.

Mickey Rooney as ''Nick Lewis'' (Satan) in *The Private Lives of Adam and Eve*. Directed by Mickey Rooney and Albert Zugsmith. USA, 1960.

Peter Cook as ''Spigot'' (Satan) in *Bedazzled*. Directed by Stanley Donen. USA, 1967. A much inferior remake (2000) stars Elizabeth Hurley in the Cook role.

Andreas Teuber as Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*. Directed by Richard Burton and Nevill Coghill. UK, 1967.

Christopher Lee as Lucifer in *Poor Devil*. Directed by Robert Scheerer, 1973. TV movie.

George Burns as ''Harry O. Tophet'' a.k.a. Satan in *Oh, God! You Devil*. Directed by Paul Bogart. USA, 1983.

Robert De Niro as ''Mr. Louis Cyphre'' (Lucifer) in *Angel Heart*. Directed by Alan Parker. USA, 1987. Based on the novel *Falling Angel* by William Hjortsberg.

Jack Nicholson as Daryl Van Horne in *The Witches of Eastwick*. Directed by George Miller. USA, 1987.

Viggo Mortensen as Lucifer in *The Prophecy*. Directed by Gregory Widen. USA, 1995.

Al Pacino as ''John Milton'' (Satan) in *The Devil's Advocate*. Directed by Taylor Hackford. USA, 1997.

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everyone around her, including the friendly, nosy, elderly neighbor (Ruth Gordon) who may barge in to gossip or borrow some sugar, but is actually a leading member of the coven of witches responsible for the whole conspiracy.

The Devil is not actually seen, except perhaps glimpsed in what Rosemary thinks is a ''dream,'' the night she is impregnated. He is all the more fearsome

not being seen, as Ray Russell had concluded earlier. The horror becomes personal, and extremely intimate. What better place for the Devil to attack us than through our own bodies, in ways that Rosemary cannot tell anyone, even her gynecologist, and hope to be believed? It is an expectant mother's ultimate nightmare.

The Exorcist, both novel and film (1973, directed by William Friedkin, based on a screenplay by Blatty), is the ultimate parent's nightmare. Many commentators have suggested that timing played a major part in the story's success. At the height of the Hippie Era and the Sexual Revolution, what parent didn't fear that their sweet child might become an obscenity-spewing, incomprehensible monstrosity? In any event, *The Exorcist* is less fine than *Rosemary's Baby*, both novel and film less subtle on all levels, but it hardly matters. *The Exorcist* has a literal, in-your-face quality, complete with pea soup vomited into the face of the priest-exorcist, Max Von Sydow, and the notorious scene of fourteen-year-old Regan (Linda Blair) masturbating bloodily with a crucifix. The story may drive its points home with a sledge-hammer, but it does drive them. Much more so than *Rosemary's Baby*, which is about a sophisticated, subtle form of soul-corruption, *The Exorcist* is back-to-basics in terms that the medievals could understand. Good battles evil without any shades of gray. The Devil, an external reality and not the product of anyone's diseased mind or inner cravings, invades a young girl's flesh, makes her hideous, performs malign miracles, such as rotating her head 180 degrees, levitation, or hurling a grown man to his death out a window. He must be driven out by traditional weapons of Faith, notably prayer and the Roman Catholic rite of exorcism, which, we are told, is an anachronism and a bit of an embarrassment in the modern age. But the veneer of civilization and progress is peeled back; it is exactly what the characters need.

How seriously should anyone take this? Blatty, who comes from a deeply Catholic background, apparently takes it seriously. But as a piece of horror fiction and horror cinema, *The Exorcist* is as important as *Dracula* (1931) or *Frankenstein* (1932). It defines, in the public mind, the imagery of the Devil, and of possession and exorcism, even as those two films defined the Vampire and the Monster. *The Exorcist* is endlessly imitated and parodied. If, in any other story or film, a child starts speaking in a gruff voice, drawers open and close by themselves, and the bed starts thumping, we know what to expect. The TV comedy serial "Soap" (1977–1981) deftly parodied it in a plotline that involved a wayward daughter having a love affair with a priest, by whom she gets pregnant and—guess what?—the baby is possessed by the Devil. Many of then numerous imitations of *The Exorcist*, such as *The Omen* and its sequels, are difficult to distinguish from parodies.

The impact of *The Exorcist* remains significant, even if there has been no clear follow-up beyond the level of parodies and obvious imitations. Blatty's own sequel, *Legion* (1983), had much less impact, although it was turned into a surprisingly good film, *Exorcist III*. (*Exorcist II* [1977], directed by John

Boorman and starring Richard Burton, was such a disaster that within a short while everybody concerned, particularly Blatty, seemed to pretend it never happened.) Stephen King's *Needful Things* (1991) does present a sinister shopkeeper who buys and sells everything up to and including souls, and is likely the Devil. Neil Gaiman's short story ''Murder Mysteries'' (in *Smoke and Mirrors*, 1998) is an actual detective story, set in Heaven before the creation of the Earth, in which we see a more or less sympathetic but not comical Lucifer just beginning to take the path toward rebellion. Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens* (1990) is a cosmic comedy about the Antichrist, of a type that would have fit in right alongside John Collier's ''The Devil, George, and Rosie.'' The Devil also appears in the comic-philosophical novels of James Morrow, particularly in *Only Begotten Daughter* (1990), a book more in the spirit of Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*.

But even if they have had no clearly major successors, the importance of Blatty and Levin and the films derived from their books is that, not just for the sort of religious fundamentalists who devour the *Left Behind* novels, but for the general public, the Devil has become the object of fear again. He is genuinely evil once more. Mister Scratch is still recognizable, but he is a minor figure. Faustian comedies are still possible, such as the film *Bedazzled* (1967, and a much inferior remake, 2000), but the Devil has become, once more, an Icon of Horror.

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The Doppelgänger

by Tony Fonseca

DEFINITIONS

Although he deals with the concept only marginally in his serial novel *Titan* (1800–1803), German Romantic author Jean Paul (born Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, 1763–1825) is synonymous with the literary doppelgänger. Dimitris Vardoulakis echoes John Herdman's *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1991) in crediting Jean Paul with actually coining the term doppelgänger (Vardoulakis 82; Herdman 13): Paul's novel *Siebenkas* (1796) tells the story of a sensitive husband who ends his unhappy marriage by feigning death and burial, and in one of the footnotes, Richter developed the concept of the doppelgänger, defined as "so heissen sie Leute die sie [sich] selbst sehen" ("so people who see themselves are called"). In 1981, Clifford Hallam's "The Double as Incomplete Self" took a linguistic track in defining Jean Paul's creation. He translates Paul's phrase literally, coming to the conclusion that the

essence of the author's description can be summed up simply: it is the "double goer" (5). Hallam notes that that the word doppelgänger once referred to the seer, but that the term has evolved and is used today by literary critics and psychiatrists to refer to the second self, or created vision (25). Karl Miller places the phenomenon in context in *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (1985), emphasizing the literary origins of what later became a psychological concept, noting that the doppelgänger could simply be understood as "the fictional double" (21). However, in terms of literary criticism, the concept of the double is what Albert Guerard calls "embarrassingly vague" (quoted in Hallam 5). Other literary critics, namely Richard Rogers and C. F. Keppler, have attempted to hone the idea of the double, but none have been able to rescue it from its overly broad usage. Hallam sums this problem up best when he writes that, as far as the literary doppelgänger is concerned, "in the broadest sense of the idea, [the word] 'double' can mean almost any dual, and in some cases even multiple, structure in a text" (5). He did, nonetheless, arrive at a working definition, asserting that the doppelgänger was, in the words of Sir James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), a physical manifestation, or result, of an inner being existing without.

Related literary motifs include the evil twin and the alter ego, which by some definitions are subsets of the doppelgänger, the main difference being that the evil twin and alter ego are, strictly speaking, what John Pizer in *Ego-Alter Ego: Double and/as Other in the Age of German Poetic Realism* (1998) calls second selves that result from an ego-alter ego split. This occurs when two oppositional entities manifest a physical identity, or at least a close physical resemblance. Such is the case in two of the better-known double texts, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double (A Petersburg Poem)* (1846). In the case of the alter ego, physical manifestations can be in the form of an intimate friend, an associate, sometimes even a stranger who looks eerily similar, and the alter ego can represent a unique facet in an individual's personality, for the literal translation of the Latin expression is "the other I." Therefore, as Pizer points out, "If one adheres to the precise nuance inherent in the original Latin, the alter-ego must be seen as governed by a relationship of radical alterity to the primary ego. Thus, when one juxtaposes the two figures in a dialectic synthesis, the entire spectrum, the broad range of human personality traits is revealed" (2). By this definition, the alter ego represents a direct psychological, emotional, or mental opposition to the self; the doppelgänger differs from the alter ego because although it is almost always a premonition of destruction, possibly even death, it does not *necessarily* have to exist in binary opposition to the self.

Andrew Webber's *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (1996) establishes six descriptive criteria for the literary doppelgänger: It is "a figure of visual compulsion," meaning that the double either is seen, as in *The Double*, or it is to be on the edge of sight, as in Guy de Maupassant's "The Horla" (1886). It operates "divisively" on language. It is an inverterate

performer of identity, so that it is not strictly a mirror image, reflecting the subject back exactly as it is, for there must be some subversion and autonomy in its very presence. It represents a power play between ego and alter ego. It is almost always gendered as male, for where female figures are doubled, it is typically as the objectification of a polarized male subject; finally, it is usually the product of a broken home (2–5). Vardoulakis adds that the doppelgänger is defined by its foreshadowing of jeopardy, something Herdman described in terms of the alter ego a decade earlier: "It is necessary to be clear about the nature of the true double, or Doppelgänger. The Doppelgänger is a second self, or *alter ego*, which appears as a distinct and separate being apprehensible by the physical senses (or at least, by some of them), but exists in a dependent relation to the original ... [and] often the double comes to dominate, control, and usurp the functions of the subject" (14). Ralph Tymms (*Doubles in Literary Psychology*, 1949) makes an important contribution to the definition, especially considering the affinity that Gothic and horror authors have with the double, by arguing that the doppelgänger is informed by an emphasis being placed on "the magical, occult, psychical or psychological qualities" of the double, whether it is created by duplication or division, as well as its ambiguous nature (16). Also examining the phenomenon psychologically, Robert Rogers (*A Psychoanalytic Study of The Double in Literature*, 1970) argues that the doppelgänger differs from "the conventional double" (some sort of antithetical self, usually a guardian angel or tempting devil) in that it is often diabolic, at least in psychological terms, for it represents unconscious, instinctual drives; Rogers also points out that the doubling process can be either subjective or objective (2, 5). Vardoulakis adds that the double is given life due to the threat of isolation, that isolation, in fact, is "instrumental to the Doppelgänger" (82). Webber notes that the character who imagines his double is almost always a bachelor (12), thus bolstering and giving a social context to Vardoulakis's isolation theory. Joanne Blum (*Transcending Gender: The Male/Female Double in Women's Fiction*, 1988) adds several useful criteria as well. Blum establishes that the term "double" or "doppelgänger" should denote an ego-division or fragmentation of self into dual, and sometimes multiple, personalities, and that the self with which the reader identifies should be the realistic one, while the mirror self is the more fantastic or supernatural. She also suggests that the double not necessarily be physical; it can also be an illusion or image, as in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (2–3).

GERMAN ROMANTICISM AND THE DOPPELGÄNGER

Perhaps the doppelgänger was destined to vagueness, given the number and variety of Romantic authors, German, Russian, and American, who took Jean Paul's simple phrase and created their own versions. The concept was

almost immediately influential on Jean Paul's countrymen, namely Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Ludwig Tieck, Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Wilhelm Hauff. Herdman traces a direct line of influence from Jean Paul to Hoffmann (13), who Tymms credits with the actual creation of what we now recognize as the literary doppelgänger (21). Tymms in fact traces a line from Cardinal Richelieu's idea of twins who are created by spiritual division, to Jean Paul's notes in *Siebenkas*, to the recurring twin motif in Goethe, to Hoffmann's influential text, "Der Sandmann" (first published in *Nachtstücke*, volume 1, 1816; made into the film *Der Sandmann* in 1993 by Eckhart Schmidt). He further notes that there is a consistent addition of the occult dimension begun by Jean Paul (34). It is easy to imagine why the concept of the doppelgänger quickly reduplicated itself in the literature of German Romanticism, as the aforementioned authors enjoyed working in the realm of the imagination, basing their tales on occultism, Mesmerism, magic, allegorical symbolism, and recent psychological discoveries that began the examination of the subconscious parts of the mind. The little-known book by Hauff, *Mitteilungen aus den Memoiren des Satan* (1826), is the epitome of the German interpretation of the double. In it, the character Hasentreffer represents the primary self. He begins seeing images of himself, looking out of the window of an inn located across the street. Ultimately, he confronts his doppelgänger, is strangled by it, and is summarily replaced by his second self.

The German Romantics began a trend that continues even today, as the imaginative nature of the doppelgänger motif lends itself to science fiction, horror, and fantasy. Horror in particular is filled with doubles because the genre is based on the idea of Otherness, where the Other comes to represent those parts of the self that society, and perhaps the individual as well, find unacceptable. When certain aspects of the self are disavowed, often so violently that they must be projected onto another, often a scapegoat, in order to be purged from the consciousness, they are sometimes concretized by being amalgamated into one identifiable, often physical being. This Other can become monstrous, something that is utterly reviled. Therefore, the doppelgänger, as an icon of horror, is the most recognizable, the most "uncanny" manifestation of this Other, as it is a mirror version of the self whose behavior reveals all that the original would prefer remain hidden. Try as the good Victorian doctor of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* might, he cannot repress the more "animal" part of his nature, which rages and desires. This part of his nature is loosed through his potion (perhaps a symbol for alcoholism), which invokes Mr. Hyde. Jekyll and Hyde are literally a single entity dissociated into two, what Otto Rank in "The Double as Immortal Self" (*Beyond Psychology*, 1941) calls opposing selves. According to both Rank and Freud, the double in primitive societies is conceived of as a shadow, representing both the living person and the dead, and it insures immortality, functioning as a kind of guardian angel. In modern civilizations, however,

this can become an omen of death to the self-conscious person (Rank 71–76). This is particularly true in Stevenson's story, just as it is in an inhibited or self-restrained modern society like that of Victorian Britain.

PSYCHOLOGY: FREUD, RANK, AND BEYOND

In strict psychological terms, the doppelgänger can be either an alter ego or mirror image, as in Dostoevsky's second novel, *The Double*, which tackled the idea of dissociation, an idea that psychologists have noted often results in Multiple Personality Disorder (as it arguably does metaphorically in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*). In a broader sense, seeing oneself as an individual that exists outside of the body comes under the umbrella term "autoscopic phenomena." Peter Brugger, in the journal *Cognitive Neuropsychiatry* (2002), quibbles with the strict definition of doppelgänger. He argues that the idea of the double can refer to various types of what he calls "illusory reduplications" of the self. Illusory reduplications can be divided into three distinct classes or psychological phenomena according to Brugger, one of which is *heautoscopy*, or the encounter specifically with an alter ego or doppelgänger, which differentiates the doppelgänger from other types of illusory reduplication such as the mirror image and the out-of-body experience. He writes that in "the encounter with one's own doppelgänger as an alter ego, the observer's perspective may alternate between body-centred and alter-ego-centred ... accompanied by the greatest complexity of psychological interactions between the original and reduplicated self" (180). What this means is that there is a psychological component, what Brugger calls a "psychological affinity," when the doppelgänger is the reduplicated image, which is unlike other types of psychological mirror imaging. The person and the doppelgänger can share feelings, but more importantly, it is likely that the individual's perspective will shift between him or herself and the doppelgänger, to the point that "with increasing bodily depersonalization, there is an increase in the doppelgänger's 'personalisation,' that is, the subject may wonder whether it is the body or rather the doppelgänger which contains the real self" (184). More often than not, the literary doppelgänger follows this definition.

Sigmund Freud was fascinated with the idea of dissociation and with variant selves. In his dream interpretation theories, he had posited that the ego might sometimes appear in dreams as other people; these dream people often prove, on analysis, to be further representatives of the ego, or self (Rogers 11). The popularization of the notion of a second self or other selves can be traced back to Freud's "The Uncanny" (1919). Freud notes that this feeling of duplication harks back a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world, and was developed as a method to secure immortality for the ego, which avoids destruction via the perceived supernatural duplication of itself. He envisioned the *uncanny* as the eerie sense one gets when one is

terrified of something that has a vague familiarity about it, when the terror harkens back to something that is known, has been internalized, but has also been forgotten. Experiencing the uncanny, in that case, means coming face to face with long-repressed desires and fears; consequently, certain double stories fall into this category, as they represent the return of that part of oneself that has been repressed, that part being the aforementioned perceived immortal part (called the shadow in primitive cultures). Generally speaking, Freud's theory is that there is an "unheimlich," a word that stands in opposition to what is "heimlich," meaning "homely" or "of home," safe, comfortable. The unheimlich, what we call the uncanny, is therefore unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and, above all, unsafe. The prefix "un" further indicates a sense of repression; therefore the word also connotes a secret, something that is not to see the light of day or reason. It is, in short, what is repressed, but familiar, such as the sense of the inevitability of death or an understanding of the animalistic nature of humanity.

"The Uncanny" was more than just a psychological treatise, however. Freud had, by 1921, reached what *The Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* terms a "reluctant private conclusion that there might be something to telepathy" (after he was party to a few secretive experiments with the Hungarian psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi). He once wrote psychical investigator and author Hereward Carrington, "if I had my life to live over again, I should devote myself to psychical research rather than to psychoanalysis." Freud's interest in the paranormal is evident in "The Uncanny," in his fascination with Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann." In larger respects the essay was a literary critique on Gothicism, on dark sexual imagery in fiction, and on the literary doppelgänger, a motif that informs Hoffmann's epistolary tale of a young legal student, who, in spite of a promising future, cannot rid himself of certain childhood memories concerning the death of his father. At the center of this nightmare is a mysterious visitor he knew only as The Sandman, a mixture of fairy tale and folklore which the narrator comes to fuse (and confuse) with an actual human being with whom his father had commerce. The tale introduces the idea of two sets of mirror selves, with the tripartite father figure, The Sandman, Coppelius the lawyer, and Coppola the eyeglass salesman, as well as the dichotomous female Klara and the automaton Olympia. Here it is important to remember that Freud explained that the doppelgänger motif has many variations, including split characters, recurring characters, automata, relived fantasies, visions, and dreams. According to Hallam, the uncanny is therefore similar to what the French call "déja vu" (literally, the already seen), except that seeing it is somehow terrifying (14–15). In the cases where the double represents an incomplete self, Hallam writes, "we can explain the unusual interest that the principals typically show for one another—especially in those instances where the host and the Double appear to be socially and/or morally far apart" (20). Because dissociation may occur in cases of traumatic experience, the doppelgänger can in some instances be a projection of the

dissociated self, which makes it familiar; however, since the reason the dissociation occurred in the first place is because it was a defense mechanism and therefore its existence is based on a staunch denial of some truth, the projected self is unrecognizable.

Historically speaking, the fear of one's double goes back to even ancient civilizations, as Otto Rank reminds us in his essay "Der Doppelgaenger" (1914), where he points out that in ancient traditions and folk beliefs, the double was the first conception of the soul and was related to beliefs that the shadow was a second self. In a 1997 article in *Cognitive Neuropsychiatry*, Brugger and Theodor Landis chronicle the prevalence of the doppelgänger in various primitive cultures, noting that the motif of the double is abundant in the literature of both ancient and modern times, and that autoscopic phenomena could be found in Medieval and Renaissance medical texts. Tymms notes that "in primitive belief . . . the term double acquires the special sense of the spiritual—the 'wraith' or visible counterpart of the person, seen just before or just after, or at the moment of, his death" (17), ostensibly as part of the shadow world which many primitive cultures believed in. Therefore, one can envision that with a few logical leaps, this figure became the premonition of one's death, specifically if that individual suffers an early and untimely death. Rogers came to similar conclusion concerning primitive cultures, arguing that the doppelgänger was associated with both birth and death, but that it was commonly believed that any man who saw his double or wraith was about to die (9). Rank sums up this evolution of the double as thus: "Double as the immortal soul leads to the building-up of the prototype of personality from the self; whereas the negative interpretation of the Double as a symbol of death is symptomatic of the disintegration of the modern personality type" ("The Double as Immortal Self" 66).

Rank traces the double theme (in the form of the twin) as far back as Greek mythology and drama ("The Double as Immortal Self" 67). It is not difficult to find, in the folklore and official state mythology of various ancient civilizations, stories that revolve around twins. The earliest known double story is an Egyptian narrative based on twins, called: "The Brothers," but twins can be found in Indian folktales, in the myth of the founding of Rome, as well as in the Hopi Little War Twins (patron deities of salt), to name a few. In some tribal beliefs, however, even the existence of twins presages destruction: George Devereux in 1941 found, for example, that the Mohave react to twins is two distinct ways, one being that they believe that twins are inferior because twins are believed to be souls who have died and come back again, returning for items that are needed in heaven such as clothes, clay (used as body paint), and beads, so that when twins are born, parents are not as excited because they are just dead people who have come back. This finding is similar to those of two African studies: by Melville J. Herskovits in 1926, where he found that the Wawange tribe in East Africa believed that a woman who gives birth to twins is so unlucky that she must be secluded, for if she happens to look at a cow her

unluckiness would diffuse from her to the cow, rendering the cow dry; and by T. O. Oruene in 1983, finding that ancient Yoruba communities believed twins to be a bad omen (although twins are currently revered). This very basic fear of the "twin" or "double" can be seen in de Maupassant's "The Horla," a confessional tale where the narrator senses his double on the edge of reality and finally comes to realize that he can destroy it (before a whole army of shadow selves bleed into the world) only by committing suicide.

Perhaps the primitive fear of twins, combined with various tribal beliefs concerning the shadow and its relationship to death, influence the modern view of the double. When this is seen in the context of the double's becoming a metaphor or symbol of a moral inner struggle, as it was used by St. Augustine, and then given a psychological tint as exemplifying how modern humans have created a civilization based on what Rank calls the "over-civilized ego" ("The Double as Immortal Self" 65), the creation of the doppelgänger as uncivilized alter ego seems almost inevitable. This equation seems to be at the center of various critics' readings of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, the 1818 science fiction/horror classic by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. The golem, or created human, is arguably one type of doppelgänger, according to Tymms (23). Considering the duality inherent in Gothic sensibilities, it seems plausible that golem texts, such as Mary Shelley's, are indeed another type of doppelgänger story.

The Golem as Doppelgänger: Frankenstein

In *The Monster in the Mirror: Gender and the Sentimental/Gothic Myth in Frankenstein* (1987), Mary K. Patterson Thornburg argues that the very nature of the nineteenth-century Gothic makes it a prefect breeding ground for doppelgänger texts, as what she terms "the gothic myth" is indicative of "a world view divided against itself" (1). Linda Dryden's *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (2003) takes a stronger stance on this relationship. She writes that "it is rare to find a tale of doubles or doubling that does not contain strong elements of Gothic horror and inevitable death. The double is a threat to the integrity of the self, and frequently evidence of a Gothic, supernatural force at large that brings with it death and destruction" (38). What they and others like Paul Coates (*The Double and the Other*, 1988) have realized is that the literature and zeitgeist of sentimentality that preceded Romanticism set the stage for what can best be called a division of consciousness. The literature of sentimentality, which budded from the neo-classicism of the eighteenth century, as Thornburg writes, "represents reality as the . . . middle class of the Age of Reason wished to see it, and as many actually did see it. The Gothic embodies those aspects of reality that for many reasons, primarily their irrationality, those same people rejected and continue to reject" (2). These irrationalities, however, were so well engrained in the human psyche that they began to inform much of the literature, creating what amounted to a

schizophrenic relationship between what the literate middle classes acknowl-
edged and what they instinctively knew existed.

In essence, one could argue (as some critics come very close to doing) that
Gothicism by its very nature could be best personified by the doppelgänger. As
both a metaphor and a psychological phenomenon, doubling speaks to that
part of humanity which neoclassicism and logic would have exiled from the
consciousness. Coates sees the creation of the double as also being related to
the Romantic belief in subjectivity. He writes, "the appearance of the double
in literary iconography at the beginning of the nineteenth century is perhaps
connected with the Romantic belief that character is mutable rather than
fixed; thus one can look into the future and see oneself as another person" (2).
Thornburg uses the example of *Frankenstein* as a metaphor for this relation-
ship: "The Monster's independent existence, like the persistent vitality of the
Gothic tradition, affirms the potency of those elements. And the Monster's
subsequent peculiar relationship with Victor . . . is like the relationship of the
Gothic to the sentimental—an ambiguous affirmation of the fact that neither
side is complete without the other, while their separation portends the de-
struction of one and the other's loss of meaning, loss of reason to exist" (6).
Dryden sees a similar metaphor in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr.
Hyde*, wherein the Victorian literary doppelgänger is informed by scenes set in
night versus day, or the day self versus the night self, foregrounding its rela-
tionship to the day city versus the night city. She writes that "the London of
Jekyll and Hyde, even during the day, is a Janus-faced metropolis" that reflects
the mindset of the times (89, 93). Victor Frankenstein's creature is his "child,"
and by some definitions, his double (Dryden 38), a man made in his own image,
whether or not he acknowledges it. Likewise, Thornburg points out that
"Victor Frankenstein [is] a 'self-devoted' and self-conscious sentimental hero
[that] creates and rejects the Monster. . . . the creation and rejections are here
essentially the same act, for it is Victor's intention to perfect himself as the ideal
man of sentimental tradition, and in doing so he casts out of himself those
elements the sentimental tradition abhors, the very elements that make up the
Monster" (6).

Like most literary characters who meet their doubles, Victor follows the
classic psychological pattern: he fails to recognize his second self, and he fails
to recognize the ominous significance of meeting one's doppelgänger. Ironi-
cally, as Thornburg notes, "that awareness [of their relationship] is left . . . to
the Monster" (7). In fact, awareness of the relationship between the double
and the self is often reserved to the doppelgänger or alter ego. C. F. Keppler in
The Literature of the Second Self (1972) summarizes the relationship of the
literary self and literary doppelgänger this way:

> The first self is the one who tends to be in the foreground of the reader's attention,
> usually the one whose viewpoints the reader shares; he is the relatively naïve self,
> naïve at least in tending to suppose that he is the whole self, for he seldom has any

conscious knowledge, until it is forced upon him, of any other self involved in his make-up. The second self is the intruder from the background of shadows, and however prominent he may become he always tends to remain half-shadowed; he is much more likely to have knowledge of his foreground counterpart than the latter of him. (3)

Such is the case in David Fincher's 1999 film version of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996). Screenwriter Jim Uhls changes the plot so that the imaginary double, Tyler Durden, is not only the most aware of the two (Durden actually runs the pseudo-sychiatric session in which the protagonist is brought to the realization that his friend and nemesis is imaginary), but is the version of the self that has a name. As scenes progress, it becomes clear that the protagonist's name is a mystery not only to the viewer, but to himself. Fincher's interpretation of the double is a textbook example of Brugger and Landis's definition of *heautoscopy proper*, which involves a feeling of detachment or hollowness, a sense of depersonalization and that the doppelgänger contains the real consciousness, rather than the self, and the possibility that the doppelgänger can actually act independently, ever preemptively, instead of being confined to mirror image movements (22).

Shelley's novel, Palahniuk's novel, and Uhls's screenplay all exemplify another particularly interesting trait of the literary doppelgänger, that being its maleness, a phenomenon that has not escaped critic Joanne Blum, who calls the tradition of the double "largely a male one" (2). Coates theorizes that this occurs because only the male in society is "accorded the social and spatial mobility . . . to enter the imaginary 'elsewhere'" (6), a rule that applies to most early science fiction, horror, and fantasy, and seems applicable to doppelgänger texts even today. Shelley originally published *Frankenstein* anonymously, thereby making the author of that classic male by default, as are the novel's main characters. The maleness of the double is emphasized by literary studies on the motif, such as Gordon E. Slethaug's *The Play of the Double in Postmodern American Fiction* (1993), wherein six doppelgänger texts are examined, each and every one of them written by a male. In fact, the only collection of doppelgänger tales, *The Book of Doppelgängers*, edited by Robert Sterling (2003), contains tales from ten authors. Of these, Maupassant, Hoffmann, Poe, Hans Christian Andersen, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Algernon Blackwood, Henry James, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Max Beerbohm, and Honoré de Balzac, only one is female.

Perhaps the most famous double tale penned by a woman is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall Paper" (1892). This classic, considered Gilman's only "horror story," is somewhat autobiographical, based on treatments she received for depression by S. Weir Mitchell. In the tale, the female narrator is kept in seclusion, for all practical purposes imprisoned, by a well-meaning husband. Her isolation leads to an obsession with the wallpaper in her bedroom, and she eventually sees a woman behind the paper, attempting to

claw her way out. By the story's end, it is made apparent that the woman is her mirror image (not quite a doppelgänger per se or an alter ego). Ultimately, however, the mirror image becomes a replacement, as the last image readers see of the protagonist is of a woman crawling on all fours, tearing at the wallpaper, trying to escape. However, even today, very few doppelgänger texts are written by women, and the relatively small number of texts where male writers create female characters who have doubles are not literally doppelgänger texts; rather, they investigate the dichotomy of womanhood from the male point of view.

> *"I really have discovered something at last. Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out. The front pattern* does *move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one."*
>
> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892)

OTHER ROMANTIC AND VICTORIAN DOUBLES

One of the strangest authors of the time had to be James Hogg, a regular contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* whose *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) comes close to being an alter ego text, as it is the story of two brothers whose opposite courses in life ultimately lead to a showdown and the destruction of one. Madness was a subject touched upon by Hogg in several of his works, and in 1830 he returned to the theme of a doppelgänger in "Strange Letter of a Lunatic," which was rejected by William Blackwood but printed in the December 1830 issue of *Fraser's Magazine* after considerable editing. The protagonist, James Beatman, becomes involved in a series of extraordinary experiences, including an encounter with a mirror image, which not only matched his physical looks, but expressed his ideas as he would have expressed them. He is eventually challenged to a duel by his alter ego, and winds up in an asylum (this may have influenced the ending of Palahniuk's novel version of *Fight Club*). Some of the more inventive writers who adapt mirror images, doubles, twins, and alter egos to their literary needs include Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Nikolai Gogol, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, and J. Sheridan Le Fanu.

In his notes to "Christabel" (1816), Coleridge writes that he intended for Geraldine to vanish, returning to change her appearance to become a cross-gendered doppelgänger, taking on the form of the absent lover of Christabel, so that she could begin a courtship. When the real lover (the original self) resurfaces, producing the ring that Christabel had once given him in sign of her betrothal, the supernatural double disappears, and a rightful marriage takes place. Here, Coleridge introduces two interesting twists to the concept of the double: androgyny or cross-gendering, and the defeat of the doppelgänger by the self. Shelley toys briefly with the primitive notion of a shadow (mirror image) realm in his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), subtitled *A*

"Hey, you created me. I didn't create some loser alter-ego to make myself feel better. Take some responsibility!"

Tyler Durden (doppelgänger, to his original self, the narrator/ protagonist), *Fight Club* (film)

Lyrical Drama, in a conversation between The Earth and Prometheus, the former tells of two realities, one of the living and another, shadow world, of the grave, which is similar to many primitive beliefs of the double as expressed by Rank. Gogol, in 1836, published the "The Nose" ("Nos," in *Sovremennik*), a strange golem tale influenced by folklore and fairy tale. "Nos" recalls one of the minor characters in Jean Paul's *Titan* (who cannot bear to see any part of his own body for fear that this will invoke his double) in that a body part, which goes missing, takes on the traits of a human being, as it is seen riding in an elegant carriage and wearing the uniform of a State Councilor, a higher rank than that of the protagonist.

Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) stands alone among double tales as being a noncomic version of the "identical" human story (the Prince and the Pauper motif) that relies on no supernatural element whatsoever to explain its mirror imaging or further its plot. One of his most popular novels in the United States, this pseudo-historical love triangle story set in the 1770s and 1780s revolutionary France, links London and Paris through a relatively small cast of characters. Sydney Carton, a London lawyer and admitted alcoholic, meets his physical twin Charles Darnay, a former French aristocrat who immigrated to London before the revolution. Darnay returns to France to save his family from the guillotine, and is captured. Carton substitutes himself for Darnay, ending his own life to save the husband of the woman he loves (one must wonder here how much of a debt Milos Forman's 1979 movie musical *Hair* owes to Dickens). In Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson: A Tale* (1894), a low-level lawyer's collection of fingerprints undoes a murderer in the Antebellum South. A dark comedy, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* relates the age-old tale of being switched at birth, in this case two children are switched by a mulatto slave, in the hope of sparing her child the indignities of slavery. One of the twins commits a murder, and the crime is blamed on the twins of Italian immigrants. Wilson, the lawyer, defends the innocent twins and reveals the true killer's identity via fingerprints. An interesting version of the double as alter ego can be seen in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, first published by Wilde in *Lippincott's Magazine* for July 1890. "Inspired by any number of doppelgänger tales" (Dryden 115), *Dorian Gray* posits the theory of an image serving as alter ego, in this case, a portrait. Because it lacks consciousness, however, the double here, strictly speaking, is not a doppelgänger, even though it can be argued that it does eventually usurp the position of the self.

Crossing the Atlantic was an obvious move for the doppelgänger. As Miller notes, duality is one of the defining traits of the American experience, which possibly explains why even the earliest of American authors wrote of an imaginative dualistic psychiatry and embraced the Gothic conventions in literature

(349). The most influential American doppelgänger tale of the nineteenth century was published by Poe in 1841. After he had dealt tangentially with the idea of doubles (in this case opposite-sex doubles created by psychological duplication by division) in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), Poe, in his lesser-known "William Wilson," created a sustained and in-depth character study of a man who meets and recognizes his doppelgänger, in the form of an alter ego proper. In this tale, an unnamed narrator (the narrator's name is revealed only in his relationship to the doppelgänger, who shares his name) who practices various vices and even some illegal activity is pursued by a mirror image that, at every opportunity, attempts to stop the narrator from partaking in self-destructive and unethical behavior by catching his attention and then whispering his name to him, ostensibly to remind him of his responsibilities to himself. The doppelgänger chases the narrator from school to school as he continues his life of debauchery, until the narrator confronts the double at a masquerade party, and kills it. The doppelgänger's parting words, "In me didst thou exist—and in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself" (83), reiterate the interrelated identity motif. When the doppelgänger disappears, leaving only a mirror, the reader discovers that the narrator has stabbed himself.

Oversimplified criticisms of this story state the obvious, that the doppelgänger represents the moral conscience of the narrator, from which he has alienated himself (Jung 385). Others apply Freudian, Jungian, or Lacanian parameters to the double. What is most intriguing about "William Wilson," however, is not its meaning but its adaptation of the doppelgänger concept. Rather than have the animalistic side of human nature be represented in the double, it is the self that is pure id. Here, the double functions as alter ego and ego, since the self is absent of both. Throughout the tale, the doppelgänger is a source of stress for the narrator, the self, as it foreshadows his destruction; eventually the doppelgänger comes to replace the individual, as it does in various shadow folktales (which influenced Hans Christian Anderson's 1847 short story, "The Shadow").

Poe's tale stands in opposition to stories such as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and "Green Tea." Le Fanu, known for his great contribution to vampire literature ("Carmilla," 1871), is also known for what seems to be a cross between "The Horla" and *Jekyll and Hyde*. In "Green Tea" (1869), part of the Dr. Hesselius series, explicit in its satire of Mesmerism and the theories of mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, the Reverend Mr. Jennings breaches the psychic realm by means of an unnatural concentration of the mental facilities. Jennings then becomes haunted by the personification of his animalistic side, a somewhat deformed and deranged monkey, which follows him around and encourages him to act out his impulses. As in "The Horla" (published in the same year as *Jekyll and Hyde*), the protagonist has been involved with research on mysticism and begins to sense an invisible presence. In Maupassaunt, the presence becomes the narrator's double, which proves to

be threatening to both the narrator and all society; in "Green Tea," it becomes an animalistic manifestation of the id (as in *Jekyll and Hyde*). In each of these tales, as in "William Wilson," self-annihilation is the only method of destroying the double. "Green Tea" ends in a suicide note by proxy.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY DOPPELGÄNGER TALES

Twentieth-century fiction has continued in this tradition, with authors such as Henry James, Algernon Blackwood, Max Beerbohm, and Arthur Machen. James's "The Jolly Corner" (1908) introduces an alter ego based on nationality, as a long-expatriated American who wonders what he would have been like if he had stayed in his native land visits his boyhood home and finds himself face to face with his alter ego. As is typical of James, the encounter is intellectual and philosophical (perhaps even too clever, as Spencer Brydon mentions "finding himself" on occasion), but it does end with a typical doppelgänger confrontation, and the ambiguous ending implies that the doppelgänger has replaced the self. Blackwood's "The Terror of the Twins" (1909) is based more on primitive fear of twins than on the concept of the alter ego. Here, a nobleman who has long yearned for a son and heir becomes the father of twin boys, resulting in his unnatural hatred, bordering on madness. Beerbohm's "Enoch Soames" (1916) takes the doppelgänger motif into the realm of time travel, when a writer makes a Faustian deal to travel into the future to assess his literary reputation, prompting a meeting between his older and younger selves (a plot device used recently to wonderful comic effect by Neil O'Connelly in the eccentric *Buddy Cooper Finds a Way* [2004]). One of the few examples of female doubling (readers should see also the fiction of Robert Aickman, most notably "The Fetch," "Marriage," and "Ravissante"), Machen's "The Great God Pan" (1894) explores the relationship between proper Victorian womanhood and a horrifying, primitive sexuality in the creation of a superficial beauty whose second self is a writhing mass of primordial ooze. In Wales a woman named Mary has her mind destroyed by a scientist's attempt to enable her to see the god of nature—Pan. Years later, a young woman, Helen Vaughan, arrives on the London social scene, causing young noblemen to commit suicide. Ultimately it is discovered that she is the monstrous offspring of Mary and the god Pan (Nodens, or Noddyns, the "god of the abyss"). Machen's novella inspired H. P. Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror" (1929), as well as Peter Straub's *Ghost Story* (1979).

Among contemporary horror novelists, the doppelgänger is a popular thematic device, utilized by writers such as Daphne du Maurier, Thomas Tryon, Peter Straub, Stephen King, John Skipp and Craig Spector, and Christopher Fowler. In du Maurier's *The Scapegoat* (1957) a history teacher, while in France researching, meets his exact double in appearance—an alter ego in this case. Over drinks the Frenchman proposes that the two men exchange lives,

and the protagonist awakens the next morning in a strange room, a chauffeur awaiting his orders. But he learns that his alter ego is a murderer from a dysfunctional family. He begins to give a sense of purpose to the alter ego's family members, but is interrupted by the its return. Both return to their former lives, and the protagonist discovers a lack of meaning now that he has no family to save, so he joins a monastery. The novel was made into a film in 1959 by Robert Hamer. Perhaps the best-selling doppelgänger fictional text of all time, Tryon's *The Other* (1971), is the schizophrenic tale of twin brothers, one of whom plays deadly pranks. Gradually, the reader is made aware that only one twin is actually alive, but his obsession with his twin, combined with a psychic connection and experiments with ESP and astral projection, has created a scenario where two selves

> *"Niles looked down beyond the orchard to the river.... Along the water's edge were the cattails, bending to meet their reflections.... 'I hate to think how many it'll take,' Holland said, lolling at another window, humming on his harmonica, and it was as though he had read his mind."*
>
> Thomas Tryon, *The Other* (1971)

inherit one body. *The Other* has sold in excess of 3.5 million copies to date. Straub's *Mr. X* (1999) pays tribute to H. P. Lovecraft and Guy de Maupassaunt, as a man who always senses an unseen presence (reminiscent of "The Horla") is heading home for his mother's funeral, discovers a family secret, as well as the fact that his father, a supernatural being known only as Mr. X, intends to murder him.

   The Dark Half (1989), by Stephen King, examines the relationship between a writer and his pseudonym, or more specifically, the persona behind that pseudonym (by now King was questioning his decision to kill off his Richard Bachman alter ego). Owing more to Stevenson's tale than Poe's "William Wilson," King creates here two disparate and oppositional beings, for he had previously stated that he felt Stevenson's monster focused on the subhuman characteristics of human beings, which he deemed necessary for the alter ego. In *The Dark Half*, the alter ego is in fact a completely amoral survivalist. It is the Other Writer who desires to continue to publish dark, shocking purple prose, as opposed to subtle, erudite language. The novel also examines theories behind the fear of twins, as the protagonist/novelist had undergone neurosurgery as a child to remove the vestigial remains of a twin. This encounter with the double has a positive ending, for the primary self ultimately destroys the alter ego, though the novel reveals a great deal about the unconscious forces that people try to repress. Skipp and Spector's *The Cleanup* (1987) introduces a protagonist who is the epitome of what has become known as a "slacker," an out-of-work wannabe, too-idealistic musician who literally needs to clean up his act. Enter his doppelgänger at a nearby coffee shop, in the form of a fanatically responsible guardian angel who will do whatever it takes to right a situation. Here, a traumatic incident, the main character's witnessing a fatal knifing in the streets of New York City, causes him to accidentally invoke this protector of sorts. *The Cleanup* is a study of just how far in the wrong direction

(violence against those who do not clean up) being socially responsible can go when powers are given to an idealist, rather than a realist.

Christopher Fowler's *Spanky* (1995) also examines the negative impact of a double who plows dangerously ahead, resulting in a small body count (one could read many similarities between this and Dominik Moll's French film *With a Friend Like Harry* [2000], where a character who identifies too closely with an overburdened protagonist takes matters into his own hands). *Spanky*'s protagonist is an anything but heroic twenty-three-year-old. He hates his job as a furniture salesman, has watched others get promoted ahead of him, shares a house with a neo-hippie roommate who allows the house to fall down around him while getting high and offers no help with household duties, and is not very successful with women. To worsen matters, he is being manipulated by his parents, who are haunted by the memory of a son who died (and apparently could have been successful). He goes to a club one night and is approached by a man who exudes confidence and introduces himself as Spanky, claiming that he is a daemon and can deliver on any of the protagonist's desire, making what he calls immeasurable improvements on his life. Fowler takes a bit more of a realistic track than most at this point, in that he has the self deny the doppelgänger. It is only with time that the drudgery of everyday life weighs down and causes the self to make a Faustian deal. Immediately, the improvements he was promised begin to come to fruition, as rivals have nasty accidents, new management results in a promotion, and a new bachelor pad opens up, suddenly making the pursuit of his dream woman a reality. The doppelgänger, however, is not content with being the second self. As a fallen angel, it needs a human body—his—to inhabit briefly, and has just seven days to possess it. At this point the angel for all practical purposes turns into a Mr. Hyde, and begins a series of murders and kidnappings that have the main character questioning his sanity and wondering if he himself hasn't been committing crimes. As do all doppelgänger texts, *Spanky* ends with a confrontation, although it results in the survival of a self (rather than the double), but this self adopts some of the alter ego's methods in order to survive and thrive.

YOUNG ADULT DOPPELGÄNGERS

James A. Moore's *Possessions* (2004) and *Rabid Growth* (2005), as well as Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002), differ from most supernatural young adult fiction by male authors in that they incorporate the figure of the doppelgänger, rather than the more popular psychic (more specifically, the clairvoyant) motif. Similar to the classic film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, here the double comes as a result of an invasion by an Other, a creature similar to H. P. Lovecraft's Old Ones. This plantlike, subterranean, ancient "god" attaches itself to its victims literally, by rooting itself in their very flesh. While

doing so, it also produces replicants for the humans it uses for potting soil, marking them with large, cancerous sores and an insatiable appetite for violence and mayhem, themes which are entirely too appropriate for a series about teenagers turning into young adults. Moore himself clarifies this reading of the series by having his protagonist be a young man who is known for his responsible nature; he is mature enough to become the legal guardian for his sister when the mother is killed. Contrasting his nature is the best friend character, an eighteen-year-old who is known as a good kid, but whose behavior has had to be dismissed with a boys-will-be-boys shake of the head on more than one occasion. By no accident, it is the friend who is captured and turned maniacal by the creature in *Possessions*, and who must be saved from his rash (pun intended) and violent replicated self in *Rabid Growth*.

Coraline stars a pre-teen protagonist who wanders lonely through her family home, as no playmates live nearby, school is out, and the nasty weather makes playing outside unpleasant. Coraline's parents also fail to provide any abatement of her ennui, as both are too occupied with their own professional endeavors to keep her amused, and they do not see their role as extending to entertaining their child; instead, they encourage her to take responsibility for amusing herself. As a result, she discovers a door to another dimension where Other Mother and Other Father live. These doubles seem very nice at first, for unlike Coraline's real parents, they are passionately interested in her life, and cater to her every whim, stocking her closet with dress up clothes and never cooking strange and inedible food derived from "recipes." And best of all, they want her to never grow up. But there is something not quite right with this doppelgänger family's interest in Coraline. Soon it becomes apparent that Other Mother is that dreaded phallic mother we know from fairy tales and popular culture. While outwardly seeming to conform to her gender role, the phallic mother is truly the source of all power, which she uses to warp and manipulate those she supposedly loves. The phallic mother is Cinderella's evil stepmother robbing her of her birthright and attempting to prevent her from marrying the prince; she is the Evil Queen in Snow White, in competition with her own daughter for the affections of all; and she is Mrs. Bates, living in a psychologically incestuous union with her son before throwing him over for the attentions of a man. In short, she is all our collective cultural imaginative fears women are capable of. In this dimension behind the door, Other Mother is the one who rules, keeping Other Father locked in the cellar, along with other children who are now unsubstantial wraiths—having lived in darkness so long that they can no longer recall their corporeal existence. Thus Coraline decides to leave this dimension for good, but when she returns to her own world, she discovers that her real parents have become trapped on the other side of the door, so she herself must defeat Other Mother, an idealized version of the parent that Coraline must learn to renounce if she is ever to grow up, to release the original selves.

DOPPELGÄNGERS IN FILM

Twins and doppelgängers have been used to great effect in film, whether the screenwriter and director create an intensely personal story of one man's descent into madness, or evoke more universal fear by creating a world of usurping doubles. Among some of the better studies of isolation and loneliness leading to the emergence of the double is Stellan Ryes and Paul Wegener's *Der Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague*, 1913), considered by some the first horror film ever produced; it was remade in 1926 and 1935. This screen adaptation by Hanns Heinz Ewers of Poe's "William Wilson" uses the plot device of the scholar protagonist. The film differs from Poe's tale in that the main character is not a lothario. Rather, he is an impoverished aesthete who rescues a beautiful countess, becoming obsessed with her afterwards. He makes a Faustian deal for wealth and his deepest desires. He is then pursued by his double, who, contrary to the double in Poe, acts as his raging id. The double murders one of his rivals before he can stop the act from occurring. The film was so influential that Rank used it as one of his starting points for his study of doubles.

A testimony to the possibility that an alter ego can manifest itself at any age, Robert Mulligan's *The Other* (1972), which is extremely faithful to Tryon's novel (the author also wrote the screenplay), tells of a 1930s Connecticut summer when a nine-year-old becomes the focal point of a series of deadly "accidents." The father is killed by a trapdoor in the barn; the mother is paralyzed in a trip-and-fall; a cousin jumps off of a hayloft and lands on a misplaced pitchfork; an elderly aunt is scared to the point where she has a heart attack; and the family baby disappears—to be found later in a pickling barrel. True to the theory that isolation is a root cause of the doppelgänger, Tryon portrays the twin as a lonely, friendless boy, whose only companion is his mirror image, which turns out to be the memory of his deceased twin brother. Like the novel, Mulligan's adaptation balances the supernatural with the psychological, providing possible logical explanations for the "resurrection" of the dead twin, as well as for the ESP and astral projection practices that inform the tale.

George A. Romero's *The Dark Half* (1993) is more similar in theme and atmosphere to his little-known vampire flick *Martin* (1977) than to his blockbuster zombie movies. Based on the Stephen King novel, Romero's screenplay visits the theme of a writer's characters coming to life (see Christopher Golden's *Strangewood* [1999]). A child who grows up to be a writer has a tumor removed, but incredibly the growth turns out to be a twin brother that never developed. Years later, as a successful author, he is blackmailed by someone who has discovered his secret pseudonym under which he writes trash. When he attempts to kill off that series of books, he is framed for a series of gruesome murders. He begins having the same recurring nightmares he had as a child before the operation, leading him to suspect that either he is insane,

or has a doppelgänger (his twin). A similar type of private hell informs John Polson's *Hide and Seek* (2005), about a single-parent widower psychologist who moves with his daughter to the country. The daughter, a loner, is in therapy, for she has seemingly created an imaginary and very angry, potentially homicidal friend. However, as her potential playmates get scared off, and a murder is committed, it is slowly revealed that the imaginary friend is all too real: it is her father's doppelgänger, a Hyde version of his usual Jekyll demeanor, brought about because of his wife's infidelities and years of decorum.

The idea of doubles or replicants taking over an entire community has been extremely popular on film, with the 1950s bringing Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956). Based on Jack Finney's novel, the Daniel Mainwaring screenplay introduces Dr. Miles Bennel, who upon returning to his small-town American practice, discovers that several patients suffer from a psychological illness where they believe that all of there friends and relations have been replaced by doppelgängers. In an interesting twist on the doppelgänger motif, here the self comes to understand that all society is the replication; instead of the isolation of the hero causing the birth of the double, the emergence of the double results in the isolation of the hero. Gerry Anderson's film *Doppelgänger*, released in theaters in the United States in 1969 as *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun: Doppelgänger* (directed by Robert Parrish), is similar in theme to Siegel's masterpiece: An entire planet of doppelgängers on the exact opposite side of the sun from Earth is found by the team of an American astronaut and a British scientist. A crash-landing fools the two into believing they are back on Earth, but once the astronaut is reunited with his wife, he realizes that he has found an alternate universe.

Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris* (2002) is cut from the same mold. Based on a Stanislaw Lem science fiction novel (Soderbergh wrote the screenplay for this remake of Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 movie), the film tells the story of a planet that, for want of a better phrase, reads minds. This planet can then reproduce the images from the mind it has read, creating individualized realities filled that oblige its visitors by rewarding them with doubles of all the people they miss or have lost. As the film opens, two astronauts have died in a space station circling the planet, and the survivors have sent back alarming messages, prompting a psychiatrist to visit. When he awakens after his first night on board, his wife, who had committed suicide, is in bed with him. He knows this is a materialization, yet is torn between turning his back on it and giving in to this world of shadows. What *Solaris* adds to the mass replicant dialogue is the genius of Lem's underlying idea: The planet duplicates humans only as they are seen by other humans. In other words, the replicants are entirely self-driven, so they know no more about themselves than the being who imagines them; they have no personality traits other than those that are recalled by memory. Yet they are beings, the second selves of those who are imagined, and they are capable of replacing the original selves they copy because they learn from human interaction. They have a present and a future, but are truly

A Chronology of Important Doppelgänger Films

1913 *Der Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague*) (Stellan Ryes and Paul Wegener)

1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel)

1959 *The Scapegoat* (Robert Hamer)

1969 *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun: Doppelgänger* (Robert Parrish)

1972 *Solyaris* (Andrei Tarkovsky)

1972 *The Other* (Robert Mulligan)

1975 *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes)

1977 *Martin* (George A. Romero)

1979 *Hair* (Milos Forman)

1987 *Angel Heart* (Alan Parker)

1988 *Dead Ringers* (David Cronenberg)

1991 *Barton Fink* (The Coen Brothers)

1993 *Der Sandmann* (Eckhart Schmidt)

1993 *The Dark Half* (George A. Romero)

1996 *Thinner* (Tom Holland)

1999 *Fight Club* (David Fincher)

2000 *Memento* (Christopher Nolan)

2000 *With a Friend Like Harry* (Dominik Moll)

2001 *Mulholland Dr.* (David Lynch)

2002 *Solaris* (Steven Soderbergh)

2003 *Dopperugengâ* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa)

2004 *El Maquinista* (*The Machinist*) (Brad Anderson)

2005 *Hide and Seek* (John Polson)

without pasts. For this reason they are considered threatening; if humanity is not careful, it will allow these selves from the shadow realm to completely replace what we know to be reality.

Worldwide threat is replaced by communal threat in William Goldman's screenplay (1975) of Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972), which changes the intent of the tale drastically, making it less of a study of the descent into madness of one individual, and more of a broad satire of an entire mindset, male chauvinism. Here, the idyllic, small community of Stepford in upstate New York is replete with replicants, as the automaton Olimpia has been updated to fit 1970s' robotics technology. Women are systematically replaced with perfect automatons, doppelgängers which destroy the original self and

usurp its place in society, merrily and absent-mindedly cleaning, laundering, cooking, and pleasing sexually.

A handful of the more respected cybergoth directors, such as David Cronenberg, David Lynch, Joel and Ethan Coen, and David Fincher, are responsible for what I would have to argue are the best double and doppelgänger films to date. Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers* (1988), based on the work by Bari Wood and Jack Geasland, explores the relationship between sexuality and horror. Twin Jekyll and Hyde-like gynecologists who routinely impersonate one another play a sexual game in which the more confident (and emotionally dark) of the two passes on the women who fill his calendar of trysts to the other, a plan which works fine until the beta twin falls in love, creating an atypical, truly weird love triangle that delves into the taboo subject of the physiology behind pregnancy. Insanity is introduced into the equation when the beta twin begins sharing one of the shared lovers' drug habits, resulting in the invention and use of surgical instruments of which the Marquis de Sade would have been envious. Cronenberg approaches such a personal hell with scientific curiosity and objectivity, even when the twins become truly mad and self-destructive.

Lynch's *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) and the Coen Brothers' *Barton Fink* (1991) are unique in that the doppelgänger relationship in both is seemingly tenuous (owing to the fact that the alter ego is not identical to the self physically), but nonetheless these are without a doubt doppelgänger tales. Perhaps the only well-known female doppelgänger movie, *Mulholland Dr.*, introduces two characters named Betty and Rita. The movie follows them through mysterious plot loops. By film's end, however, it becomes apparent that the two are not different characters, as suspected (Rita's amnesia helps to keep this possibility plausible). Betty, an aspiring starlet, is a new arrival who has moved to inhabit her aunt's vacant apartment. Rita is about to be murdered when a limo accident accidentally saves her; now an amnesiac, she crawls out of the wreckage on Mulholland Drive, stumbles down the hill, and is taking a shower in the apartment when Betty, who decides to help her, arrives. The plot is driven by the two women's attempts to fit the pieces of Rita's life (various weird characters are introduced, including a blackmailed director marked for murder; a wheelchair bound dwarf guide on a cell phone; and a Joe Friday and Bill Gannon like cop team). Eventually the characters start to, as Roger Ebert describes it, "fracture and recombine like flesh caught in a kaleidoscope." Similar in its dreamlike quality is *Barton Fink*. Fink is a troubled New York playwright obsessed with bringing his new idea of Theater of the Common Man to his producers. He is initially successful, and is rewarded with a trip to Los Angeles to write, where he checks into a labyrinth of a hotel to work on a B-movie wrestling picture. Suffering from writer's block, he enlists the aid of his only fellow hotel inhabitant (here isolation again results in the manifestation of a mysterious Other), the personification of the common man, a salesman named Charlie Meadows. Eventually the movie delves into the darker

recesses of the mind, and ends in murder, with the viewer wondering if Meadows actually ever existed.

Without a doubt the masterpiece of all doppelgänger movies, Fincher's flawless, loose adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club*, stands apart for its brilliant, almost textbook representation of the doppelgänger and the psychology of heautoscopy. Screenwriter Jim Uhls plays down the realism of the novel, which ends in the main character's hospitalization in a mental ward, opting instead for over-the-top metaphor-turned-metamorphosis, replacing the symbolic with the literal. An anticonsumerist visual tome, *Fight Club* is the story of an insomniac insurance representative with no name, a man whose sole job is to travel to accident scenes, inspect the carnage, and then help calculate the formula which will determine whether or not manufacturers should recall an item (based on a profit-loss formula). His idyllic consumer existence is shattered, however, when he ceases to feel anything, when his life becomes "a copy, of a copy, of a copy." Enter the doppelgänger, social anarchism personified, Tyler Durden. The narrator of the film meets Durden on a plane (although the careful viewer can see quick splices of him in the background of earlier, pivotal scenes), and immediately is entranced by the idea that one need not be polite, deferential, and courteous, for Durden has deconstructed all of the niceties of society and has discovered that they are empty actions performed in order to keep the status quo. For example, when he gets up to leave his plane seat, he asks, "so should I give you the ass, or the crotch?" The narrator, who has a death wish, returns to his condo to discover that an explosion has occurred; with nowhere to turn, he takes out Durden's business card (Durden claims that he sells soap, "the yardstick of society"), and arranges to stay with the mysterious stranger, as a co-squatter, in a condemned house on Paper Street. In the meantime, the narrator is finding himself drawn to a punky nihilist named Marla Singer, who dresses and acts likes a female version of Durden (the narrator seems unaware of this). Through various incidental occurrences, the three become involved in a love-hate triangle, and while this is happening, Durden and the narrator form the first Fight Club, a group of lower and middle class, behind-the-desk/gaspump/stove/diswasher men who meet after hours to basically vent their frustrations by beating each other up. This leads to Operation Mayhem, whereby Fight Club members join an army of Space Monkeys, disavow their right to an identity, and wreck havoc on society by participating in acts of comic vandalism.

The backdrop behind all this is the narrator's slow realization that Tyler Durden does not exist (Fincher brilliantly directs every scene so that no character ever interacts with the narrator and Durden at the same time), that sometimes he is himself, and sometimes he is Durden (which it turns out is his name). True to the psychological theories of the doppelgänger, Durden is always more aware of the narrator's next move than he is of Durden's. As the film progresses, Durden, the second self, begins to take over the consciousness, as the narrator becomes more and more dissociated. Finally, the narrator

attempts suicide in a marvelous standoff filled with psychological logic, and he kills off Durden, although he is too late to stop the anarchist's plans to destroy all credit card records and equalize society. However, Fincher gets the last laugh: He knows that the doppelgänger can never really be killed off if the self survives, and in the closing credits, a quickly spliced image of a penis—Durden's calling card when he worked as a projectionist—appears.

"You wake up at Seatac, SFO, LAX. You wake up at O'Hare, Dallas-Fort Worth, BWI. Pacific, mountain, central.... You wake up at Air Harbor International. If you wake up at a different time, in a different place, could you wake up as a different person?"
Narrator/protagonist,
Fight Club (film)

The cinematic potential of the doppelgänger has also been seen in other countries. Kiyoshi Kurosawa's 2003 Japanese film *Dopperugengâ*, coauthored with Ken Furusawa, presents the story of a failed inventor working on the perfect robotic wheelchair (an automaton). On the verge of being fired from the research division, he is confronted by his doppelgänger, which offers to help him out of his inventor's block. The amoral doppelgänger helps to design a mind-controlled wheelchair, which will "replicate the complexity of human behavior." The doppelgänger reminds him that like the paralyzed individuals who will use his invention, he lacks the ability to accomplish his task at hand. The doppelgänger, which seems in league with many of company's researchers and managers, see the chair as a vehicle towards riches; in other words, they want the inventor to sell-out his altruism. Finally, the researcher chooses to be true to himself (and to the self), refusing the possibility of millions of dollars, and a Nobel prize.

Brad Anderson' s *El Maquinista* (*The Machinist*, 2004), written by Scott Kosar, draws heavily from *Fight Club* in its representation of the doppelgänger, but is more of a private nightmare that a social satire. A machine shop lathe operator who is literally dying of insomnia begins seeing a strange looking co-worker, who makes it a point to catch his attention at crucial moments where an accident can be caused. Reminiscent of *Angel Heart* (1987), *Thinner* (1996), and *Memento* (2000), this strange film begins with the main character's rolling what looks like a body up into a carpet. He takes this body out to the quarry in order to submerge it, but is interrupted by a night watchman carrying a flashlight. Just after the carpet rolls out of sight, the stranger shines a light on his face and asks the central question of the movie: "Who Are You?" There is a quick editing cut to the protagonist's washing his face and looking at himself in the mirror, hardly recognizing what he sees there, and then noticing a post-it note on his refrigerator which asks the overwhelming question in writing. At this point he meets the mysterious fellow "pit" worker, a grotesque looking muscular man with a shaved head; the trouble is, no one else has ever seen or heard of this man. A source of constant distraction, this causes a series of mistakes that cost a co-worker his arm, followed by more strange post-it notes, in the form of a hangman game that reflect back to the question, "who are you?" As it turns out, here the

doppelgänger is caused by a traumatic past event, followed by intense guilt and a total dissociation with the self. The protagonist has not only slept for a year; he has lost over seventy pounds. He is a man trying literally to disappear. He no longer recognizes pictures of himself. Finally a confrontation with the doppelgänger occurs, and in an atypical turn of events, the protagonist kills the doppelgänger without destroying himself. On the contrary, it is only after he commits the murder of this second self that his primary self is again able to emerge, causing him to remember the event that sent him over the edge, and to finally take responsibility for his actions. Where this film stands apart from *Fight Club* in its visual telling of the story (*Fight Club* is narrated, start to finish). Washed out color, the constant alternation between blue backlighting and gray tones that permeate the movie, and the uses of the color red, add an eerie quality that compliments images such as the pit machines, the weird post-it notes, blood leaking from a refrigerator, and the quarry itself.

CONCLUSION: THE DOPPELGÄNGER IN POPULAR CULTURE

The number of films and blockbuster novels dealing with doubles only hints at the cultural preoccupation with the subject. Nothing attests more to the popularity of the doppelgänger than does television and video games. Doppelgängers make appearances in various television shows, including fan favorites like "Kolchak: The Night Stalker," "The X-Files" (in an episode called "Fight Club" after the Palahniuk novel), "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," David Lynch's "Twin Peaks," the original "Star Trek," Adult Swim's "Sealab 2021," "NCIS," "Supernatural," "Sliders," and "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation." Video games that feature doppelgängers include Bloodrayne (the Doppelgänger Twins, Sigmund and Simon), Prince of Persia (a double produced when reflections escape from an enchanted mirror), Guild Wars, Nintendo's Pokémon (one character can replicate opponents), Sonic the Hedgehog (Metal Sonic is an alter ego), Mario Brothers (Wario and Waluigi are alter egos), Magic: The Gathering (the Vesuvian Doppelgänger), Metroid (two Doppelgängers), The Legend of Zelda (Dark Link is a doppelgänger), Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening, Onimusha (Stylado is a Genma clone), Ragnarok Online (has various doubles), Gamecube's Lost Kingdoms (players can acquire doppelganger cards), and Playstation's Saga Frontier (includes various "shadows," or doubles). In fact, as of April 2006, the word "doppelgänger" retrieves over 2 million hits in a Google search of the Internet.

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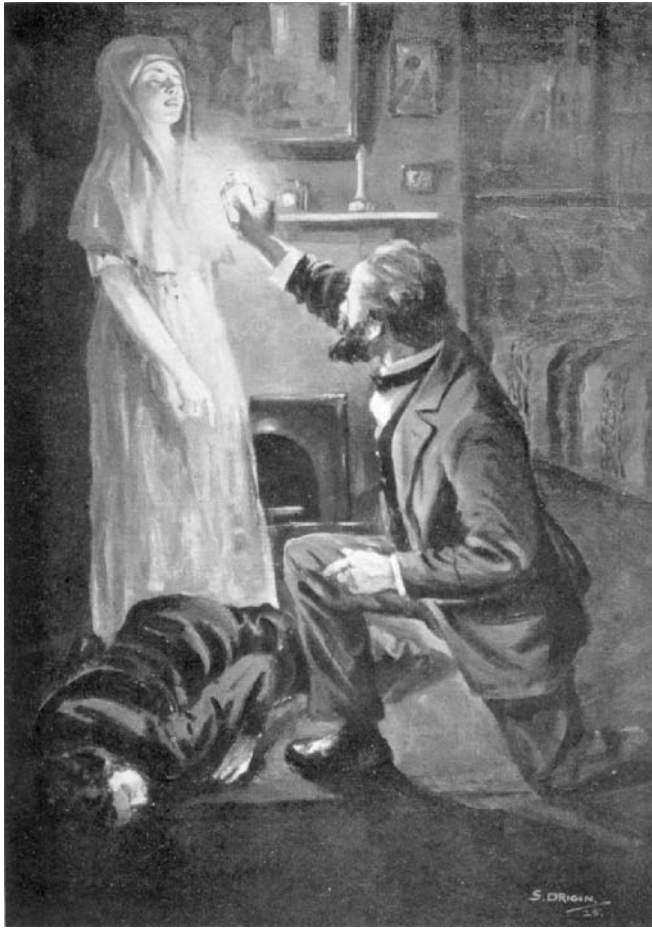
The Ghost

by Melissa Mia Hall

"Ghosts accompany us everywhere, and the longer you live, the more of them
are following you around"—Peter Straub
From Michael McCarty's Sci.Fi.com's 2005 interview with Peter Straub,
www.scifi.com/sfw/issue445/interview.html

The haunting allure of the ghost creates a seductive mystique and a very
marketable icon that appeals to all ages. The apparition of a dead person or
animal—the disembodied spirit that can be manifested as sound, touch, smell,

or vision, and possess or manipulate objects or do any number of frightening or inspiring things—is without a doubt one of the most enduring staples of horror and the supernatural. The ghost's popularity might wax and wane, wavering in and out of sight, but it never truly vanishes. And even if you share the sentiments of Pete, the cynical doctor Robert Downey, Jr., plays in *Gothika* (Warner/Columbia/Dark Castle, 2003), "I don't believe in ghosts," or agree with Dr. Miranda Grey (as played by Halle Berry), "Neither do I but they believe in me," the ghost remains as a major blip on pop culture's entertainment radar screen.

Dead people stay dead. But what if they don't? Communication with the dead has been a human desire, terrifying or humorous, mystifying or illuminating, for ages. Sit around a campfire with a bunch of kids or adults long enough and the ghost stories begin. Read a book alone with a flashlight under the covers or dare a buddy to visit a haunted house at the stroke of midnight. Or just hang out with friends sitting too long around a table that goes bump in the night. Séance, anyone? Maybe it was just the dog that made that weird whine. Was that the cat scratching the sand in the litter box or . . .

So what if the lights aren't working quite right? What if the candle flame lengthens, burning brightly and then goes out with a whoosh when there's not a whisper of air in the room? What if there's . . . someone in bed with you, an invisible being lulling you into a shadowy embrace, a phantom hand holding your hand? Whether the wraith inhabits a tattered E.C. comic, a yellowing copy of *Weird Tales*, the corridors of a computer game, within literary fiction, stylish film production, or a potboiler replete with bloodcurdling screams and gory scenes, both print media and visual shock-fests know the worth of a good (or very bad) ghost.

So basic is this human desire that scribes and artisans of the ancient world explored it through Books of the Dead (Egyptian, Tibetan, etc.), detailing the appropriate ceremonies and rituals that should be conducted for the mortal soul's passage into the immortal region of the netherworlds. And for cultures where books had yet to materialize, oral folk tales were passed down from generation to generation that included stories about contact with spirits. We find ghosts intriguing, whether depicted by an ancient Native Indian shaman or by a television writer for *Medium* (2005). Emmy Award–winning Patricia Arquette plays Allison Dubois (based on a real medium) who solves crimes with the help of the victim's spirit while coping with family issues. Another TV production, also based on a John Gray's experiences as a medium also utilizes psychic communication with ghosts is *Ghost Whisperer* (2005), starring Jennifer Love Hewitt as Melinda Gordon a young newlywed who helps restless spirits resolve personal issues that will allow them to find peace.

It can be the female ghost Peter Straub depicts in *Ghost Story* (1979) or a house in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) or an angel like Susie in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* (2002). The ghosts within frightening or enchanting tales once so prolific in world literature still exist because we

want them to. And more often that not, they are resurfacing from disintegrating magazines and fragile old books once more numerous than the DVDs and tapes now crowding the shelves of our nation's public libraries. Whether the ghost sounds of a 1930s' radio play or the hollow echoes of footsteps across a stage during a performance in the Victorian age, the ghost seduces with the charm of a surprising welcome of an uninvited guest long missed. Or with the terror of one long feared.

It might be Toni Morrison invoking the angry ghost of a child killed to prevent her from becoming a slave or an Edward Gorey or a Gahan Wilson invoking a whimsical ghost in a drawing. It might be the wavering ghost crying out from Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream* (actually most art critics infer that the figure is quite real and not a ghost, but this is just one view of that currently missing masterpiece). The ghost may entertain us visually as a stop-action wraith in a Tim Burton film or create a sympathetic tug at our heart when an abused girl's spirit calls out for help in *The Sixth Sense*, written and directed by M. Night Shylaman. The enigmatic paradox found in the contemplation of ghosts is that whether they enchant and/or terrify, their power can be found in the mortality they represent while suggesting the possibility of immortality. It might be a paradox, but it's a fascinating one.

Pseudo-reality journalism TV shows often lure viewers to address ''real'' ghost stories featuring psychics exploring this endless fascination with spirits. ''Entertainment Tonight'' or similar productions find endless charm in doing specials like ''Haunted Hollywood'' (2006), about spirits hanging out at the Roosevelt Hotel, the Chateaux Marmont, and don't forget The Viper Room. But for now let's concentrate on the amazing wealth of fictional ghosts that have already proven their worth. A quick check of the index of *Supernatural Literature of the World*, edited by S. T. Joshi and Stefan Dziemianowicz (Greenwood, 2005) for specifically ''ghost'' related entries yields a whopping seventy-seven entries. Ghosts may pass periodically into the shadowy realm but they always return when summoned due to their ability to produce chills, thrills, and sometimes wisdom.

The question of belief is all-important in dealing with ghosts. Even M. R. James was not prepared to discount totally the actual existence of ghosts or revenants. In 1997 England's veteran editor of horror and the supernatural, Stephen Jones, edited *Dancing with the Dark: True Encounters with the Paranormal by Masters of the Macabre* (Vista). Among the contributions, from both living and dead authors: Joan Aiken, Clive Barker, Robert Bloch, Charles de Lint, Ed Gorman, Stephen King, H. P. Lovecraft, Richard Matheson, R. C. Matheson, Anne McCaffrey, Edgar Allan Poe, Vincent Price, H. R. Wakefield, Douglas E. Winter, and Gene Wolfe. Graham Masterton's account, ''My Grandfather's House'' (213–18) is especially evocative and includes this passage (217) about again encountering the ghost of his grandfather: ''My scalp prickled, but I thought: This time I'm going to speak to him…if he keeps

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Old Scotch verse:

From Ghoulis and Ghosties
And Long-leggèd beasties
And Things That Go Bump in the Night,
Good Lord Deliver Us!

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appearing, there must be a reason. And I need to know what it is . . . I turned around and there was nobody standing within thirty feet of me. He simply wasn't there.''

Can communicating with psychics to connect with ghosts lead to addiction? Sarah Lassez, an actress turned activist/author, became so addicted she established an online support group for recovering psychic addicts (www .psychicjunkie.net) and, with Gian Sardar, wrote a book, *Psychic Junkie: A Memoir* (2006), about her ten-year addiction. ''At her darkest moments it cost her about $1000 a month'' (Alex Williams, New York Times News Service, March 19, 2006).

THE GNARLED AND TWISTED ROOTS OF THE GHOST STORY

The first written record of a ghost story might be found in cave pictographs, and it does not take a massive leap of imagination to consider a cave painting in Lascaux in the Dordogne region of France as the first pictograph story. Depicted in dark brown dissolving into white, the ghostly horse appears to be vanishing or materializing in the midst of an animal stampede (Plate III in the pamphlet *La Grotte de Lascaux* by Jean Taralon [Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques, 1953]). Perhaps the artist just got tired, but the image is mysteriously haunting.

Scrutiny of Mayan, Greek, Roman, Indian, Chinese, and other cultures' ancient artifacts and texts would also yield a brush of the ghostly. Study of Egyptian pyramid décor might also yield a story about the mythical Osiris, King of the Underworld, who was killed by his evil brother Set and temporarily brought back to life by Isis (Guardian of the Living and the Dead) who, although she was also his sister, became his wife and the mother of their child, Horus.

The spirit world's interaction with the ''real'' world can be interpreted in countless languages and ways. Many scholars agree that in 2700 B.C.E. Shin-equi-unninni, a cuneiform scribe, wrote the first story about communicating with a ghost/spirit. On the twelfth tablet of the Epic of Gilgamesh, there is an addendum to the actual story, almost a dirge about a grieving Gilgamesh who converses lyrically with the wraith of his great friend Enkidu about the afterlife after he begs a god to allow him to speak with him:

Ea from his abyss deep heard Gilgamesh and took pity then said: "Nergel, hear me now, open a most wide hole in your roof, from whence can Enkidu waft like smoke up from your hot fires below." Nergel heard Ea's great voice and did cut a hole in his roof to let Enkidu's spirit waft up from his hot fires below. (Column III of tablet XII)

The Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is one of the earliest and most beloved ghost stories. The tale has been reinvented and reinterpreted many times and even inspired Jean Cocteau to make *Orpheus* (1949), set in Paris, which Roger Ebert in *The Great Movies II* applauded for its audacity: "The humor, when it comes, is dry. Certain lines—not too many—employ Cocteau's own poetic language. The best is: 'mirrors are the doors, through which death comes and goes. Look at yourself in a mirror all your life and you'll see death do its work'" (317). Another imaginative version of the myth is Marcel Camus's *Black Orpehus* (1959), an Academy Award and Palme d'Or winner, set against the bossa nova backdrop of Rio de Janeiro's Carnival.

In the original myth Orpheus goes upon a quest to seek his wife's release from the Stygian realm after her premature death. He succeeds, or so it seems, by singing so sweetly the gods and ghosts of the underworld are convinced to grant his wish—as long as he does not look at her until after they return to Earth. Unfortunately, Orpheus forgets and his wife is returned to the realm of the spirits after one premature glance. This bittersweet tale was very popular in the Middle Ages, and similar stories about grieving souls seeking to retrieve their loved ones from the regions of the dead can be found in many Books of the Dead and in Native American folklore.

The Greeks and Romans loved their ghost stories. Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Pliny spring to mind, as well as Lucian (115–189 C.E.), a humorous Greek scribe from Samosata (Syria) who wrote about "a ghost of a dead wife who tells her husband where to find a lost slipper; a house haunted by an evil 'phantom' (*phasma*), whose bones are later found buried under the floor of a room" (S. T. Joshi, in *Supernatural Literature of the World* 746). Consider this passage from a letter by Pliny the Younger:

The philosopher turned back his head, and saw the figure, which he observed to answer the description, that he had received of it. The apparition stood still, and beckoned with a finger, like a person, who calls another. Athenodorus signified, by the motion of his hand, that the ghost should stay a little, and gain immediately applied himself to writing. The spectre rattled his chains over the head of the philosopher, who looking back, saw him beckoning as before and immediately taking up a light, followed him. The ghost went forward in a slow pace, as if encumbered by the chains, and afterwards turning into a court belonging to the house, immediately vanished, leaving the philosopher alone; who finding himself thus deserted, pulled up some grass and leaves, and placed them as a signal to find the spot of ground. The next day he went to the magistrate; informed them of the event, and desired, that they would order the

palace to be dug up. Human bones were found buried there, and bound in chains. Time and the earth had mouldered away the flesh and the skeleton only remains: which was publicly buried; and after the rites of sepulture, the house was no longer haunted. (Laing, *The Haunted Omnibus* 279)

Shakespeare understood the power the ghost can yield in a play. Margaret Atwood noted, "Even when the dead arrive uninvited, as in the Hamlet's father and defunct-true-love scenarios, as a rule you know that if you can just last out until daybreak, they'll be gone. But there's something quite a lot riskier: instead of dealing with the dead on your own territory-merry middle-earth—you can cross over into theirs" (*Negotiating with the Dead*, 167).

But how long we stay there depends on how illuminating and entertaining the ghost is. Although Atwood was addressing the role of the writer in the same book when she stated: "To go to the land of the dead, to bring back to the land of the living someone who has gone there—it is a very deep human desire, and thought also to be very deeply forbidden (*Negotiating with the Dead* 171–72), she could easily have been speaking about how a successful ghost story capitalizes on that desire, leading the intrepid traveler on a satisfying journey that allows the reader or viewer to dispel fears regarding death.

THE GHOST STORY WRITERS

Before diving into the swirling mists of story, short and long form, or of print and visual media, it is imperative to address the elephant in the room. It's a very large elephant, accompanied by a herd of still larger elephants. The number of writers who have mentioned ghosts in passing or included them as a major element in the construction of their plots is so vast it can only be guessed at.

And the list that follows, of classic ghost stories, is just a teaser, a reminder of the many brilliant ghost tales still available, in print or out of print. With the advent of the Internet, some stories once hard to find and are now out of copyright can be found and read. Sadly, many worth ghost stories have become rare, especially story collections by women authors who excelled in ghost story writing during the Victorian age and even during the twentieth century. Luckily, "lost" fiction by lesser known women authors from the Victorian age continue to resurface to be studied in university classrooms, taking their place beside more well-known male authors such as the classical prose by authors including: Ambrose Bierce (1842–1914), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), Washington Irving (1783–1859), Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), Henry James (1843–1916), M. R. James (1862–1936), Algernon Blackwood (1869–1951), E.T.A. Hoffman (1776–1822), F. Marion Crawford (1854–1909), Sheridan LeFanu (1814–1873), Guy de

Maupassant (1850–1893), H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937), Arthur Machen (1863–1947), Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), Russell Kirk (1918–1994), Robert Aickman (1914–1981), Fritz Leiber (1910–1992), John Bellairs (1938–1991), Manly Wade Wellman (1903–1986), and living authors such as Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Clive Barker, Richard Peck, R. L. Stine, Graham Masterton, Charles L. Grant, Peter Straub, T.E.D. Klein, Dean Koontz, Steve Rasnic Tem, Charles de Lint, Thomas Montelone, Ramsey Campbell, Thomas Ligotti, Joe Lansdale, Neil Gaiman, Gene Wolfe, Gahan Wilson, Terry Dowling Dan Simmons, Edward Bryant, Thomas Ligotti, Dennis Etchison, Michael Chabon, John Farris, David Schow, David Silva, Robert McCammon, and many others.

It can be a rewarding treasure hunt to seek out the lost voices. Michael Cox, the editor of *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century Ghost Stories* (1996), noted: "One inescapable fact of supernatural fiction in the twentieth century, as in the nineteenth, has been the dominance of women. It has been claimed, by the writer Jessica Amanda Salmonson, that 'supernatural fiction written in English in the last two hundred years as been predominantly women's literature, and much of it is clearly feminist' " (quoting from Jessica Amanda Salmonson's *What Did Miss Darrington See?: An Anthology of Feminist Supernatural Fiction* ix). Whether feminist in nature, there are many women writers who utilized the ghostly supernatural including: Clara Reeve (1729–1807), Sophia Lee (1750–1824), Charlotte Riddell (1832–1906), Mary Braddon (1835–1915), Olivia Howard Dunbar (1873–1953), Margaret Oliphant (1828–1897), Sarah Orne Jewett (1849–1909), Mary Wilkins Freeman (1852–1930), Gertrude Atherton (1857–1948), Madeline Yale Wynne (1847–1918), Margaret Irwin (1889–1967), Rhoda Broughton (1840–1920), Harriet Prescott Spofford (1835–1921), Marghanita Laski (1915–1988), Mary Molesworth (1839–1921), Dorothy Kathleen Broster (1877–1950), and Fanny La Spina (1880–1969), among many others.

More well-known authors include: May Sinclair (1863–1946), Violet Hunt (1866–1942), Edith Nesbit (1858–1924), Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865), Jane Austen (1775–1817), whose *Northanger Abbey* (published in 1818) is a must-read for fans of the Gothic parody, Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896), Emily Brontë (1818–1848), Edith Wharton (1862–1937), Francis Hodgson Burnett (1849–1924), Ellen Glasgow (1873–1945), Isak Dinesen/Karen Blixen (1885–1962), Shirley Jackson (1916–1965), Agatha Christie (1890–1976), Daphne du Maurier (1907–1989), Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960), Joan Aiken (1924–2004), Patricia Highsmith (1921–1995), and Elizabeth Bowen (1900–1973). Dizzy yet?

Moving into the more recently plowed field of ghost fiction, female wraith watchers (okay, groan at that dieting-inspired phrase, but ghost stories can be addictive, hence a guide to healthy ghost story consumption is not at all a bad idea!) since then have excelled in creating memorable work, among them: Tananarive Due, Susan Hill, Elizabeth Taylor, Alison Lurie, Muriel Spark,

Joyce Carol Oates, Lisa Tuttle, Nancy Holder, Elizabeth Massie, Alice Hoffman, Isabel Allende, Louise Erdich, Cynthia Ozick, Kathryn Ptacek, Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, Poppy Z. Brite, Margaret Atwood, Tanith Lee, Kathe Koja, Lucy Taylor, Elizabeth Engstrom, P. D. Cacek, Sharyn McCrumb, A. S. Byatt, Joanna Russ, Jane Gardam, Angela Carter, Penelope Lively, Clare McNally, Kit Reed, Wendy Webb, Melanie Tem, Alice Sebold, Melissa Pritchard, and many others.

No doubt there are many uncollected ghost stories floating about just waiting to be rediscovered and new ones being written. But before moving on to another list, let's backtrack and think about what makes a ghost story work. Gender has no bearing when it comes to genius in scripting the unearthly but good writing does.

What defines a ghost story? Gene Wolfe is a critically acclaimed fantasy author whose creepy but ghost tale, "The Walking Sticks," managed to land on my list of classic short stories. Wolfe believes there are five key must-have elements:

1. "Atmosphere. This is the hardest to achieve, and the most important.
2. "Setting. A ramshackle old house, a ship lost in fog—you know." (This Wolfe list came via personal correspondence. He assumes I know. I assume the reader also knows or should know that the setting of a successful ghost story should invoke a sense of dread or mystery, magic or hope but most importantly it should feel real. The insertion of the ghost then upsets the apple cart and keeps the reader reading.)
3. "A believable and interesting central character.
4. "A back-story.
5. "A reason for the ghost's activities."

The usage of "ghost" is often used to describe supernatural fiction that doesn't always include a recognizable spirit but is often but not always horrific in nature. The ghost can inhabit things, places, and humans. It can also be fantastic or realistic.

The must-have elements of a great ghost story, according to Neil Gaiman, author of *American Gods* (2001), *The Sandman* (1989–1996), and *Anansi Boys* (2005), should produce "a feeling that you're facing the inexplicable, and it's bigger and stranger than you can even imagine. I don't like ghost stories where things wrap up neatly, because they just don't..." (from personal correspondence).

In his perceptive chapter on horror fiction in *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King found the ghost to be the most potent archetype of four classic archetypes in supernatural and horror literature, the others being "the Vampire, the Werewolf and the Thing Without a Name" (252). However, King noted that "Ghosts are not inherently evil..."

Dean Koontz on ghost stories:

''Ghost stories—all stories of the supernatural—are especially wonder-invoking, for they deal not merely with the unknown but with the *unknowable.* We are curious about what lies beyond death, and good ghost stories, while not always philosophical or intellectual to any great degree, give the illusion of pulling back that black curtain to provide us with a glimpse of what waits us on the other side. A ghost—any ghost in any story, regardless of the tale's primary intent—is a symbol of our faith in a hereafter and is therefore a symbol of our deeply held belief that life is more than a biological accident, that human life has purpose and meaning and a destiny beyond this world. Convince me, for the duration of a story, that ghosts are real, and for that same length of time you also convince me that my own spirit will never die.
''*Afterword,*'' Post Mortem

THE CLASSIC SHORT STORIES

The development of the ghost story becomes more challenging to denote in chronological order, primarily due to the enormous amount of wonderful stories to choose from. Thus, a top-ten list seems a bit short, so behold—a top twenty. Like the novel list that follows next, this is only an attempt to chart some of the popular short stories that have made a major impact on the memory of the ghost story connoisseur. They are becoming more rare to find in today's marketplace but they're still coming. Michael Cox in his excellent introduction to *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century Ghost Stories* said: "critic Edmund Wilson expressed surprise that the ghost story was still alive and well in the age of the electric light" (vi). But why shouldn't it be thriving? The ghost can now be in the machine or be the machine, for that matter. The ghost, like Elvis may have left the building but can manipulate software, computers, cell phones, TVs, DVD players, tape machines, even zap us with psychic messages that can be recorded using all sorts of computer whiz bang technology.

1. "The Brahman, the Thief, and the Ghost" from the Panchatantra, a Kashmir, Sanskrit folk tale, translated by Arthur W. Ryder (*The Haunted Omnibus*, 1937). It seems fitting to lead off this list with a short ghost tale that in its great simplicity has much power. It's about a man triumphing over a thief and a tricky ghost named Truthful. Modern ghost tales often return to this simple theme, the struggle that pits mortal against ghost.
2. "Ligeia" by Edgar Allan Poe (*American Museum*, September 1838). The grotesque tale of a man whose morbid fascination with his dead wife leads him to kill his second wife whose corpse becomes vessel for the returning ghost of Ligeia. This horrific tale is also about a femme fatale, a siren.

3. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving (*The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*, 1819–1820). The story of that sleepy teacher, Ichabod Crane, encountering the infamous Headless Horseman has enchanted children for years.

4. "Le Horla" by Guy de Maupassant (*Gil Blas*, June 14, 1887), and longer version, *Le Horla* (Ohlendorf, 1887) A masterpiece of brooding, escalating unease. An invisible entity gradually inhabits a man. Seen by some critics as the product of a terminally ill man, it was written while Maupassant was reasonably healthy and at the top of his creative powers. It reflects not only his fascination with the intricate workings of the human brain but the age that he lived. In his own words, from "Fear" (1884), Maupassant writes, "One is only truly afraid of what one does not understand." This story is a perfect expression of this philosophy.

5. "Miss Jéromette and the Clergymen" by Wilkie Collins (*Little Novels,* 1887). A tale about a doomed woman who foresees her own death by her cheating husband and appears as a tragic wraith to a former suitor. A sophisticated tale of domestic abuse and revenant seeking justice or, at the very least, some sort of peace, it was ahead of its time. Collins also wrote the Victorian Gothic novels, *The Moonstone* (1868) and *The Woman in White* (1868).

6. "The Story of the Inexperienced Ghost" by H. G. Wells (*Strand Magazine*, 1902). Wells is a famous pioneer of science fiction but he also enjoyed rueful fantasy. This is one of his playful stories.

7. " 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' " by M. R. James (*Ghost-Stories of an Antiquary*, 1904). An often-reprinted tale, about a whistle that summons a ghost, is only one of James's memorable ghost stories. "Lost Hearts" is another chiller featuring the spirits of murdered children. Although not considered a supreme stylist like Henry James or other British writers of his generation, his love for the form is evident and his stories endure.

8. "The Willows" by Algernon Blackwood (*The Listener and Other Stories*, 1907). This is a ghostly tale about man versus nature, praised by H. P. Lovecraft and admired for its depiction of nature and the pull of the invisible world as it also explores the dangers of trespassing into regions ruled by spectral forces.

9. " 'They' " by Rudyard Kipling (*Scribner's*, August 1904). Another perennial favorite features the ghosts of children, reflecting a personal loss Kipling and his wife had experienced. His supernatural tales are collected in *The Mark of the Beast and Other Tales*, edited by S. T. Joshi (Dover, 2000).

10. "Afterward" by Edith Wharton (*Century Magazine*, January 1910). A quiet but compelling tale about an American couple in England and a ghost in America who makes an unpleasant call upon the husband whose business transactions leave something to be desired. Lisa Tuttle noted: "Wharton's typical stylistic restraint makes the mysterious ghost all the more unsettling when it arrives" (*Supernatural Literature of the World* 4). Wharton also wrote other excellent ghost tales, among them "The Lady's Maid's Bell" (*Scribner's*, November 1902) and the cleverly demonic "The

Eyes'' (*Scribner's*, June 1910). Her ghost stories have been reprinted in various editions, including *Ghosts* (1937), in which Wharton wrote an introduction.

11. "The Yellow Wall Paper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (*New England Magazine*, January 1892). A classic feminist tale about a woman suffering from postpartum depression whose disintegration is oddly similar to Maupassant's protagonist in "Le Horla." Both narrators are being haunted from within while outside forces make healing, or survival, an apparent impossibility.

12. "The Ghost Ship" by Richard Middleton (*Century Magazine*, April 1912). An often-reprinted humorous ghostly classic about what happens in a small English community when a ghost ship washes ashore, spilling its spirited crew among the equally spirited townspeople.

13. "The Shadowy Third" by Ellen Glasgow (*Scribner's*, December 1916; in *The Shadowy Third and Other Stories*, 1923). A ghost child avenges her mother's death and her own in this durable chiller from an American Pulitzer Prize–winning author. Contrast and compare the abused child them in newer stories like "Bundling" by Lucy Taylor (*Gahan Wilson's The Ultimate Haunted House*, 1996).

14. "School for the Unspeakable" by Manly Wade Wellman (*Weird Tales*, September 1937). Although it might be perceived as more about Satanic demons than ghosts, this scary story about a school boy run by an evil headmaster still resonates, a sort of nightmare precursor to Harry Potter and Hogwarts. Wellman also penned a memorable ghost story, "Where Angels Fear" (*Unknown*, March 1939).

15. "Smoke Ghost" by Fritz Leiber (*Unknown Worlds*, October 1941; in Leiber's *Nights Black Agents*, 1950). This story represents a gritty World War era when ghosts took on an even more poignant meaning.

16. "Duel" by Richard Matheson (1971; in *Foundations of Fear*, edited by David Hartwell, 1992). This is an example of the transition ghost in the machine, the transformation of traditional ghost into a technological phantom that appears to have been vanquished at the end, much like a ghost passing into a light, only this monstrous ghost passes through a fiery explosion.

17. "Mr. Elphinstone's Hands" by Lisa Tuttle (in Tuttle's *Skin of the Soul*, 1990). A story about a Victorian woman's unwanted ability to emit ectoplasm. Another Tuttle story, "The Spirit Cabinet" (in *Women of Darkness*, edited by Kathryn Ptacek, 1989), also blends the heritage of the Victorian ghost story with a modern twist that seems to bridge the past with effortless glee.

18. "Lost Boys" by Orson Scott Card (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*, October 1989), This poignant ghost tale gave birth to the novel of the same name (1992). It is about a "normal" family impacted by tragedies involving boys; Card described it as "the most autobiographical, personal and painful story" he has ever written (*Supernatural Literature of the World* 212).

''August 14. I am lost. Somebody possesses my soul and dominates it. Somebody orders all my acts, all my movements, all my thoughts. I am no longer anything in myself, nothing except an enslaved and terrified spectator of all the things I do. I wish to go out; I cannot. He does not wish to, and so I remain, trembling and distracted, in the armchair in which he keeps me sitting. I merely wish to get up and to rouse myself; I cannot! I am riveted to my chair, and my chair adheres to the ground in such a manner that no power could move us.''

Guy de Maupassant, ''The Horla,'' in The Haunted Omnibus

19. "Haunted" by Joyce Carol Oates (in *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque*, 1994). Oates is a juggernaut when it comes to stories about the super-natural. The only woman so far to be awarded a Bram Stoker Award for Life Achievement (1994); she is also a National Book Award Winner. This tale of twisted familial devotion along with an earlier story about spiritualism, "Night-Side" (in *Night-Side*, 1977), are just brief samples of her short story writing prowess.

20. "The Walking Sticks" by Gene Wolfe (in *Taps and Sighs*, 1999). Wolfe is another author who has been awarded a Bram Stoker for Life Achievement (1996). Told in a gripping first person similar in a strange way to the narrator in Gilman's masterpiece, this story tells of a man receives a legacy, some haunted walking sticks intended for his (missing) ex-wife that bring with them, great evil and the appearance of a mysterious man, "a big man with a black moustache and a derby hat such as one sees in old photographs..."

THE NOVELS

A Chronological Checklist for the Discerning Reader

David Hartwell, editor of two outstanding anthologies about the evolution of horror, *The Dark Descent* (1987) and *The Foundations of Fear* (1992), observed that until the 1970s, the ghost short story had been the "dominant literary genre of horror" ("Introduction" to *The Foundation of Fear*, 1). Is the novel now the dominant literary genre of the ghost story? One wonders. Readers now seek their ghostly thrills at longer lengths. Savor these novels that handle the spectral theme with flair.

1. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens (1843). In one of the world's most profoundly beloved ghost stories, four determined ghosts decide to teach the evil Ebenezer Scrooge that there is a price for his miserly ''bah humbug'' attitude; to get out of paying it, he must learn about the redemptive powers and rewards of generosity.

2. *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë (1847). This is another enduring ghostly masterpiece from a family of distinguished writers, including Charlotte and Anne Brontë. This romantic Victorian tale remains a testament to the tragic but ultimately transcendent love affair and the consequences of revenge. H. P. Lovecraft in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1927): "Between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw is a tie deeper and more terrible than human love. After her death he twice disturbs her grave and is haunted by an implacable presence which can be nothing less than her spirit."

3. *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James is a novella originally serialized in *Collier's Weekly* (January 27–April 6, 1898) and later in book form (*The Two Magics*, 1898) that many authors cite as their favorite ghost story, including Peter Straub (personal correspondence) and Stephen King in *Danse Macabre*.

4. *In the Closed Room* by Francis Hodgson Burnett (1904). A little known jewel by the woman who wrote two well-known children's classics, *The Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden*. It works best when viewed as an adult novel, not a juvenile ghost story, which might account for its obscure status. This is not a fairy tale for children, although it might attract fans of *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871) by George MacDonald, a noted expert at fairy tales. Both books were written during a time when children died more frequently than today, as modern advances in medicine have made some diseases obsolete. A seemingly innocent child's ghost who lives in a locked room in an abandoned house becomes enamored of a visiting living child. But the lonely child does not want the living child to leave, which lends a creeping unease to the story that is also about grief, class conflicts, and the permeable and sometimes quite chilling boundaries between life and death from a parent's perspective.

5. *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson (1959). House as ghost? House as lover? This chiller is another perennial favorite. A ghostly house captures a lonely woman like a butterfly in a net in a book that heavily influenced other contemporary haunted house novels, among them Richard Matheson's *Hell House* (1971), Anne River Siddons's *The House Next Door* (1978), and Stephen King's Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* (1977). Lisa Tuttle, who also wrote a ghost novel, *Familiar Spirit* (1983), early in her career, noted in an essay in *Horror: 100 Best Books*, edited by Stephen Jones: "I happen to believe, with Henry James, that the imagination is more terrified by unseen terrors than by anything a writer can describe and Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* is the best argument I can think of for this point of view. The book is work of art. And it is still one of he scariest stories I've ever read" (181).

6. *Suffer the Children* by John Saul (1977). Saul became one of the most successful if formulaic late 1970s/1980s horror-boom authors. His first novel featured a vengeful child's ghost. The ghost possession theme proved such a bestseller that similar themes resurfaced in *Comes the Blind Fury* (1980), *Nathaniel* (1984), and *Brain Child* (1985).

7. *The Shining* by Stephen King (1977). In *Horror: The 100 Best Books*, edited by Stephen Jones, Peter Straub called King's gripping ghost story about a writer's disintegration ''a masterwork, a bold product of an original vision, a novel of astonishing passion, urgency, tenderness, and invention'' (233). It is also very scary, with themes including alcoholism, child abuse, psychic phenomena, and marriage. King, influenced heavily by Shirley Jackson and Henry James, nevertheless added a fresh spin to a novel that endures because of its timeless portrait of a family trying to pull together under enormous stress.

8. *Ghost Story* by Peter Straub (1979). Generations of horror fans still cite this novel as their favorite, and it is not due to the elegant simplicity of the title. Stephen King in *Danse Macabre* observed the striking influence of Henry James in much of Straub's work, including his earlier ghostly thriller, *Julia* (1975), and said that Straub's usage of the ''idea that ghosts, in the end, adopt the motivations and perhaps the very souls of those who behold them'' (257) still resonates.

9. *The Pet* by Charles L. Grant (1986). Published as an adult novel but also an excellent teen thriller, this story about a ghost horse summoned by a disturbed teen to do his bidding is a prime example of Grant's quiet horror style that influenced the YA horror field much as R. L. Stine, Christopher Pike, and Lois Duncan's supernatural contributions did, by pitting ordinary teens in supernatural situations in which they could prevail or perish.

10. *Ash Wednesday* by Chet Williamson (1987). A wonderful ghost story involving the mysterious arrival of blue spirits in a small Pennsylvania town. How the townspeople react to such a spectral onslaught varies, but the quality doesn't. A prime example of Charles L. Grant–influenced ''soft horror,'' which relies more upon thought than gore for its chills.

11. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (1987). This critically acclaimed masterpiece about slavery won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988, the Anisfeld Wolf Book Award in Race Relations, and the Melcher Book Award. It is a tragic story about ''Beloved,'' ghost child who returns to its mother, Sethe, a former slave who had killed her baby rather than have her grow up to become a slave. The consequences are devastating, the prose lush, the story terrifying. It was made into a plodding but visually impressive film by Jonathan Demme (1998), starring Oprah Winfrey.

There he was, semi-transparent—the proper conventional phantom, and noiseless except for his ghost of a voice—flitting to and fro in hat nice, chintz-hung old bedroom. You could see the gleam of the copper candlesticks through him, and the lights on the brass fender, and the corners of the framed engravings on the wall-and there he was telling me al about his wretched little life of his that had recently ended on earth. He hadn't a particularly honest face, but being transparent of course, he couldn't avoid telling the truth.

H. G. Wells, ''The Story of the Inexperienced Ghost''

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12. *Selene of the Spirits* by Melissa Pritchard (1998). An extraordinary ghostly delight with its roots in the Victorian period of table rappings, séances, and Theosophy. Peter Straub noted in a back cover blurb, "With a kind of ferocious serenity, *Selene of the Spirits* effortlessly draws us into the haunted world of Victorian spiritualism and by means of a thousand gleaming details invokes an unexpected and mysterious grandeur." The young Miss Selene Cook was inspired by Florence Cook, a Victorian spiritualist, and "Sir William Crookes, a chemist, amateur photographer and psychical investigator who attempted within the controlled environment of his home laboratory, to calibrate, to weight and to confine to measurement Miss Cook's soul" (Melissa Pritchard, "Afterword," 215).

13. *From the Dust Returned* by Ray Bradbury (2001). The supernatural stardust in this gem cannot be construed as strictly ghost material, as Bradbury's ghostly Elliott "family" remembrance includes vampires, witches, and otherworldly creatures enriched by the artistry of Charles Addams, whose painting, "The Homecoming," graces the book's cover. Bradbury's love of Halloween runs like a pumpkin-colored thread throughout a novel that grew out of several stories published from 1945 to 1988. It is a charming family reunion, connected by a very enchanting haunted house and spirited characters, most notably Timothy, a boy who accepts a precious gift from an ancient Egyptian ghost of the One Who Remembers, whose lesson is magnificently simple and profound.

14. *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold (2002). One of the most impressive books in the last twenty years, Sebold's first novel features the ghost/angel of Susie Salmon, a fourteen-year-old murdered girl. It was written after Sebold's memoir *Lucky*, which examined her recovery from being assaulted when she was a Syracuse University student in 1981. Lyrical, taut, and majestic in its simplicity, *The Lovely Bones* manages to be both a traditional ghost story and an angelic avenger tale. *Publishers Weekly* (June 17, 2002) gave it a starred review, calling it a "a small but far from minor miracle. Sebold takes a grim, media-exploited subject and fashions from it a story that is both tragic and full of light and race."

15. *lost boy lost girl* by Peter Straub (2003). Another Straub eerie masterpiece. Douglas E. Winter in his *Washington Post* review (December 21, 2003) found "no false notes, no tired cinematic tricks; Straub entices then unnerves us by conjuring an atmosphere of dread and decay whose intimations of darkness succumb, in time, to those of light—to the thought that, if evil dwells within this space, so must the divine." In the narrative, Underhill is an uncle pondering the fate of his nephew Mark, an apparent victim of a serial killer. Winter notes, "As mystery begets mystery, his own failure to save a loved one from death challenges our perception of the text, which transforms from a story into a ghost story into a story about ghost stories. . . . Peter Straub and his 'collaborator' urge us to look past the surface of things, to question he solidity of the world (and the novel), and to regain our faith in fiction as something that offers more than simple entertainment, but glimpses of the answers that elude us in life."

16. *Beyond Black* by Hilary Mantel (2005). Communicating with the dead can be fodder for black humor. A chilling but caustic dark bit of brilliance, this contemporary take on spirits explores the life of a middle-aged professional medium and clairvoyant, a "sensitive" named Alice, who has a creepy "spirit guide" named Morris. Terrence Rafferty in the *New York Times* (May 15, 2005) described it as a funny and harrowing, about a woman "coming to terms—better late than never, as any one of the book's may platitude-dependent character might say—with her disturbing past. And I say 'coming to terms with' because that, too, is just the sort of comforting, shock-absorbing expression, familiar to viewers of the more earnest and wetly therapeutic daytime talk shows, that Mantel has made it her mission to seek out and destroy."

17. *Joplin's Ghost* by Tananarive Due (2005). A young girl named Phoenix becomes haunted by the ghost of the famous ragtime composer and becomes a channel for his talent. Due depicts Scott Joplin's struggles with racism, illness, and heartaches while depicting Phoenix's modern problems as she tries to become a successful musician. *Publishers Weekly*'s starred review (July 25, 2005) noted: "Due's admirable illustration of the musician's dilemma: how to be true to a gift in the face of pressure to create what will sell." Paula Guran also posted a review (March 25, 2005) on her site, www.darkecho.com: "Due also has a knack of making the supernatural as everyday ands MickeyDs while still delivering the chills."

18. *Candles Burning* by Tabitha King and Michael McDowell (2006). The darkly humorous and at the same time deftly poignant Southern Gothic was Michael McDowell's strength. Native of Alabama, McDowell crafted the Blackwater paperback series released by Avon in 1983 in six monthly installments and *Cold Moon Over Babylon* (1980), and wrote the screenplays for *Beetlejuice* (1988) and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993). When he died in 1999 he left behind 200 pages of a manuscript that Tabitha King finished, creating a cunning masterpiece about a little girl name Calliope Carroll "Calley" Dakin whose father is brutally murdered. A little girl with very big ears, she can hear ghosts and see them, making her a pawn in an evil game. Tabitha King's completion of his unfinished manuscript is nothing short of fabulous, although, she noted in the preface, "The story as I completed it is not the story that Michael set out to tell, or the one he would have told, had he lived to finish it." It is, however, a fantastic example of Southern Gothic served with Magic Realism sauce on the side with a dash of hot and sassy Tabasco sauce.

THE MOVIES

Again, using the handy chronological method, here are twenty-five (plus!) significant revenant-enriched films. The sheer amount of ghost-related films to choose from makes any list a monumental, possibly thankless task, as there are many worth mentioning. What is significant about this genre is how a film about

> Have you ever thought what a ghost of our time would look like, Miss Millick? Just picture it. A smoky composite face with the hungry anxiety of the unemployed, the neurotic restlessness of the person without purpose, the jerky tension of the high-pressure metropolitan worker, the uneasy resentment of the striker, the callous opportunism of the scab, the aggressive whine of the panhandler, the inhibited terror of the bombed civilian and a thousand other twisted emotional patterns. Each one overlying and yet blending with the other, like a pile of semi-transparent masks?
>
> *Fritz Leiber, ''Smoke Ghost''*

this supernatural icon doesn't have to be viewed as horror. Bloodletting, sheer physical violence is not required in a good ghost film, although sometimes viewers use the term ''ghost story'' to describe something simply scary or bloody awful, totally terrifying, a slasher flick, or even a psychological thriller. It is rather like a publishing marketing ploy: tag something with the word ''ghost'' to grab the right reader. Many short story collections in the print medium might read ''Ghost Stories by Whomever''—and are made up of stories that don't feature a phantom *exactly*. But they are often scary and, in recent years, bloody.

Horror and supernatural films often reflect current events, and it is not too surprising, given the state of the world's unrest, that violence has escalated in all genres, as writers and filmmakers endeavor to cope with and comment on what has been happening. Within the ghost film category, the best films still are the quiet ones because the essence of spirit, for good or ill, appears to thrive in silence or in messages that don't have to be delivered with a sledgehammer or a chainsaw.

The ghost film rarely roars into the violent horror of *Wolf Creek* (2005) or even old Wes Craven territory (*The Hills Have Eyes*, 1977). The influence of 1970s' gorefests-like Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) or *The Last House on the Left* (1972) can be felt in the construction of the contemporary ghost films. Ditto the charms of manic demonic possession films like *The Exorcist* (1973), based on William Peter Blatty's novel, and its uneven follow-ups (1977 and 1990). But the effects of more subtle psychological thriller fare like of *Wait Until Dark* (1967) or Alfred Hitchcock films like *Psycho* (1960), based on the Robert Bloch classic—which spawned a remake (1998) and two regrettable sequels (1983, 1986)—or *Carrie* (1976), based on the Stephen King's early bestseller, or the otherworldly menace of *The Birds* (1963), based on a Daphne du Maurier classic, makes it possible to watch an invisible ghost inflict bodily harm on a character without too much surprise. See *Gothika* (2003) for an example of a violent ghost seeking the *assistance* of Halle Berry's character by attacking her, or the violence an angry child ghost can wreak in the *Ring* (1998–2003) film franchise. But so far, what the ghost film might lack in body counts, it makes up with the often more lingering unease of ''what if there really are ghosts?''

This list endeavors to be faithful to the ghost icon in general. So get some popcorn and pop in that tape or that DVD and turn off the lights and whisper, "I ain't afraid of no ghosts!"

1. *The Headless Horseman* (1908). The first supernatural ghost film appears to have been a popular silent film that spawned other versions, all inspired by "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving, including Disney versions in 1955 and 1980. See also *Ichabod Crane and Mrs. Toad* (1949) and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999).

2. *Wuthering Heights* (1938). Wildly romantic Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon star in this classic of tormented love was adapted for the screen by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. Two other versions in 1970 and a 1992 remake with Juliet Binoche and Ralph Fiennes, couldn't top it.

3. *Ghost Breakers* (1940). This is a Bob Hope comedy remake of a 1914 silent film with H. B. Warner that was also remade in 1922 with Wallace Reid and then was remade in 1952 as *Scared Stiff*. Hope's influence can be detected in more contemporary ghost comedies like *Hold That Ghost* (1941), an Abbott & Costello comedy; *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* (1965), starring the ruefully madcap Don Knotts; *Casper* (1995), also very loosely based on the classic comic; *Ghost Dad* (1990), a sentimental Bill Cosby vehicle; and many other genre ghost comedies.

4. *The Uninvited* (1941). A stylish production adapted from Dorothy Macardle's novel *Uneasy Freehold*, starring Ray Milland and Ruth Hussey. A mother's ghost, malevolent or benevolent, haunts a young woman when she returns home.

5. *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947). A haunted house romance directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Rex Harrison is a cheeky ghost haunting attractive earthbound woman, Gene Tierney. Sparks fly. It inspired an American TV sitcom in 1968 with Hope Lange.

6. *Orphée* (1949) by Jean Cocteau, inspired by the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, and the Brazilian bossa nova version, *Black Orpheus* (1958). Fast forward thirty years and Richard Matheson's *What Dreams May Come* (1998) comes to mind: "one of the most elaborate metaphysical loves stories ever tackled by Hollywood" (Stephen Holden, *New York Times*, October 2, 1998), an Orpheus with a happy ending, starring Robin Williams and Annabella Sciorra.

7. *The Innocents* (1961). This British production based on Henry James's equally chilling *Turn of the Screw* about a haunted governess tormented by a past that tragically impacts her ability to take care of her two young charges.

8. *The Haunting* (1963). The Robert Wise film (not to be confused with the overwhelming special-effects-laden 1999 remake that totally lost the source material's quiet power but did have to its credit Liam Neeson in the cast). This remains the ultimate haunted house (as ghost) film, faithful to Shirley Jackson's novel with great performances by Claire Bloom and the incredible Julie Harris. The David Boulton cinematography in stark black and white

also adds to the chilling atmosphere. Stephen King succinctly expressed why it worked so well: "Something is scratching at that ornate, paneled door, something horrible . . . but it is a door that Wise elects never to open" (*Danse Macabre* 12).

9. *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965). This Federico Fellini classic explores the lighter side of ghosts and focuses upon an attractive middle-aged woman who summons spirits to teach her how to rediscover the simple sensual joys of life.

10. *Don't Look Now* (1973). This visually stunning film by Nicholas Roeg is based on a Daphne du Maurier story. Roger Ebert calls it "one of the great horror masterpieces, working not with fright, which is easy, but with dread, grief, and apprehension. Few films so successfully put us inside the mind of a man who is trying to reason his way from mounting terror. Roeg and his editor Graeme Clifford cut from one unsettling image to another. The film is fragmented it its visual style, accumulating images that add up to a final bloody moment of truth" (*The Great Movies II* 128).

11. *The Shining* (1980). Often dismissed as a Stanley Kubrick disaster movie marked by a maniacally over-the-top performance by Jack Nicholson, in retrospect this film, based on Stephen King's bestseller, holds up remarkably well as a dependable chiller. Remarkable visual effects, especially the haunting imagery of the twin girls in the hallway, conjure up the ghost of Diane Arbus's photographic wizardry. And its effect on horror filmmakers can be detected in many films and television shows. The ghosts in this haunted hotel are not only within its walls but within the brain of a husband and father struggling to hold on to his soul.

12. *Ghostbusters* (1984). Another box office winner capitalizing on the whimsical side of supernatural chicanery, it is also notable for its Academy Award–nominated Ray Parker song with the memorable line from the Dan Akroyd/Harold Ramis script, "I ain't afraid of no ghosts," and comedic performances from Bill Murray, Akroyd Ramis, Rick Moranis, and Sigourney Weaver. The lamentable 1989 sequel was alas, a bust.

13. *Ghost* (1990). Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze play a young couple separated by death but still together at heart in a supernatural romance that captured the 1980s era and resonated with audiences . . . how does a cute young woman deal best with loss, making clay pots while the spirit of her hunky husband tries to make love to her? Why not? Whoopi Goldberg's Academy Award–winning performance as a hip medium heralded popular culture's renewed fascination with contacting the dead twenty years later (see prime time TV's "Medium" and "Ghost Whisperer"). Bruce Joel Rubin penned the romantic Oscar®-winning screenplay that proved the afterlife could be fun. *Dragonfly* (2002) is a not so distant cousin to *Ghost*, about a physician/widower (played by Kevin Costner) mourning the loss of his pregnant wife who endeavors to communicate with her husband via terminally ill cancer patients. It features understated special effects and is oddly optimistic. "It is High Grade Hollywood hokum," noted Kevin Thomas of the *Los Angeles Times* (quoted in *Halliwell's Film & Video Guide, 2005* 255).

The dead are never exactly seen by the living, but many people seem acutely aware of something changed around them. They speak of a chill in the air. The mates of the deceased wake from dreams and see a figure standing at the end of their bed, or in a doorway, or boarding, phantomlike, a city bus.

On my way out of Earth, I touched a girl named Ruth. She went to my school but we'd never been close. She was standing in my path that night when my soul shrieked out of Earth. I could not help but graze her. Once released from life, having lost it in such violence, I couldn't calculate my steps. I didn't have time for contemplation. In violence, it is the getting away that you concentrate on. When you begin to go over the edge, life receding from you as a boat recedes inevitable from shore, you hold on to death tightly, like a rope that will transport you, and you swing out on it, hoping only to land away from where you are.

Like a phone call from the jail cell, I brushed by Ruth Connor—wrong number, accidental call. I saw her standing there near Mr. Botte's red and rusted Fiat. When I streaked by her, my hand leapt out to touch her, touch the last face, feel the last connection t Earth in this not s-so-standard issue teenage girl.

On the morning of December seventh, Ruth complained to her mother about having had a dream that seemed too real to be a dream. When her mother asked her what she meant, Ruth said, ''I was crossing through the faculty parking lot, and suddenly, down out of the soccer field, I saw a pale running ghost coming toward me.''

Mrs. Connors stirred the hardening oatmeal in its pot. She watched her daughter gesticulating with the long thin fingers of her hands—hands she had inherited from her father.

''It was female, I could sense that,'' Ruth said. ''It flew up out of the field. Its eyes were hollow. It had a thin white veil over its body, as light as cheesecloth. I could see its face through it, the features coming up through it, the nose, the eyes, the face, the hair.''

Alice Sebold, The Lovely Bones

14. *Ghost Story* (1981). In 1977 Peter Straub's novel *Julia* inspired *The Haunting of Julia*. This next film adaptation of his classic novel was directed by Lawrence D. Cohen and lacks the subtle power of the source material but features welcome appearances by Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas, John Houseman, and Douglas Fairbanks, four haunted old men.

15. *Poltergeist* (1982). Steven Spielberg scripted and produced this very scary film that presages others that incorporate technological devices to dramatize communication with spirits. By somehow utilizing a television's white noise, a little girl releases the spirits of angry spirits whose ancient Indian burial ground has been disturbed. Still memorable: ''They're here!'' the child's

With another gliding step, the dark figure emerged into sharper, though still uncertain, focus.

To Mark, the figure seemed too small and slight to be anything but a girl. The person inside the house had come forward to see him as well as to be seen by him. She hung unmoving in the obscurity beyond the window, declaring her presence, exactly as the house had declared itself. Look at me, take me in, I am here. The house and its inhabitant had chosen him. That he had been chose implied an invitation, a summons, a pact of some kind. Something had been decided, he knew not what, except that it had been decided in his favor.

Peter Straub, lost boy lost girl

announcement anticipates the twenty-first century's fascination with communicating with the dead. Tobe Hooper directed the film, starring JoBeth Williams and Craig T. Nelson. It inspired two lackluster follow-ups in 1986 and 1988.

16. *Lady in White* (1988). A sensitive, even poetic film about childhood trauma featuring a little boy played by Lukas Haas whose ability to see the ghost of a murdered girl leads to identifying the killer, an example of quiet horror. Contrast with the more horrifying but pedantic film *The Changeling* (1979), about a house haunted by a murdered child, starring George C. Scott and Trish van Devere.

17. *City of Angels* (1996), based on William Wender's *Wings of Desire* (1987), celebrates the pull of the afterlife by featuring wistful angels interacting with humans. See also the time-travel romance, *Somewhere in Time* (1980), starring Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour, based on Richard Matheson's *Bid Time Return.*

18. *Ringu/Ringu 0 Basudei/Ringu 2Ringu* (1998–1999). Three landmark Japanese films about a mysterious videotape that brings death to anyone who watches it mark the further development of ghost via electronics; they are written by Hiroshi Takahashi based on novels by Kôji Suzuki. These blockbusters inspired two Americanized versions about the vengeful ghost of Samara, an abandoned child—who may have been the spawn of other-worldly beings—who was left to die in a covered well by her disturbed mother: *The Ring* (2001) and *Ring 2* (2003). Both Naomi Watts and Sissy Spacek deliver over-the-top performances, with screenplay adaptations by Ehren Kruger, who later wrote the script for a Southern Gothic haunted house thriller, *The Skeleton Key* (2005), starring Kate Hudson and Gena Rowlands, that was enjoyable but predictable. These films influenced *White Noise* (2003), starring a grieving widower, Michael Keaton, a flawed and confusing film that uses a computer and recording devices to create a conduit between the living and the dead. This technological ghost film genre reflects the twenty-first century's growing preoccupation with dissecting supernatural phenomena in order to understand it. The goal? "Ghost" becomes

evidence a C.S.I. can examine, analyze, and dump into an evidence storage facility. It is the same desire that Victorian ghost hunters felt when they hauled out their tripods and bulky cameras to photograph ectoplasmic emanations at séances or record visual evidence of a fairy hanging out in a park.

19. *Beloved* (1998). Based on Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Award–winning novel, this is about a vengeful ghost child who returns to haunt her mother. Although it is flawed by glacial pacing, it is visually compelling and worthy of mention because of its faithful adaptation of a literary masterpiece, with good performances by the cast headed by Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover.

20. *The Sixth Sense* (1999). The M. Night Shyamalan masterpiece showcases the struggle of a boy (played skillfully by an Academy Award nominee Haley Joel Osment) with his ability to "see dead people" and Bruce Willis as a psychiatrist who helps him. "Spooky movie with a twist ending that changes the focus of what has gone before; it's both clever and disturbing, maintaining a haunting atmosphere that keep its audience off-balance. The film was a box-office success, taking more than $276 million at the U.S. box-office, and earning Willis an estimated $50 million" (John Walker, *Halliwell's Film Video & DVD Guide 2005*, 806).

21. *Stir of Echoes* (1999). Based on a novel by Richard Matheson, updated but faithful to the essence of the source material, this came out at the same time as Shymalan's flashier box office winner but was just as chilling. It concerned the spirit of a murdered girl seeking justice from beyond the grave, featuring an underrated performance from Kevin Bacon

22. *What Lies Beneath* (2000). A siren ghost haunts a yuppie couple, Harrison Ford (playing against type) and Michele Pfeiffer (his endangered wife), in a thriller that Joe Queenan found "sufficiently frightening that its virtues far outweigh its shortcomings." (*Halliwell's Film, Video & DVD Guide 2005* 963).

23. *The Others* (2001). A stylish English chiller with Nicole Kidman at her neurotic best playing a 1940s widow trying to protect her children from an unknown terror. This role presages another haunting performance in *Birth* (2004), where Kidman plays another neurotic widow but this one is real and about to be remarried when an intensely odd boy comes to her, insisting that he is her husband, Sean, who died ten years earlier. It's a choose-your-own definition of ghost. Is the child possessed or could he truly be her lost love's reincarnation? A cynic might believe it's a scam: a romantic or a nightmare. Eerie it is, and the boy vanishes from her life like a ghost often does; nonetheless, it reflects another interpretation of the twenty-first-century ghost on film.

24. *Gothika* (2003). An uneven atmospheric chiller, this ghost tale is notable primarily for Halle Berry's performance as a psychiatrist who wakes up to find herself a prisoner accused of killing her husband, a doctor who turns out to be half of a serial killer partnership. The ghost of one of their victims helps the doctor find justice and leads to the resolutions of other murders

committed by the killers. Roger Ebert said in his review, "I cherished this movie in all of its lurid glory" (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 2003). The film is a prime example of the influence television programs like the "C.S.I." franchise that began in 2000 and is still influencing a scientific slant to modern ghost tales with a crime twist—even on the big screen.

25. *The Corpse Bride* (2005). Tim Burton's exquisite stop-action stars a ghost bride with a broken heart and a brave young man who helps her find her way to the light. This atmospheric hybrid Victorian/contemporary is also a haunting thriller replete with the Burton touches that blend the macabre with winsome charm.

Common Ghost Manifestations

Obiwan of www.ghosts.org lists the top six categories of ghost manifestations:

1. Crisis Apparitions—These ghosts appear most often to their loved ones at a moment of great crisis or death. Typically, the ghosts appear only once to a special loved one who may be many miles away at the time of the accident.
2. Doppelgängers—Doppelgängers are ghostly doubles of living people. Often the doppelgänger is not visible to the person himself, and will simply follow the person around. In some cases a person will come up on his own doppelgänger who is typically engaged in some future activity. Doppelgängers are traditionally considered omen of bad luck or even death.
3. Repeated Actions—Many apparitions are always viewed repeating the same motions or scenes. Many classic hauntings fall into this category. An example of this type of haunting is the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall, who was always seen moving down a hallway with a lantern in her hand. Usually these ghosts pay little or no attention to the observer.
4. Poltergeists—Poltergeists are the only spirits who leave immediate physical traces. Poltergeists are best known for throwing things about and producing rapping sounds and other noises. In fact, the word 'poltergeist' means 'noisy ghost' in German. Poltergeists often occur where there are children on the brink of puberty, and often interact with people.
5. Ghostly Sounds and Lights—Sometimes a haunting will consist entirely of the sound of footsteps or ghostly music. There are also many legends of ghost lights, which are often said to be caused by someone's ghostly lantern or by a spectral motorcycle or train.
6. Possessed Objects—Sometimes inanimate objects are said to be cursed or possessed. A very famous example of a supposed cursed object is the Hope Diamond. Sometimes a particular pieces of furniture will refuse to say in place, en moving in front of the owner's eyes.''

THE TV SHOWS

A brief survey of ghosts on TV also confirms the popularity of the subject. Ghosts visit comedies, reality TV shows, and dramas with varying frequency, but they always come back because the welcome mat is rarely too far away from the door.

Anthology shows are memorable for including a ghostly element, including Rod Serling's "The Twilight Zone" (1959–1964) and "Night Gallery" (1969–1973), and "Ray Bradbury Theater" (1985–1992). "The Outer Limits" and many others have touched upon ghostly themes to the delight of several generations. A British import, "Journey into the Unknown" (1968–1969), even included an adaptation of Oliver Onions's femme fatale ghost story, "The Beckoning Fair One." Also of note: Spielberg's "Amazing Stories" (1985–1987), "Tales from the Crypt" (1989–1996), "Tales of the Darkside" (1983–1990), and "Masters of Horror" (2005–2006).

Whether watching a children's show like R. L. Stine's "Goosebumps" (1996–1999) or a prime-time sitcom like "Eerie, Indiana" (1991–1992) or the camp soap opera "Dark Shadows" (1966), spirit spotting is fun. And of course, sometimes the ghost defies definition as scary or just plain surreal, as in Shaun Cassidy's memorable "American Gothic" (1995), a weird series (think a horror-fried *Twin Peaks*) that lasted enigmatically for one season, starring Gary Cole and Lucas Black. "Kingdom Hospital" (2004), based on "The Kingdom" (1994), a Danish TV project, was retooled with the help of Stephen King and focused on ghosts haunting the staff of a weird American hospital. The chills were tempered with black humor.

"Buffy the Vampire Slayer," starring Sarah Michelle Geller (1997–2003), and "Angel," its spin-off starring David Boreanaz, both delved into the supernatural although there were more vamps and demons than ghosts populating the story-lines. Many other TV movies also sported a spirit or two, too numerous to name; but it would be remiss not to mention another haunted house vehicle, a made-for-TV Stephen King mini-series, *Rose Red* (2002), influenced by Shirley Jackson and Richard Matheson, which King followed up with a TV movie, *The Diaries of Ellen Rimbauer* (2003).

But ghost-hunts are best rewarded via treatments that utilize the psychic medium angle. "The Others" (2000) aired for only thirteen episodes and failed to capitalize on the popularity of *The Sixth Sense*. It focused on a group of psychics who could communicate with ghosts and "see" past events and paved the way for two more successful primetime TV series, "Medium" (2004) and "Ghost Whisperer" (2005). Both shows use psychic communication with spirits to solve mysteries. "Medium" follows the suburban life of Alison Dubois, who helps investigators prepare difficult court cases and the restless ghost victims of unresolved crimes. Alison's role as a wife and mother of budding mediums is just as interesting as the crimes she solves. In "Ghost Whisperer," Melinda Gordon is a young newlywed who also has the ability to communicate

ghosts who are having a hard time "crossing over." The first show is gritty and sharply written and appeals to fans of more standard issue crime shows, while the latter appeals to those who enjoyed "Touched by an Angel" (1994–2003), a long-running drama that dealt with angels interacting with humans in order to resolve conflicts. "Joan of Arcadia" (2003–2005) did not feature ghosts or angels but had God popping into Joan's life in various human forms, encouraging her into actions that either led to wonderful consequences or caused her to wonder if she has lost her mind. At the end of the last season the Devil arrived on the scene to challenge her, but how she made out we'll never know, since, of course, just as it was getting good it got canceled.

Ghosts, spirits, angels, wraiths, revenants, specters, spooks, phantoms, phantasms, poltergeists, apparitions, shades, shadows, eidolons, Manes—the deified souls of our ancestors or just plain old dead folks whose incorporeal beings return to visit the living to rattle our bones with fear, awe, or sheer delight, the longing to communicate with them has given birth to an enduring story icon. The roots of the literary ghost story can be found in all languages and cultures in folk tales and stories inspired by "real" ghosts, but that's another chapter in another book entirely.

Do a Google or a Dogpile on "ghost" and be amazed by the multiple hits. Ask and ye shall receive ad infinitum! Skip the Internet search engine with the mind-boggling results and merely ask family and friends if they enjoy a good ghost story or what their favorite ghost movie is, and they'll more than likely have an answer. How could they not?

Whether captivating or monstrous, the lure of phantom never ceases. They may perch motionless on a porch swing in the midday sun or send it rocking wildly at the strike of midnight while screaming like a banshee. Whatever they say, we'll listen. Whatever they do, we'll remember. They remind us of our own mortality might or might not be a fiction. Ghosts represent what living beings all must face eventually, death. And that somber realization just feels a little easier to handle when attention is paid to the storytellers' lessons. Spirits may whisper, moan, scream, sing, or just laugh out loud as they point out what we suspect we already know—that the unknown is forever. Oh, we can listen to the ghost—suggest what life *might* be like on the other side or heed the warnings from old Grandma or Daddy about certain bumps in the night. But cherishing the revenant is not something that requires explanation or proof of anything. It just allows us to enjoy thinking about that silken touch in the middle of the night, the invisible gifts of an elusive rose petal breath, an eerie light. To shiver about the sudden discovery of something thought forever lost. Maybe you've seen a glowing woman in white or felt invisible revelers pass through your body as you climb the stairs at the L'Opéra du Garnier in Paris. Was that a fleeting glimpse of a misty boy or a spirit hovering around a Scottish castle ruin? Are ghosts big fat jokes or was that nightmarish bleeding apparition standing beside a wrecked car just a figment of your imagination? Maybe you want to talk about it. Or maybe you

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Singing Bones

The notion of ghost bones haunting others in order to seek justice for their murder is not a new one. D. L. Ashman (at http://www.pitt.edu) has a folktexts Web resource with a library of folklore, fairy tales, and mythology. Ashman, a veteran translator and editor of the world's folktales, includes nine stories that feature the poignant "singing bones" of ghosts. They include

1. The Singing Bone by the Brothers Grimm,
2. The Singing Bones (Louisiana French tale),
3. The Griffin (Italy),
4. The Dead Girl's Bone (Switzerland),
5. The Little Bone (Switzerland),
6. Binnorie (England),
7. The Silver Plate and the Transparent Apple (Russia),
8. The Magic Fiddle (India), and
9. The Twin Brothers (Nigeria).

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just want to scream. That vanishing hitchhiker might not be an urban legend but it feels good to dream why the ghost keeps coming back, with a message or an agenda that often creates more puzzles than it solves. Like life.

Kirby McCauley, an editor and once Stephen King's agent, among others made an excellent point about the barriers ghosts break down through their very existence in horror and supernatural literature. In his introduction to *Dark Forces* (Viking, 1980), a landmark anthology published during the horror boom of the1980s, McCauley wrote:

> Of course all art has its origin in the subconscious, but I believe the uncanny tale retains a stronger foothold there, *in effect as well as origin*. Robert Aickman . . . has observed: "The essential quality of the ghost story is that it gives satisfying form to the unanswerable; to thoughts and feelings, even experiences, which are common to all imaginative people but which cannot be rendered down scientifically into "nothing but" something else. . . . The ghost story, like poetry, deals with the experience behind the experience: behind almost any experience. . . . They should be stories concerned no with appearance and consistency, but with the spirit behind appearance, the void behind the face of order." . . .
>
> A final thought: the tale of horror is almost always about a *breaking down*. In one way or another such stories seem concerned with things coming apart, or slipping out of control, or about sinister encroachments in our lives. . . . Perhaps this kind of story has always been popular because, no less than our forebears, we live in a world where goodwill and reason do not always triumph . . . the tales of terror and fantastic encounter mitigates our fears by making them subjects of entertainment. Who is to say that is a bad thing? (McCauley, "Introduction" to *Dark Forces*, xv–xvi)

The phantom is just another symbol of the human's grasp on reality. Wavering at times then growing solid and strong. It's the icon that demands us to pay more attention to what we should be doing right now, in the unearthly present.

It is the symbol of hope.

> "Remember that hope is a good thing. Red, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies."—Stephen King
> "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption,"
> *Different Seasons* (Viking, 1982), p. 100

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The Ghoul

by Scott Connors

From ghoulies and ghosties
And long-leggedy beasties,
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, deliver us!
    —Old Cornish Litany

THE ORIGINS OF THE GHOUL

" 'Ghoulish' is one of those words one uses so easily in conversation—one utters it without stopping to think of its meaning. But, in my opinion, it is not a word to be used lightly. When one uses it, one should have in one's mind a firm, unwavering picture of a ghoul." So wrote Ray Russell in his well-known

novella "Sardonicus" (24). Of all the iconic figures lurking in the shadows of the human imagination, the ghoul is perhaps the most nebulous. If we consider the nursery rhyme quoted above, for instance, it could refer to just about any malignant supernatural creature. The word itself has come to refer to any morbid person, embracing a wide spectrum from the "camp" (television horror host Zachary, "the Cool Ghoul") to the horrific (serial killer Ed Gein, the "Plainfield Ghoul"). When a word has too many meanings, it is just as true to say that it has no meaning, yet might it not also be true that this dilution of meaning serves to lessen the true horror inherent in the idea? The concept concealed at the core of the word might not be humanity's oldest taboo, but it surely has little in the way of competition for the title.

The word "ghoul" is derived from the Arabic word *ghala*, meaning "to seize," and traditionally refers to a demon or other supernatural entity that haunts burial grounds and feeds on human remains. The star Algol (*Al Gol*, the Demon) is named for this creature, which in Arabic lore was also a shape-shifter, taking the form of hyenas or other carrion-eating creatures. They were a type of jinn, a pre-Adamite race sired by Iblis, the Muslim Satan, and like their brethren were associated with winds and the desert. Sir Richard Francis Burton describes the ghoul as being the equivalent of the Hebrew *Lilith* or Greek *lamia*, a female demon seeking prey in the wastes, and thought her "the embodied horror of the grave and the graveyard" (55). He also identified her with ogresses and flesh-devouring figures from folklore such as the Russian witch Baba Yaga. Montague Summers gives the following description in *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*:

> The ghoul appears as a female demon who feeds upon dead bodies and infests cemeteries at night to dig open the grave for her horrid repasts. Sometimes she would seem to be a woman, half-human, half-fiend, for in story she is often represented as wedded to a husband who discovers her loathsome necrophagy. She can bear children, and is represented as luring travelers out of the way to lonely and remote ruins when she falls upon them suddenly and devours them, greedily sucking the warm blood from their veins. (231–32)

The word probably entered the English language in the early eighteenth century, when the first translations of the *Thousand and One Nights* appeared. The word was definitely part of the English language by 1786 when William Beckford refers to *gouls* in *Vathek*: when the Caliph awakens his servant Bababalouk from dreams of the lady Nouronihar, only to be shocked when he sees her standing beside Vathek: " 'Ah, my lord!' cried he, recoiling ten steps, and covering his eyes with both hands: 'do you then perform the office of a Goul? 'tis true you have dug up the dead, yet hope not to make her your prey; for after all she hath caused me to suffer, she is even wicked enough to prey upon you' " (72).

Several of the stories told in the *Thousand and One Nights* are accounts of the creature's ghastly habits. One recounts how a young prince encountered a beautiful maiden while hunting in the desert. She recounted tearfully how she was "daughter to a King among the Kings of Hind," but had become separated from her caravan and was now lost and alone in the wilderness. Taking pity on her, he sits her behind him on his horse and heads home. As they pass an old ruin she asks that she be allowed a comfort stop. She takes so long about her business that the prince investigates, only to discover that she was a ghoul who was informing her many children that their dinner was about to arrive. Another tells of a young man, Sidi Nouman, whose bride, Amina, turns out to be a ghoul, described in Andrew Lang's translation as "one of those demons which, as your Highness is aware, wander about the country making their lairs in deserted buildings and springing out upon unwary travelers whose flesh they eat. If no live being goes their way, they then betake themselves to the cemeteries, and feed upon the dead bodies." Noticing that his wife eats nothing at dinner but single grains of rice, he pretends to sleep one evening and follows her to a deserted cemetery. There he is shocked to find her sitting down with a pack of ghouls in a vault, and watches with horror as his lovely wife partakes of the fare found within.

Although the word itself had become commonplace during the nineteenth century, literary depictions of the classic Arabian Nights ghoul have been few and far between; as has been noted by A. Langley Searles, this is not surprising, "since they would arouse disgust even more than horror or fright" (62). Another reason may be its rather culturally specific associations: actual folklore belief has not spread beyond countries influenced by Islam or the Ottoman Empire. An exception was the California poet and author Clark Ashton Smith, who was heavily influenced by both the Arabian Nights and by *Vathek*; in fact, his short story "The Ghoul" (*Fantasy Fan*, January 1934) is set "during the reign of the Caliph Vathek" (319). Intended by Smith as a deliberate exercise in archaism that reads like a newly discovered tale of Scheherazade, "The Ghoul" deals with the hideous bargain a young husband makes with a ghoul to ensure that his deceased wife's corpse remains unviolated. The unfortunate youth's bride is named Amina, after the tale of Sidi Nouman, but she is not the ghoul, but the ghoul's victuals: one night, while lying on top of her grave mourning his loss, he

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Goul or *ghul*, in Arabic, signifies any terrifying object which deprives people of the use of their senses; hence it became the appellative of that species of monster which was supposed to haunt forests, cemeteries, and other lonely places, and believed not only to tear in pieces the living, but to dig up and devour the dead.

—*Samuel Henley, Notes to William Beckford's* Vathek *(1786)*

heard a terrible voice that bade me rise from the ground on which I was lying. And lifting my head a little, I saw a hideous demon of gigantic frame and stature, with eyes of scarlet fire beneath brows that were coarse as tangled rootlets, and fangs that overhung a cavernous mouth, and earth-black teeth longer and sharper than those of the hyena. And the demon said to me:

"I am a ghoul, and it is my office to devour the bodies of the dead. I have now come to claim that corpse that was interred today beneath the soil on which thou art lying in a fashion so unmannerly. Begone, for I have fasted since yester-night, and I am much anhungered." (321)

The husband strikes a bargain with the ghoul to provide it with eight fresh bodies on eight successive nights that would not otherwise have come its way. He relates his story to the judge before whom he is arraigned after being caught with the seventh victim, only to be released by the judge, who knows him to be an honorable man and that he will provide justice in his own manner.

Some writers borrowed the classical concept of the ghoul during the pulp era. L. Ron Hubbard had great success with a heroic fantasy novel set in the world of the Arabian Nights, *Slaves of Sleep*, when it appeared in the July 1939 issue of John W. Campbell's "sophisticated" fantasy magazine *Unknown*, and he returned to that belief-system the next month with *The Ghoul* (*Unknown*, August 1939). A bellboy in a New York hotel during the Depression becomes suspicious of a turbaned gentleman from the Middle East when he overhears him verbally abusing an American woman in his room, but when he contrives a reason to trick him into opening the door, the room is empty save for a large trunk. However, he notices that this figure, Mohammed Ali, has pupils like those of a great cat, so he consults a fortune-teller. She turns out to be more than a confidence trickster, who warns him that Ali is a ghoul, which Hubbard describes as

an Oriental demon, capable of changing shape at will and so presenting a bewildering array of forms. This practice facilitates the waylaying of their quarry. They feed exclusively on human flesh, but can, at times, go for weeks and months without eating.... The one constant characteristic of the ghoul is his eye, which is not unlike that of a leopard, having an oblong pupil which opens and shuts horizontally. Their eyes have the peculiar characteristic of overpowering their victims, much as do several varieties of snakes. While generally found in ruins and along infrequently traveled roads from which they take their victims, ghouls are not indigenous to any locale or clime. (37–38)

As Hubbard describes him, Ali does not feed on the flesh of his victims, but is instead intent on enslaving the souls of those whose lives he takes; it was in fact the ghost of one of these victims that the bellboy overheard him taunting. Instead, he treats him as a type of jinn: he is able to take the form of a whirlwind, and when faced with his own death he begs for mercy on the grounds that unlike human beings, once he dies he has only oblivion, not a second life,

waiting for him on the other side. Hubbard attempts to emulate the jauntily comic style of Damon Runyon, but falls flat with a parade of ethnic stereotypes that even the nonpolitically correct might find offensive.

Frank Belknap Long's "Grab Bags Are Dangerous" (*Unknown Worlds*, June 1942) also makes use of ethnic stereotypes, but in a much less objectionable manner (it is more of a matter of an accent creating a misunderstanding). However, the basic concept about one never quite knowing what one will receive when dipping into a grab bag is quite effective, injecting an element of random malignancy into what should be innocent fun.

More recent writers have written sparsely on the folkloric ghoul, perhaps out of a concern about trivializing elements of Islamic culture (ghouls are, after all, a type of jinn, to whom the prophet Mohammed also preached, according to the Koran, and because of this several high schools have replaced genies as their mascots to avoid the appearance of denigrating the culture). Mark Ronson's novel *Ghoul* (1980) describes ghouls as being analogous to the European vampire:

> It is told that the fallen angel Azazel in his arrogance tried to emulate the Creator by forming beings in his own image, but his spawn were monsters who become mankind's reminder of living evil. They are called ghouls and, instead of drinking the blood of the living, they are necrophagus—that is, corpse-devourers. Our folklore tells us that they are the haunters of tombs, that they dwell in the secret places of the earth and, being Azazel's parody of Man, they are man-shaped yet they live … many times the human span, often hibernating for great period until something awakens them … and their vile hunger. Tradition has it that if you meet a stranger on a dark night you will be warned if it is a ghoul by its revolting graveyard odour. (118)

Ronson describes a historical episode similar to the tale of Sidi Nouman, where a husband discovers that his wife is unfaithful to him with one of these creatures, which leads to its confinement by the Seal of Solomon until an earthquake releases it two millennia later. Set in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, several of the chapters are told from the creature's point-of-view, making the novel essentially a "haunted house" story where the characters wander around, blissfully unaware of their danger, until the monster jumps out and devours them, or, in the case of female characters, rapes them and then devours them.

Tim Powers's World Fantasy Award–winning novel *Declare* (2000) is much subtler in its treatment. The reader has several chapters under his belt before the first indications that it is anything other than a mundane spy thriller, and it is not until the very end that Powers reveals the necrophagus nature of his jinn. The book is an ingenious alternate history of the Soviet Union dealing with rogue factions of both western and Soviet intelligence agencies fighting a Cold War through occult means. Powers cleverly interprets various tales from

the Arabian Nights in the context of such real people as T. E. Lawrence and Russian double-agent Kim Philby. Several of the episodes, such as the destruction of a British commando team and pilgrimages into the desert to consult several ancient survivals, are extremely effective. To call *Declare* a ghoulish story is perhaps the literal truth, but it is an altogether inadequate description of a uniquely successful fusion of genres.

THE INFLUENCE OF WHITE AND LOVECRAFT

Edward Lucas White deserves much of the credit (or blame) for adding the ghoul to the literature of horror. As early as 1897, White wrote a poem, "The Ghoul," which was told from the perspective of a creature who devoured humans. Searles suggests that this may have originated from White's readings of H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), where the subterranean Morlocks raise and fed upon the Eloi, as well as Rudyard Kipling's "Her Majesty's Servants," in which the oxen revolt at the knowledge that humans shall eat them. His short story "Amina" (1906) takes its name from the bride of Sidi Nouman, but it also owes something to the tale of the Prince and the Ghoul from the fifth night discussed above. White's story deals with Waldo, a disoriented Maine Yankee on a hunting trip in the Mesopotamian desert, who wanders away from his camp and encounters a woman whose exotic nature exceeds even what one might expect for Persia of the early last century. For one thing she is unveiled, wearing no ornaments but exhibiting exception musculature, with long nails on both her bare feet and hands. Amina learned English at the mission school, "not knowing me for what I am" (70), although she barely moves her lips. She claims to belong to the Free-folk, who are neither Muslim nor Christian. She offers to take him to her dwelling that he might refresh himself, which turns out to be an ancient tomb. He is surprised to find it swarming with numerous infants that "moved with the assurance of boys of eight or ten" (71). Then Waldo's host, the American consul to Persia, intercedes and shoots Amina twice. When Waldo accuses him of murdering a woman, the consul "pulled open the full, close lips, disclosing not human teeth but small incisors, cusped grinders, wide-spaced; and long, keen, overlapping canines, like those of a greyhound: a fierce, deadly, carnivorous dentation, menacing and combative" (72–73). Still not convinced of her nature, the consul disrobes the corpse to reveal to Waldo that "What he saw was not the front of a woman, but more like the underside of an old fox-terrier with puppies, or of a white sow, with her second litter; from collar bone to groin ten lolloping udders, two rows, mauled, stringy and flaccid" (73).

Several innovations are introduced by White in his account. He emphasizes the feral nature of the ghoul, not even mentioning their necrophagus habits, and reduces them to a zoological oddity. White draws upon Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* for his treatment as he does folklore: the Free-folk (resistant to

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Top Ten Ghoul Tales

Edward Lucas White, ''Amina'' (1907)

H. P. Lovecraft, ''Pickman's Model'' (1927)

Henry S. Whitehead, ''The Chadbourne Episode'' (1933)

Clark Ashton Smith, ''The Ghoul'' (1934)

Henry Kuttner, ''The Graveyard Rats'' (1936)

Robert Barbour Johnson, ''Far Below'' (1939)

Ray Russell, ''Sardonicus'' (1961)

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, ''Disturb Not My Slumbering Fair'' (1978)

Edward Lee, *Ghouls* (1988)

Brian McNaughton, *The Throne of Bones* (1997)

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both Ottoman and colonial hegemony perhaps?) are a temporal threat, not a spiritual one, which is emphasized by the sexual attraction that Waldo felt towards Anima: ''Her hair was black, short, and tousled, yet she did not look wild or uncomely. Her eyes smiled and her lips had the effect of smiling, though they did not ever part so little, not showing at all the teeth behind them.'' He also notices that while she appears to lack any definition from the front, she displays a ''lithe, shapely back'' (69). This suggestion of miscegenation, that she is the stereotypical dark, exotic femme fatal, is complimented by the determination of the consul and his Persian janissaries in exterminating all of her brood as a threat to the continued dominion of humanity over the earth, noting that while ''there is little or no solidarity in Mohammedan communities . . . one matter as to which there is no disagreement is that it is incumbent upon every man to assist in eradicating these creatures'' (65).

At the end of ''Amina'' Waldo protests that he thought ghouls to be purely mythical, to which the consul retorts ''I can very well believe that there are none in Rhode Island. . . . This is in Persia, and Persia is in Asia'' (73). Henry S. Whitehead set his homage to White's story, ''The Chadbourne Episode'' (*Weird Tales*, February 1933), in Connecticut, not Rhode Island, but the threat was still not native: Whitehead's story tells of a transplanted pack of Persian ghouls that, like Count Dracula moving to London, have abandoned their native deserts for fresh hunting grounds among the tombs of the New World. Whitehead opens his story with the account of a little girl who had come across a nursing sow that had ''a lady head,'' noting that it was fortunate she was ''altogether too young to be devastated, her sweet little soul permanently blasted, her mentality wrenched and twisted away from normality'' by what she had seen by the Old Churchyard (214). Whitehead exploits the nativist fear of alien immigrants intruding upon ''real'' Americans, allowing

his characters none of the lingering doubts that White's character Waldo felt when he saw the "ten small carcasses laid out a row" (65). However, like White, Whitehead has his ghouls preying on the living, particularly small children, and underplays their feasting upon the dead.

It was Whitehead's friend and colleague Howard Phillips Lovecraft who would restore to the ghoul that meat most rightfully theirs, while at the same time demonstrating that their natural habitat did indeed extend to the New World. His 1926 short story "Pickman's Model" is his most celebrated treatment of the theme, yet, as George T. Wetzel has demonstrated, the ghoul theme in Lovecraft's fiction extended back almost to his very first adult writings. By combining it with the Celtic concept of the changeling, Lovecraft removed the ghoul from its Middle Eastern origins and made it as universal a boogey as vampires or werewolves, two themes that were generally absent from his work. Both of these legendary creatures had become too well established in the popular imagination to serve as fodder for Lovecraft's imagination, but the very attributes that made the ghoul taboo in genteel society made them irresistible to the dean of American horror.

Lovecraft describes a history of New England that is not explicitly found among the history books, but may only be gleaned from inferences found in varied and obscure sources that only point to the truth when one is unfortunate enough to piece together the puzzle. It was inspired by an actual bit of New England history, the existence of a series of tunnels dating from colonial times that connected the cellars and basements of a number of structures and homes. One tunnel, which originated in the home of Sir William Phipps, abutted the Copps Hill Burying Ground. Lovecraft was a keen student of New England history, and his imagination was fired by the survival of these tunnels as late as 1900, and possibly even later:

> "Why, man, out of ten surviving houses built before 1700 and not moved since I'll wager that in eight I can shew you something queer in the cellar. There's hardly a month that you don't read of workmen finding bricked-up arches and wells leading nowhere in this or that old place as it comes down—you could see one near Henchman Street from the elevated last year. There were witches and what their spells summoned; pirates and what they brought in from the sea; smugglers; privateers—and I tell you, people knew how to live, and how to enlarge the bounds of life, in the old times!" (16)

Lovecraft never actually brings the ghouls on stage, but instead describes them through the paintings of his antihero, Richard Upton Pickman. The narrator describes them as "seldom completely human, but often approach[ing] humanity in varying degree. Most of the bodies, while roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast. The texture of the majority was a kind of unpleasant rubberiness" (18). While they were shown hunting humans, "leaping through open windows at night" or "clambering up from

some unknown catacomb through a crack in the floor of the Boylston Street subway and attacking a crowd of people on the platform" (19, 20), others of Pickman's paintings make clear that they prefer a bit of gaminess to their meat. The sheer scale of Lovecraft's nightmare vision takes away the breath as the implications seize the reader like an unwary pedestrian near a cemetery:

> One disgusting canvas seemed to depict a vast cross-section of Beacon Hill, with ant-like armies of the mephitic monsters squeezing themselves through burrows that honeycombed the ground. Dances in the modern cemeteries were freely pictured, and another conception somehow shocked me more than all the rest—a scene in an unknown vault, where scores of the beasts crowded about one who held a well-known Boston guide-book and was evidently reading aloud. All were pointing to a certain passage, and every face seemed so distorted with epileptic and reverberant laughter that I almost though I heard the fiendish echoes. The title of the picture was, "Holmes, Lowell, and Longfellow Lie Buried in Mount Auburn." (20–21)

Where White saw the ghoul as a competing species, something apart from mankind, an expression of a xenophobic dread of the Other, Lovecraft emphasized the kinship between us and these creatures, drawing upon our fear of atavistic reversion to something that would alienate us forever from the rest of mankind. Pickman's paintings depicted a clear relationship between humans and ghouls, showing that "in all his gradations of morbidity between the frankly nonhuman and the degradedly human, establishing a sardonic linkage and evolution. The dog-things were developed from mortals!" (19). One painting depicted a pack of ghouls teaching a human infant how to feed on human remains, while another showed a pious Puritan family sheltering "their changeling—and in a spirit of supreme irony Pickman had given the features a very perceptible resemblance to his own" (20). Earlier Pickman had mentioned that his "four-times-great-grandmother" was hanged as a witch on Gallow's Hill during the Salem witch trials.

Except for the title of one of the paintings, "Pickman's Model" does not mention ghouls by name, but in a novel written the same year, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, Lovecraft makes explicit what was only inferred in the earlier tale. Randolph Carter encounters the ghouls in his quest through the lands of dream in search of his marvelous sunset city, but curiously he shows little fear of them, "for strange to say, he had a very singular link with these terrible creatures" (336). That link was his friendship with Pickman, who had not only introduced Carter to a ghoul but actually taught him their language prior to his disappearance, so "he knew well their canine faces and slumping forms and unmentionable idiosyncrasies" (337). Pickman himself reappears, having "become a ghoul of some prominence in abysses near the waking world" (338).

Wetzel used "Pickman's Model" to explicate certain features of Lovecraft's earlier stories. In "The Picture in the House" (1920), a survival from colonial

> For a ghoul is a ghoul, and at best an unpleasant companion for man.
> —*H. P. Lovecraft,* The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath

times was able to achieve unnatural longevity through cannibalism. In "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), a noble family concealed a hideous cult that fed on human cattle raised in a subterranean grotto. Both of these stories, believed Wetzel, were thematically related to "Pickman's Model" through the idea of the eating of human flesh simultaneously making the consumer both super-human and subhuman.

Lovecraft's depiction of ghouls as being canine in appearance invites some intriguing speculation regarding the origin of the myth. Will Murray points out that the Egyptian god of the dead, Anubis, had the head of a jackal, and that jackals were often found prowling around tombs. Murray also points out that the amulet stolen by the grave-robbers (another type of ghoul) in "The Hound" was "the oddly conventionalized figure of a crouching baying hound, or sphinx with a semi-canine face" that was "the ghastly soul-symbol of the corpse-eating cult of inaccessible Leng, in central Asia" (174).

As mentioned earlier, Lovecraft attached features of the Celtic myths regarding fairy changelings to his conception of the ghoul, borrowing features from such stories by Arthur Machen as "Novel of the Black Seal," "The Shining Pyramid," and "The Red Hand." Machen's tales suggested the survival of an aboriginal race from pre-Celtic Britain lurking in the lonely hills of modern Wales, reduced to a dwarfish and malignant savagery and waylaying travelers, sometimes exchanging their own stunted offspring for human infants. It is true that Machen never suggests that these troglodytes, who are obviously the basis for the Celtic legends of the fairies and "Little People," possess anthropophagus tendencies. However, since Machen describes the Little People as capable of murder, rape, kidnapping, and human sacrifice, this surprising squeamishness may have been due more to Victorian reticence than anything else. After his novelette "The Great God Pan" attracted controversy in the wake of the Oscar Wilde scandal, Machen may have been reluctant to stretch taboo subjects more than absolutely necessary.

Probably based upon his readings of Margaret Alice Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921), Lovecraft also associates the ghouls with witches, based upon the suggested linkages with the witch-cult and fairy lore with the survival of an ancient fertility religion that lingers on into the Middle Ages and later. His depiction of ghoulish activity in Puritan New England is consistent with his theories concerning the prevalence of a "genuine grisliness, all apart from the supernatural legends, in the inside chronicles of Massachusetts." In a letter to Robert E. Howard, he attributes this both to the "transmuted eroticism" inherent in "the very preponderance of passionately pious men in the colony," which provides "a practical guarantee of

dark morbidities expressed in crime, perversion, and insanity'' (*Selected Letters*, 3.175), and to the introduction to the colony of a lower class of indentured servants who were not able to adapt to the rigors of a strict theocracy. The witch-cult, suggests Lovecraft, offered an escape for these disaffected elements of Massachusetts society. Among the practices of which witches were accused were the exhumation of dead infants for use in spells and potions, necromancy, and the eating of human flesh, which was of course a common charge levied against opponents of the medieval church, so the association between witches, fairy-changelings, and cannibalism was not a difficult one for Lovecraft to make.

Robert E. Howard wrote a number of stories that expanded upon Machen's concept of the Little People. One story that remained unpublished in Howard's lifetime suggests that the influence of ''Pickman's Model'' may have added some distinctly ghoulish traits to the concept. According to Howard scholar Rusty Burke, ''The Dwellers under the Tombs'' was rejected by *Weird Tales* on May 27, 1932, almost five months after the same magazine accepted ''Worms of the Earth,'' which is generally considered to be his definitive treatment of the subject. ''The Dwellers under the Tombs'' reads as if it were intended for such ''weird menace'' horror pulps as *Terror Tales*, which followed Anne Radcliffe in building up toward a supernatural explanation, only to provide a rational explanation at the conclusion. It starts out as a tale of two feuding brothers, one of whom is terrified that his newly deceased sibling has returned as a vampire. It turns out that he had faked his death and been interred in the family tomb in a trance he had mastered while in the Far East. However, it turns out that the ancient tomb was built on a series of tunnels that had been used in the days of privateers and smugglers, and that when the villain unblocks the lowest of these tunnels he inadvertently frees the original inhabitants, who make a re-interment unnecessary. In his other stories dealing with the Little People, Howard emphasizes their reptilian nature as a way of illustrating their devolution, but here he describes them as ''a flaming-eyed dog-headed horror such as madmen see in black nightmares'' (130).

Clark Ashton Smith hewed closer to Machen's ''The Great God Pan'' than to ''Pickman's Model'' in his 1932 story ''The Nameless Offspring,'' but there was little of the exoticism that pervaded his earlier story ''The Ghoul.'' Originally published in the Clayton pulp *Strange Tales of Mystery and Terror*, which emphasized action over atmosphere, it represents an uneasy combination of Lovecraftian lore with Gothic convention. The narrator, a Canadian lost on the British moors, is forced to take shelter at a remote country estate that he discovers to be the ancestral home of Sir John Tremoth, who was a schoolmate of his father. This unexpected meeting with an old family friend proves not to be reason for rejoicing, because of a horrible and tragic incident that was spoken of only in whispers. Many years before, Sir John's bride, who was subject to cataleptic seizures, was interred in the ancestral tombs when she did not revive after the usual period of time. These

tombs "were of almost fabulous age and extent, and had been excavated in the hill behind the manor-house" (6). Upon visiting her tomb the next day, Sir John was surprised to find her alive and sitting up, with the nailed lid thrown to the stone floor. She did not recall how she came to be sitting up, but

> was troubled mainly by recollections of a pale, hideous, unhuman face which she had seen in the gloom on awakening from her prolonged and deathlike sleep. It was the sight of this face, stooping over her as she lay in the open coffin, that had caused her to cry out so wildly. The thing had vanished before Sir John's approach, fleeing swiftly to the inner vaults; and she had formed only a vague idea of its bodily appearance. She thought, however, that it was large and white, and ran like an animal on all fours, though its limbs were semihuman. (7)

Lady Agatha never recovers from this shock, and dies nine months later, after giving birth to "one of those appalling monsters that sometimes appear in human families" (7). The child, now fully grown to a prodigious size and strength, is confined to a locked room whose oak door is reinforced with iron bars. When the narrator sees the servant taking carrion upstairs to drop through a trapdoor in the roof, the narrator begins to suspect the true nature of this hellish changeling foisted upon an ancient British family. When Sir John dies, his wishes for a speedy cremation are delayed by the rain, and the creature burrows through the walls to reach the corpse. When it finally breaks through, the narrator reports that

> Mercifully, perhaps, I have never been able to recall with any degree of distinctness the hellish thing that issued from the panel. The visual shock, by its own excess of horror, has almost blotted the details from memory. I have, however, the blurred impression of a huge, whitish, hairless and semi-quadruped body, of canine teeth in a half-human face, and long hyena nails at the end of forelimbs that were both arms and legs. A charnel stench preceded the apparition, like a breath from the den of some carrion-eating animal; and then, with a single nightmare leap, the thing was upon us. (18)

Later, the narrator and the manservant follow the beast's trail back to the family vaults, where they lose it among the labyrinthine passageways that honeycomb the earth.

"The Nameless Offspring" is not one of Clark Ashton Smith's better stories, despite the marvelously evocative quotation from the *Necronomicon* with which it opens, and which is as thrilling as any of those provided by Lovecraft himself. Its style is too different from that at which he excelled: it is ponderous, heavy, and indistinct, instead of poetic, incantational, and visually evocative. Smith strives to create atmosphere but uses none of his regular techniques, instead piling up dark words one upon the next until they teeter like a team of acrobats balancing upon each other's shoulders. Smith is attempting to imitate Lovecraft's technique of gradually piling up detail upon

Many and multiform are the dim horrors of Earth, infesting her ways from the prime. They sleep beneath the unturned stone; they rise with the tree from its root; they move beneath the sea and in subterranean places; they dwell in the inmost adyta; they emerge betimes from the shutten sepulchre of haughty bronze and the low grave that is sealed with clay. There be some that are long known to man, and others as yet unknown that abide the terrible latter days of their revealing. Those which are the most dreadful and the loathliest of all are haply still to be declared. But among those that have revealed themselves aforetime and have made manifest their varitable presence, there is one which may not openly be named for its exceeding foulness. It is that spawn which the hidden dweller in the vaults has begotten upon mortality. [From the *Necronomicon* of Abdul Alhazred]

—Clark Ashton Smith, ''The Nameless Offspring''

detail until only one horrible conclusion is possible, which of course nobody dares to mention because to do so is to risk being labeled mad. Instead Smith presents us with characters who refuse to acknowledge the reasons for their actions, which culminates in a holocaust devouring the doomed family.

Smith was in much better form when he wrote ''The Charnel God'' (*Weird Tales*, March 1934), which had the advantage of being set in what probably Smith's most original and artistically satisfying secondary world, the last continent of earth under a dying red sun, Zothique. (Smith was much happier when he could create everything about the setting of his stories.) As in ''The Nameless Offspring,'' the heroine, Elaith, is prone to catalepsy, and just like Lady Agatha falls victim to a third episode and is mistakenly pronounced dead. But no premature burial awaits her, for much to the horror of her newly married husband Phariom, they have entered the city of Zul-Bha-Sair, whose god is Mordiggian, and all who die in Zul-Bha-Sair belong to Mordiggian and to his priests. The priests wore voluminous purple robes, silver masks, and fingerless gloves, and were rumored not to be human at all. Yet surprisingly, the people of Zul-Bha-Sair regarded Mordiggian as a benign deity: ''Through him, we are saved from corruption and the worm. Even as the people of other places devote their dead to the consuming flame, so we of Zul-Bha-Sair de-liver ours to the god'' (173). Displaying a cosmopolitan attitude towards the customs of other cultures, Smith notes that ''Tombs, graves, catacombs, fu-neral pyres, and other such nuisances, were rendered needless by this highly utilitarian deity'' (177).

Phariom resolves to raid Mordiggian's temple to rescue Elaith before she embarks upon a tour of a ghoul's alimentary canal, only to encounter another type of ghoul: the necromancer Abnon-Tha, whose plans for reanimating the body of a woman he desired end up entangled with Phariom's when his assistant decides to take Elaith along for his own lustful purposes. The story

develops into a macabre romantic comedy until rescue arrives in the unlikely form of a literal *deus ex machina*: Mordiggian and his priests, who are in appearance identical to the creature in "The Nameless Offspring." Yet the story comes to a rare happy ending, for "Mordiggian is a just god, who claims only the dead, and has no concern with the living. And we, the priests of Mordiggian, deal in our own fashion with those who would violate his law by removing the dead from the temple" (193).

Henry Kuttner's "The Graveyard Rats" (*Weird Tales*, February 1936), the author's first sale, also deals with an encounter between different types of ghouls. Written before Kuttner began his brief correspondence with Lovecraft, it achieves a degree of gruesome and claustrophobic horror that met with the senior writer's express approval. (It was also voted one of the best horror tales of all time by the membership of the World Fantasy Convention.) Set in a Salem straight out of nightmare, "The Graveyard Rats" is an account of the ongoing battle between Old Masson, the caretaker of one of Salem's oldest and most neglected cemeteries," and the rats that infested it. (One wonders if Kuttner derived the name from Keziah Mason of "The Dreams in the Witch House," whose rat-like familiar, Brown Jenkins, is one of Lovecraft's most vivid creations.) Kuttner emphasizes the exceptional nature of these rats, which had come to Salem aboard "ships that had come generations ago from distant ports [bearing] strange cargoes" (105). As in "Pickman's Model," the town was undermined with a series of tunnels that dated back to the days of the witch trials, "when Cotton Mather had hunted down the evil cults that worshipped Hecate and the dark Magna Mater in fearful orgies," and there were dark hints of "worse things than rats and maggots" infesting the cemeteries (106). The rats are large enough to drag a body out of its coffin, yet Masson rigorously suppresses any reports of such activity for fear that the subsequent investigation might reveal his own ghoulish activities: in a grisly prediction of Nazi atrocities, Masson extracts the gold from the teeth of newly interred corpses, along with any other valuables, and then sells the cadavers to medical students. However, when a particularly choice cadaver that was buried with several expensive pieces of jewelry disappears before his eyes, Masson is driven by greed to follow it blindly into the charnel tunnels, where he discovers that the "vague rumours of ghoulish beings that dwelt far underground" of which he had heard are perhaps not so vague after all. The ironic inversion of the defiler becoming the defiled adds greatly to the story's effectiveness.

The sardonic nature of the beast is implicit in the title of "The Grinning Ghoul" (*Weird Tales*, June 1936), which was written by another Lovecraft protégé, Robert Bloch, to whose mature work we will return later. Like Kuttner, Bloch began his writing career imitating Lovecraft, making much use of the pseudomythology that came to be called the "Cthulhu Mythos." Bloch's first published story was called "The Laughter of a Ghoul," which appeared in the fanzine *Fantasy Fan* in 1934 and was never reprinted professionally. It is a brief tale told in a manner roughly similar to that of Edgar

Allan Poe and is very similar in concept to Smith's "The Nameless Off-spring."

Bloch begins "The Grinning Ghoul" much as Lovecraft did "The Rats in the Walls," but he gives away the fact that the narrator is an inmate of an insane asylum before the second paragraph. The narrator is in fact a former psychiatrist who describes a case where a distinguished scholar sought treatment for a series of dreams in which he descends into ancient vaults behind a local cemetery and encounters the "dwellers that laired beneath ... the grisly night-gaunts that he beheld in dreams" (53). Subsequent investigation of the actual scene depicted in the dreams reveals that whatever problems Professor Chaupin might have, being delusional is not one of them.

After Lovecraft's death in 1937, other writers for *Weird Tales* who had not known him paid him homage in various stories. One of these second-generation stories, Robert Barbour Johnson's "Far Below" (June–July 1939), was inspired by Lovecraft's description in "Pickman's Model" of a ghoul attack on a subway platform, and recounts a gripping story of chthonic combat between the New York City Subway Police and the creatures that prowl the deepest tunnels in the early hours of the morning. As Lovecraft did for Boston, Johnson provides New York City with a "secret history" where colonial militias patrolled the areas around cemeteries; he further suggests that the reason the Indians sold Manhattan Island so cheaply is because they knew it to be infested with the grisly carrion eaters. Civilization drove them further underground, so when the subways sank tunnels to the bedrock beneath the island, *they* filtered up through fissures and began derailing cars and feeding on the dead and injured passengers trapped helplessly in the eternal darkness. After "some sort of giant, carrion-feeding, subterranean mole" is found in the wreckage of one such disaster, only to die "screaming in agony from their lights on its dead-white eyeballs" (313), a special unit is formed to patrol the tunnels, using machine guns and infra-red sensors and microphones and every other technological advantage to protect the unwary city that goes about its business, blissfully unaware of the struggle being waged "far below." Johnson successfully applies Lovecraft's techniques of gradually adding details and information until the reader is forced to the desired conclusion to the action story, while giving new meaning to Nietzsche's admonition: "Whoever battles with monsters had better see that it does not turn him into a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you."

Lovecraft continues to inspire writers long after he himself became subject to the authority of Mordiggian. Bob Leman's "The Tehama" (*F&SF*, December 1981) opens with a graphic description of two refugees from "Pickman's Model" erupting into a cellar, but takes a quite unexpected turn into native American mythology, treating the emergence of ghouls through a brick wall as a minor inconvenience of modern suburban life. Gene Wolfe's "Lord of the Land" (1990) suggests a source to the ghoul myth that is perhaps even more ghastly than that suggested by Lovecraft.

The British author Ronald Chetwynd-Hayes described the Faustian bargain that a family of warlocks struck with a King Ghoul in his story "Don't Go Up Them Stairs." When the ten-year-old son disregards this injunction and follows his family upstairs after they carry the coffin of his newly deceased grandfather upstairs, he is overcome by a graveyard stench and observes a "deep shadow shape":

> It was lean and tall, clad in a long gown made from unbleached linen shrouds; the face was greenish-white and shone with a soft luminous light; the eyes were white, pupilless holes, and it had no nose—only two holes. It shuffled out on to the landing, right into the circle of yellow light, and reaching out a skeleton hand, opened its black-toothed mouth:
>   "Glug—glug." (33)

Once the ghoul has seen the boy, it is no longer satisfied with such carrion offerings and demands that he be its next meal, leaving the child to show in no uncertain terms just how he is a worthy son of such a family.

Edward Lee's *Ghouls* has achieved something of a cult status since it was first published in 1988. Lee's work is characterized by fast action and graphic violence more than atmosphere, and his ghouls are nearly unstoppable killing machines transplanted to Maryland from the Saudi desert by a mad scientist. Lee attempts to provide a completely naturalistic explanation for the *ghala*, as he terms them, explaining away much as merely European mythologizing of a rare species of hermaphroditic carrion eaters that live in packs and hunt at night. Lee's military experience provides a strong sense of authenticity to his writing, as does his ability to create believable characters.

THE FIGURATIVE GHOUL

In more recent times ghouls have been depicted as something similar to vampires: ordinary-appearing people who have risen from their graves and obtain immortality through consumption of raw carrion. Several of Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's novels of the vampiric Saint Germaine have featured such ghouls as servants, while the same writer's "Disturb Not My Slumbering Fair" (1978) deals with a sixteen-year-old girl-ghoul who gets a job working in the morgue; although this description may elicit a smile, the story itself elicits a quite different reaction. Jim Butcher's series "The Dresden Files" (beginning with *Storm Front* [2000]) portrays them as intelligent, flesh-eating monsters able to pass for humans. Laurell K. Hamilton's novels about the vampire hunter Anita Blake (beginning with *Guilty Pleasures* [1994]) depict ghouls as a sort of supernatural pest that infest cemeteries which lose their blessing when too many ceremonies of an evil nature are performed there. Charles L. Grant's story "Quietly Now" is a modern retelling of "The Prince

and the Ghoul" from the Arabian Nights, rewritten as an ironic paean to "family values."

   Ghouls often appear in novels of heroic fantasy as one of many mythical creatures inhabiting the secondary world described by their authors, often without reference to their feeding habits. E. R. Eddison refers to one of the warring factions in *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922) as "ghouls," but this is purely nominal; in like manner Fritz Leiber's tales of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser mention the transparently skinned Ghouls, a tribe whose skeletons are perpetually on display. C. S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia describe ghouls as creatures resembling terribly old persons who lurk in the shadows and grab unsuspecting people. Larry Niven's "Ringworld" series is a comparatively positive depiction of the ghoul as a relatively sophisticated race that eats the dead of the other races inhabiting Niven's creation. There is nothing benign about them when they appear in Robert E. Howard's *The Hour of the Dragon*, haunting the forest roads along the Zingaran-Argossean frontier: "*Ghouls*, men called them, eaters of human flesh, spawn of darkness, children of unholy matings of a lost and forgotten race with the demons of the underworld," whose "dog-like jaws" snap and rip at the flesh of King Conan and devour his stallion (178–79). Karl Edward Wagner has his antihero Kane take refuge in an abandoned necropolis infested with the creatures as a means of indicating his own problematic nature; as one character observes with horror, "What kind of man would choose as his lair these ghoul-infested tombs?" (374).

   Ray Russell's "Sardonicus" emphasizes that *ghoul* is often used in a figurative sense. As a result, it has come to mean several types of monster, human and otherwise. Ambrose Bierce's "The Discomfited Demon" (1870) has the Devil Himself encounter a figure that may or may not be a ghoul in a cemetery and then retreat in haste. The grave robbers who kept British medical schools in cadavers up until the mid-nineteenth century were often referred to as "ghouls." Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Body Snatcher" (1884) deals with the aftermath of the actual Burke-and-Hare case; whether he erred in bringing the supernatural in at the end is controversial. Sir Hugh Clifford's, ghastly but moving, "The Ghoul" (1916) is deliberately ambiguous just as to whom the real ghoul of the title is, when an anthropologist proposes disinterring a newly buried infant and observes an old woman performing a magical rite with the corpses. Russell's "Sardonicus" itself is a masterful pastiche of the nineteenth-century Gothic form, telling of a poor man who digs up his father's body in order to recover a winning lottery ticket that was buried with it. The cadaver's face was frozen into a *risus sardonicus* (a death's head smile), and the resultant shock and guilt froze the title character's own face into an identical grin. Michael Slade's novel *Ghoul* (1987) uses the term in the sense of any morbid person or someone infatuated with death or necrophilia; one suspects that Dr. Pretorius in James Whale's film *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) would fit this definition nicely. Guy Endore's *The*

Werewolf of Paris (1933) was based upon the celebrated case of Sergeant Bertrand, in which a French soldier was discovered to be violating graves and consuming portions of the remains, and as such has more in common with ghouls than lycanthropes. Frank King's novel (and later play) *The Ghoul* (1928) refers both to a master thief called by the police "the Ghoul" and to a reanimated corpse seeking after a stolen object which it believes will confer upon it eternal life. More of an "old dark house" mystery like *The Cat and the Canary* than a horror tale, it was later effectively filmed in Great Britain with Boris Karloff in the starring role. Finally, Bassett Morgan's tale of brain transplantation was rather flamboyantly if inaccurately called "Gray Ghouls" (*Weird Tales*, July 1927; reprinted September 1939).

Bill Pronzini's anthology *Ghoul!* is subtitled "A Chrestomathy of Ogrery." There have been several case histories of real-life ogres that waylaid travelers and fed on them, of which the fifteenth-century Scottish case of the Sawney Beane family is perhaps the best known. Anthony Boucher's "They Bite" (*Unknown Worlds*, June 1942) is based upon a similar case in nineteenth-century Kansas; as in David Drake's "The Shortest Way" (*Whispers*, March 1974), their diet allowed them to survive the troops' sent in to suppress their actions and to flourish as something close to a real ghoul. Nugent Barker's "Curious Adventure of Mr. Bond" (*Cornhill Magazine*, July 1939) depicts a modern version of Prokruste's inn where not every traveler who checks in checks out.

Two well-known figures from the popular culture of the last century, Sweeney Todd (Stephen Sondheim's musical *Sweeney Todd; or, The Demon-Barber of Fleet Street*) and Hannibal Lecter, the brilliant but insane psychiatrist turned killer in three novels by Thomas Harris (*Red Dragon*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, and *Hannibal*), also were known for their unsavory eating habits.

Ed Gein, a real-life serial killer from Plainfield, Wisconsin, who killed several women and then ate parts of their bodies, and who also robbed several graves, including that of his own mother, has inspired several books and films. The first and most notable of these was Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho* (1959). Bloch did not base his character Norman Bates upon Gein, but instead took as his departure the probable psychology of someone living in such

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Real-Life Ghouls and Ogres

Sawney Beane Clan, Scotland, sixteenth century (possibly apocryphal)

Bender Family (William, "Ma," John, and Kate), Kansas, disappeared 1871

Albert Fish, New York, executed 1936

Ed Gein, Plainfield, Wisconsin, died in hospital 1984

Jeffrey Dahmer, Milkaukee, Wisconsin, killed in prison 1994

a small-town environment who managed to keep such a dark side of his personality hidden. As is well known to anyone who has read the book or, as is more likely, seen the film of the same name directed and produced by Alfred Hitchcock the next year, Bates kills his mother, exhumes and mummifies her body, and lives with it as if she were still alive, allowing her personality to survive as part of his mind. As Bloch describes him, Bates possesses an interest in several ghoulish subjects, of which his hobby of taxidermy survives into the film; he also possesses a copy of Margaret Alice Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, perhaps a silent homage to his mentor Lovecraft. Director Tobe Hooper provided his own version of the Gein case in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), an extremely gruesome updating of the Sawney Beane legend about a family of inbred cannibals killing travelers and serving them up at a popular local barbeque restaurant. Actor Gunnar Hansen's portrayal of the masked wielder of the titular instrument, "Leatherface" (so called because he wore a tanned mask flayed from the face of one of his victims) was popular enough to spawn a popular film franchise, none of which managed to capture the impact of the original.

Michael Crichton's novel *Eaters of the Dead* (1976) deserves some mention. It is a retelling of the Beowulf story told from the perspective of an Arab scholar who is traveling with the Vikings, and learns of a subterranean dwelling race of dark and hairy half-human cannibals that are terrorizing the Northmen. Similar in conception to some of Robert E. Howard's stories, Crichton offers a tip of the hat at one of his sources when he lists the *Necronomicon* (as edited by H. P. Lovecraft) as one of his sources.

If one had to name a single book that represents the finest literary depiction of ghoulery in the same manner that *Dracula* represents the definitive vampire novel, that book would have to be the late Brian McNaughton's collection *The Throne of Bones* (1997), which won the World Fantasy Award for best short fiction collection, and which was described by one reviewer on Amazon.com as what Tolkien would have written if he had ever written a book depicting sympathetically the human inhabitants of Mordor. McNaughton creates a secondary world that seems a curious blend of high Renaissance culture, Graeco-Roman antiquity, and our own time; it is infested with internecine warfare between feuding great houses, military orders of religious fanatics, huge necropoli, and underneath it all a thriving substructure of ghouls that mirrors the society from which they come. McNaughton suggests two ways in which a human becomes a ghoul: they display a predilection toward the morbid and the macabre during their adolescence that brings them to the attention of Gluttriel, god of death, who recruits them in his ranks (one wonders how Dr. Pretorius managed to avoid conscription), or they become infected with the so-called "Porfat's distemper": "Before the transformation becomes obvious to those grieving at the sickbed, their grief compounded by the loved one's growing taste for perverse wit and unseemly laughter, a hunger for dead flesh impels the victim to the

nearest burial ground. The first meal induces physical changes that destroy all hope of return to human society" (211). Ghouls are preternaturally strong and fast, able to see in the dark, and are almost impossible to kill: only exposure to sunlight for an entire day or dismemberment and burning will kill them, otherwise they will revive and return to their old haunts. When a ghoul devours someone, they also acquire the memories of their victims, and if enough of the brains are devoured, they can also assume the physical appearance and mannerisms of their meal. Mopsard's *Fables for the Fabulous* contains this cautionary tale:

> When Vendriel the Insidiator lay dead on the field at Lilaret, a ghoul ate the King's corpse and took his place among the living. After a time the mimic tried to shed his borrowed guise, but found that he could not. The Insidiator, although exhibiting some alarming new quirks, lived his life as if he had never died; the ghoul that had eaten him was seen no more. Moral: Eat no corpse whose spirit is stronger than your own. (140)

The titular epic "The Throne of Bones" consists of five interconnecting short stories and novelettes. The first of these stories, "Lord Glyphtard's Tale," opens with description of the secondary world that illustrates the lack of borders between the worlds of the living and the dead, as well as McNaughton's wonderfully baroque style:

> As a child I was told not to gather souvenirs from the cemetery, but it was hard to determine where our overgrown garden blended with the overgrown fringe of Dreamer's Hill. I had found skulls that clearly lay on our property. If mother permitted me to collect them, although she would shudder and urge me to find a healthier pastime, why shouldn't I pick up skulls that lay in plain sight a few steps farther on? If it was right to uncover relics with the toe of my boot when I glimpsed them protruding from the earth, why was it wrong to seek them out actively with shovel and crowbar? The inability to make such fine distinctions has forever been my undoing. (43)

Ghouls, we are told repeatedly, love to laugh, and so does McNaughton, because his knack for a type of sardonic humor that can only be called *ghoulish* is on proud display throughout the book. Here we have tales of Quodomass Phuonsa, the titular "Lecher of the Apothegm," of whom it was truly said, "He would fuck the ghoul that tried to eat his corpse" (78); of the offspring of that union; of the fate of its mother, who apparently dies; of the researches of Dr. Porfat into the etiology of ghoulism that eventually became a subject of great personal importance; and sitting on the dread Throne of Bones the great King of the Ghouls Himself, Vomikron Noxis. McNaughton's best story is probably the subtle and moving "Meryphillia," which tells of a young she-ghoul mourning for her lost humanity and the uniquely ghoulish manner in which she regains a portion of it. *The Throne of Bones* is

> Students of madness have described a mental ailment called Fornikon's
> mania, the morbid fear that a ghoul will eat your corpse and perrsonate you to
> your loved ones. This would seem to be a universal outbreak of that delusion,
> probably caused by overcrowding, high prices, and the decline of manners in
> our sorry age.
>
> —*Brian McNaughton,* The Throne of Bones

a tour de force that belongs on the shelves of all potential patients of Dr.
Porfat. McNaughton manages to surpass Clark Ashton Smith in his bent for
the macabre, while lending a distinctive style that smacks as much of Pet-
ronius's *Satyricon* as it does Lovecraft, Smith, or Lord Dunsany.

The ghoul has not proven to be a popular figure for motion picture and
television audiences. It is often confused with the type of flesh-eating zombies
depicted in such films as George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)
or Dan O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead* (1985). This is compounded
by such books as Max Brook's *The Zombie Survival Guide*, which uses the
words "zombie" and "ghoul" interchangeably. Such films as T. Hayes
Hunter's *The Ghoul* (1933) and James P. Hogan's *The Mad Ghoul* (1943)
describe characters supposedly brought back from the dead. There have been
several films based upon the Burke and Hare case: these include Robert
Wise's fine version of Stevenson's *The Body Snatcher* (1945), which features
fine performances by Boris Karloff and Henry Daniell; John Gilling's *The
Flesh and the Fiends* (1959), also known as *The Fiendish Ghouls*; and Freddie
Francis's *The Doctor and the Devils* (1985), the last boasting a screenplay by
Dylan Thomas that is appropriately posthumous. Horror schlockmeister
William Castle adapted Ray Russell's story as *Mr. Sardonicus* (1961),
translating his graceful prose into a gimmicky piece of drive-in sensational-
ism. Actual supernatural ghouls are rarely found on the screen: Christopher
Speeth's cult favorite *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* (1973) features what may
be a family of ghouls, and Roy Ward Baker's campy *The Monster Club*
(1980) has actor John Carradine portraying author R. Chetwynd-Hayes in-
terviewing a vampire at a "club for ghouls." The only full-fledged cinematic
depiction of a classical ghoul of which the present writer is aware is Freddis
Francis's *The Ghoul* (1975), which boasts of a tremendous performance by
the late Peter Cushing but is otherwise disappointing, with the titular ghoul
being nothing more than Cushing's insane son, who developed a taste for
human flesh while living in India. Its basic concept suggests that it might have
been inspired by Clark Ashton Smith's "The Nameless Offspring," but if so
the producers were either unwilling to purchase the rights and so made
changes or else they were repelled by the extreme horror of Smith's tale.

Television appearances of the supernatural ghoul have been slightly more
prolific. Lovecraft's "Pickman's Model" was adapted for "Rod Serling's Night

Gallery'' by Jack Laird and aired on December 1, 1971, and was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Makeup. Robert Barbour Johnson's ''Far Below'' was adapted by T. K. Hudson for the short-lived syndicated series ''Monsters,'' airing on February 25, 1990; it featured Barry Nelson. HBO's original series ''Tales from the Crypt'' presented ''Mournin' Mess'' on July 31, 1991. Directed and written by Danny Moto, it describes the results of an investigative reporter's inquiries regarding the deaths of street people near a cemetery, and ends with the ''twist ending'' characteristic of this series.

As we discussed earlier, part of the reason why ghouls are the subject of such a relatively sparse body of work may be attributed to the lack of any real cultural foundation or understanding for the underlying folk belief. Vampires, werewolves, and even zombies have roots in American folklore and popular culture, but to the extent that ghouls have become popular in recent years it is as an adjunct to Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, and as such have as much relevance to the actual Middle Eastern superstition as do the *Mi-Go* from ''The Whisperer in Darkness'' to the actual Tibetan ''Abominable Snowman.'' But there is also the strong taboo against the eating of human flesh to consider. The reasons for this are many. For instance, the Greek Olympians overthrew the Titans who ate the flesh of their children, thus bringing order out of chaos, so the eating of human flesh represented a return to a darker and more chaotic period. The body of the deceased was also closely associated with the soul even after death, so that many peoples believed that desecrating the remains could prevent the passage into the afterlife—thus the Muslim prohibition against cremation, which was also shared by many Christians until recently. Some aboriginal tribes in the Pacific and North America believed that eating the flesh of an enemy allowed the consumer to absorb some of his bravery and strength. All these reasons could explain the belief in ghouls: fear of being absorbed and enslaved by a demonic creature, thus being prevented from attaining Paradise or Nirvana or Heaven. As Reay Tannahill observes in *Flesh and Blood: A History of the Cannibal Complex*, man was barely out of the trees when ''he had begun to shape ideas about the association between life and death, flesh, blood and spirit, that were to remain embedded in the human subconscious throughout all succeeding centuries'' (2). While the ghoul itself may be an import to western literature, the fears underlying it are universal.

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The Haunted House

by Steven J. Mariconda

"All houses wherein men have lived and died / Are haunted houses."
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Haunted Houses"

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who watches television, goes to the movies, reads for pleasure, or celebrates Halloween is familiar with the icon of the haunted house. More than this, few of us as children have not at some time undertaken to explore a "real" haunted house? We are all familiar with the strange sensation of being inside an abandoned dwelling. There is a sense of fear, sadness, intrusion, physical danger, and the transience of life and love. In "The Haunted House," Charles Dickens expresses the typical sentiment one feels upon the threshold of such a dwelling:

> Within, I found it, as I had expected, transcendently dismal. The slowly
> changing shadows, waved on it from the heavy trees, were doleful in the last
> degree; the house was ill-placed, ill-built, ill-planned, and ill-fitted. It was damp,
> it was not free from dry rot, there was a flavor of rats in it, and it was the
> gloomy victim of that indescribable decay which settles on all the work of man's
> hands whenever it is not turned to man's account. (9)

At its simplest, a haunted house may be defined as a dwelling that is
inhabited by or visited regularly by a ghost or other supposedly supernatural
being. The number of variants within this definition—the house, the circum-
stances, and the potential physical and emotional repercussions—is limitless.
As long as human beings have a home, the haunted house will continue to
exist.

As Sigmund Freud points out in his famous essay, the very concept of the
uncanny could not exist without the concept of home: "The German word
'unheimlich' [uncanny] is clearly the opposite of 'heimlich' ['homely']" (124).
Other definitions of "heimlich" Freud provides include "belonging to the
house; not strange; familiar; intimate; friendly, etc." (126).

A house provides a sense of containment, of enclosure, warmth, protection
from the elements, a sense of intimacy and nurture. As such, it is an extension
of the Mother archetype. Home is the center of one's existence and one's
security. A profound affect inevitably accrues to one's house over time; few can
leave their childhood homes without regret or feel a deep complex of emo-
tions upon seeing it again after a space of years.

Given that we have such a significant investment in the physical and
emotional aspects of our house, it is not surprising that the notion of it being
violated by something threatening—worse, something unnatural—feels so
fearful. As Freud wryly remarks:

> [I]n hardly any other sphere has our thinking and feeling changed so little since
> primitive times, or the old been so well preserved, under a thin veneer, as in our
> relation to death. Two factors account for this lack of movement: the strength
> of our original emotional reactions [to death] and the uncertainty of our scien-
> tific knowledge. . . . Since nearly all of us still think no differently from savages
> on this subject, it is not surprising that the primitive fear of the dead is still so
> potent in us and ready to manifest itself if given any encouragement. (148–49)

Mircea Eliade coined the phrase "sacred space," and one's home undoubtedly
falls within this concept; when something threatens to make it profane space,
the threat must be perceived as profound.

The haunted house story has to have, needless to say, a house—or, as it
may be, a castle, chateau, etc. In theory we need not confine ourselves to a
family dwelling; in the broader sense we could take a house as "a building in
which someone or something is sheltered or located." But the literature
within the first boundary is in and of itself immense. In terms of plot line, the

haunted house has to have a series of supernatural events; and the best tales will have a backstory (the history behind the situation that exists at the start of the main story) of the provenance and discovery of these events. The haunted house story has proved amazingly flexible in accommodating a wide variety of themes: good versus evil, science versus the supernatural, economic conflict, class, gender, and so on.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE IN FOLKLORE

Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* shows many "haunted house" motifs in folk lore, primarily falling into the categories encompassed in Ghosts Return from the Dead (E200.–E599.): for example, Ghosts Haunt House (E281.) and Ghosts Haunts Castle/Chateau (E282.), Mysterious Ghostly Noises Heard (E402.)—a very long list including calls, moans, cries and screams, sings, snores, songs, footsteps, music, chains, rapping, glass breaking, and doors slamming. Some related motifs elsewhere classified include House in Other World (F163.) and House at Borderland of Other World (F147.); House of Fairie (F221.) and Fairie Castle (F222.); House Spirits (F480.), some of which even fight with one another (F482.7.); Extraordinary Castle (F771.); and the ever-popular Fear Test Staying in Haunted House (H1411.). The bulk of these originate in the United Kingdom, particularly Ireland; many are from Eastern Europe, and some from India and the Middle East (e.g., Jinn Kills Whatever Tries to Occupy House It Has Chosen to Live In [G307.3.]).

The most complete haunted house stories from antiquity are those of Plautus (*Mostellaria*), Pliny the Younger (*Haunted House*), and Lucian (*Philopseudes*). The basic narrative structure is much the same as modern tale. Prior to the beginning of the story, a guest has been killed or buried on the grounds. The spirit of the deceased man roams at night, until a man of courage arrives to find the cause of the haunting. He follows the ghost to the spot where the remains are buried. After a proper burial, the ghost stays at rest.

The *Mostellaria* is a haunted house tale in a Roman comic play by Plautus that can be traced to Greek traditions of the third century B.C.E. (*Mostellum* is the diminutive of *monstrum*, a specter or prodigy.) Even at this early date the haunted house trope is so familiar it can be played for laughs with no risk that the audience won't get the joke.

The elderly Theopropides has been away on a long trip; his son Philolaches has squandered the family fortune on high living and his mistress. The father returns unexpectedly and must be prevented from discovering what has occurred in his absence. So the trickster-slave Tranio waylays Theopropides, insisting that the dwelling is haunted and that the noises from within are those of wandering spirits, rather than Philolaches and his friends socializing: "I tell you a crime has been committed there—an old crime committed long ago. . . . We have only recently found out about it. . . . A host murdered his own

''For instance, take a Haunted Tower,
With skull, cross-bones, and sheet;
Blue lights to burn (say) two an hour,
Condensing lens of extra power,
And set of chains complete:

''What with the things you have to hire—
The fitting on the robe—
And testing all the coloured fire—
The outfit of itself would tire
The patience of a Job!

''A new house does not suit, you know—
It's such a job to trim it:
But, after twenty years or so,
The wainscotings begin to go,
So twenty is the limit.''

''To trim'' was not a phrase I could
Remember having heard:
''Perhaps'', I said, ''you'll be so good
As tell me what is understood
Exactly by that word?''

''It means the loosening all the doors,''
The Ghost replied, and laughed:
''It means the drilling holes by scores
In all the skirting-boards and floors,
To make a thorough draught.

''You'll sometimes find that one or two
Are all you really need
To let the wind come whistling through—
But here there'll be a lot to do!''
I faintly gasped ''Indeed!''

                                                        Lewis Carroll, ''Phantasmagoria''

guest, taking him by force. . . . [I]t was the very same man who sold you the house. . . . And he stole his [guest's] gold. And then he buried the man—his guest—here in this very house'' (51–52). But Tranio must resort to increasingly desperate measures to maintain the illusion of haunting. Finally Theopropides discovers that the house is the same as ever and harbors no ghostly tenant.

The first tale in Phlegon of Tralles's proto-tabloid *Book of Marvels* (c. second century C.E.), entitled "Philinnion," is the story of a young woman who returns from the dead after several months to become the lover of a young man; when her parents hear of this several days after the fact, they lie in wait for her to return to the man's room and surprise her there. She dies for a second time, and the locals determine the best course to take is to burn the body outside the city limits. As in some other ancient ghost tales, Greek freedman Phlegon's retelling does not distinguish between the idea of a revenant (one who returns after death) and a ghost (the spirit of a dead person).

THE HAUNTED CASTLE

In 1927 Eino Railo published the definitive and entertaining *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism*, providing a virtual Baedeker to the castle–forerunner of the haunted house—and other elements of Gothic literature. As he succinctly says at the outset:

> The haunted castle plays an exceeding important part in these romances; so important, indeed that were it eliminated the whole fabric of romance would be bereft of its foundation and would lose its predominant atmosphere. The entire stock-in-trade of horror-romanticism in its oldest and purest form consists . . . chiefly of the properties and staff of this haunted castle, and as we proceed farther in time, of motives based in the first instance upon these; so that to my mind acquaintance with the materials of horror-romanticism is best begun with this central stage and appurtenances. (7)

Horace Walpole (1717–1797) brought the haunted castle limned by moonlight and with secret trapdoors and passageways, from a mere setting to part of the narrative fabric. His *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is considered to mark the birth of Gothic, and therefore the haunted castle.

Ann Radcliffe, with a powerful imagination, vivid descriptive ability, and lucid prose style, developed these motifs to the fullest. In her signature work, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), the castle is typically remote, in thickly treed mountains that peak other mountains. A castle bell is heard. Interior décor includes portraits and hangings. The castle's thresholds—iron-bound doors, ring-handled trap-doors—are multiplied, and winding, narrow passageways are labyrinthine, including subterranean chambers and tunnels leading to an outbuilding or some hidden copse or cave. Wind causes doors to creak on rusted hinges, and sudden lightning and thunder mark the existence of some unforgiving, immortal power. The suddenly extinguished lamp or candle, miniature portraits, and old manuscripts, letters, or wills are all here. Radcliffe also supplements the haunted castle with more structures—an old

abbey and monastery, whose twilit groves of trees effect a portentous atmosphere tinted by the otherworldly.

Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777) is the first instance of the empty suite of rooms supposed to be haunted. There are skeletal remains under the floor, portraits of the ancestral owners turned toward the wall, and a suit of bloodstained armor. Reeve also contributes the character of the trusted old butler or caretaker, an advocate of the protagonist, prowling about the premises while occasionally offering some cryptic hint or admonition.

THE ICONIC HAUNTED HOUSE

Ask someone to draw a haunted house and they will probably draw a house with a mansard roof. The word "mansard" refers to Frenchman François Mansart (1598–1666) of the Beaux Arts School of Architecture in Paris. He revived interest in this roofing style, which is characteristic of Italian and French Renaissance architecture. A second revival of the mansard roof occurred when Paris was rebuilt by Napoleon III in the 1850s. Thus is the term "Second Empire" is often used to describe a building with a mansard roof. A mansard roof has four sides; on each side the lower slope is steeper than the upper slope. Decorative wrought iron cresting is often set above the upper cornice of the roof. Mansard roofs were considered practical because their angled panels increased the inside ceiling space such that what would have been an attic could be used as a bedroom or other living space. Also, the outward facing side of a mansard roof may be set with a window—a dormer, which extends out and has its own roof which may be flat, arched, or pointed. Dormers are typically set in the lower slope of the mansard roof.

Second Empire architecture spread to England during the Paris Exhibitions of 1852 and 1867. In the United States, Second Empire was most popular from about 1860 to 1880. Second Empire houses were variously enhanced by patterned slate roofs, classical pediments, paired columns, tall windows on first story, and one or more cupolas (a dome-shaped ornamental structure placed atop a roof).

Gothic Revival is a second style that evokes the archetypal haunted house. Medieval traditions mingled with modern methods to create these whimsical Victorian homes, built between 1840 and 1880. In the mid-eighteenth century, Horace Walpole—lover of all things Gothic—refashioned his Twickenham country home with battlements, pointed windows, and other medieval details. This started a bias away from conservative and symmetrical domestic architecture, with newly built English mansions looking less like houses and more like castles, chapels, or monasteries. In the United States, architect Alexander Davis led the Gothic Revival charge in his book *Rural Residences* (1837). Lyndhurst, an estate in Tarrytown, New York, was designed by Davis and

became emblematic of the Gothic Revival style. This country home featured a steeply pitched roof, grouped chimneys, battlements, and parapets. The windows—pointed, oriel, quatrefoil, and clover shaped—used leaded glass.

Second Empire is a tall, narrow style. Perhaps this makes such houses seem foreboding. The mansard roof and wrought iron cresting add to the sense of looming height. Indeed, the upper slope of the mansard roof may not be visible when standing near the building. Dormer windows project like eyebrows from the roof. Ornate brackets beneath eaves, balconies, and bay windows seem like shoulders propping up projecting parts of the house. The façades of these houses do seem to resemble squared-off human faces, the windows a pair of eyes, the front door a mouth.

The style features an asymmetrical floor plan, as do most Victorian houses. The layout of the rooms is reflected in the exterior contours. Inside the space is severely partitioned, creating a mosaic of rooms that may be small or oddly shaped.

When the age of prosperity turned into the economic depression of the 1870s, flamboyant architecture began to fall out of fashion. From about 1895 to 1915, middle-class tastes turned further away from the perceived complexity, clutter, and partitioned spaces of the Victorian home to simpler, open, flexible floor plans.

By the 1950s and 1960s Second Empire and other Victorian homes had fallen into disrepair. As a style favored by the upper class of their era, houses that were once places of privilege became symbols of a decayed aristocracy and places of mystery. In Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), the Bates home was a Second Empire design, as was the mansion from "The Addams Family" comics and television series. These cemented what for many people is the image of the "haunted house."

THE "REAL" HAUNTED HOUSE

Amityville

Late in 1974 Ronald DeFeo, Jr., murdered his parents and siblings in their house on Ocean Avenue in Amityville, New York. DeFeo claimed his actions were caused by a supernatural entity that lived in the house. He pleaded insanity at his trial. The actual motive was the money to be gained from the parents' life insurance polices. He was found guilty of six counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to 150 years in prison.

In 1975 George and Kathy Lutz and their three children purchased the home. They would later claim they noticed an "unearthly presence" in the house, indicated by unexplained noises and doors and windows that moved. George Lutz claimed to hear music in the house. A Catholic priest was told to leave the house by an unidentified voice. The noises increased in intensity, and

things were seen outside the windows. George Lutz claimed he was "possessed" by a malevolent force. Green slime was claimed to have oozed from the walls and ceiling. Other manifestations reported were ghostly apparitions of hooded figures, clouds of flies, cold spots, odors, flying objects, and failure of telephone service. The youngest Lutz child claimed she saw and communicated with an animal-like entity. Kathy Lutz claimed she suffered lacerations from an unseen source. After a month, the Lutz family moved out of the house.

In February 1976, New York City news outlets picked up the story, probably from self-promoting ghost-hunters Ed and Lorraine Warren, who intended to stage a séance at the house. George and Kathy Lutz retained writer Jay Anson to write a book recounting their experiences. It was claimed that at one point people were coming to view the house in numbers as high as a thousand per day. A film of the book was planned. The Warrens were hired by the production company to serve as consultants.

Dr. Stephen Kaplan, a paranormal investigator from New York, examined the Lutz's claims and concluded they had no basis in fact. The Warrens attempted to undermine Kaplan's conclusions. In 1979 William Weber, lawyer for Ronald DeFeo, admitted his part in planning and creating a hoax with George Lutz (Kaplan and Kaplan, 166). Weber's motive was to get a new trial for DeFeo. According to Weber, Lutz's motive was to rid himself of a mortgage he couldn't afford. Jim and Barbara Cromarty later moved into the house and observed no usual phenomena (Kaplan and Kaplan, 190).

A survey of haunted house literature (fiction and nonfiction) will show that the most frightening stories of haunted houses tend to be those that purport to be true, even if we ostensibly do not believe in the supernatural. Freud believed there was a reason for this:

> If the writer has to all appearances taken up his stance on the ground of common reality . . . he adopts the conditions that apply to the emergence of the uncanny in normal experience; whatever has an uncanny effect in real life has the same in literature. But the writer can intensify and multiply this effect far beyond what is feasible in normal experience; in his stories he can make things happen that one would never, or only rarely, experience in real life. In a sense, then, he betrays us to a superstition we thought we had "surmounted"; he tricks us by promising us everyday reality and then going beyond it. We react to his fictions as if they had been our own experiences. (156–57)

The Amityville Horror became a best-seller, and the residence has remained the most widely known "haunted house" in the United States.

Timberline Lodge

Timberline Lodge at Mount Hood, Oregon, about sixty miles from Portland, is familiar as the exterior of the haunted Overlook Hotel in Stanley

Kubrick's film *The Shining* (1980). The lodge was built in 1936–1937 by unemployed craftspeople hired by the Federal Works Progress Administration. It was completed in less than fifteen months, with no major accidents during the entire period.

The lodge is built of rough stone masonry and heavy timber in an alpine, rural mountainside area, in Rustic Cascadian Neovernacular style. The architecture of the Lodge falls within the broad architectural traditions of English Picturesque style that originated in the late eighteenth century and the European chateaux, castle, and alpine architecture from the Middle Ages, with elements such as the asymmetry of the design, use of diverse indigenous materials, steep roof pitches and towers, and massive stone and wood members for interiors and exterior.

There is a hexagonal-shaped space sixty-four feet in diameter around rough stone core with fireplace (referred to as ''the Head House'') with a steeply pitched roof, a two-level main entrance, three walls of glass windows on the north side of the Head House, two asymmetrical cross wings, and an oriel.

The seven-mile approach to the building (used to great effect in the opening sequence of *The Shining*) takes the visitor to an elevation of 6,000 feet. The lodge has seventy guest rooms. In winter, the ground floor of the lodge is typically fully buried in snow, hence one has to enter through a snow tunnel, or directly into the second floor.

Winchester Mystery House

The Winchester Mystery House near San Jose, California, is one of the most imposing ''haunted houses'' in the world. Here Sarah Winchester, widow of the head of the company that created the repeating rifle, undertook construction project of such magnitude that it was to occupy the lives of carpenters and craftsmen until her death thirty-eight years later.

William Winchester was the son and heir of Oliver Winchester, whose repeating firearm became famous as ''The Gun That Won the West.'' The younger Winchester married Sarah Pardee in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1862. The Winchesters had an infant daughter, Annie, who died in 1866. William Winchester passed away in 1881.

Sarah Winchester's physician—or perhaps, as more entertaining accounts claim, her spiritualist—suggested she go west and establish a new home. In 1884 Mrs. Winchester purchased a partially completed eight-room farmhouse near San Jose. She undertook a construction project that continued uninterrupted for thirty-eight years. The purported rationale for the construction was that Mrs. Winchester was trying to keep away the vengeful ghosts of all those killed by Winchester firearms—mostly Native Americans—by confusing them with a maze-like warren of rooms and passages.

By 1906 the Winchester House was a seven-story, turreted, Gothic Victorian mansion that contained about 500 rooms. The 1906 San Francisco

earthquake destroyed parts of the building, which were never repaired. Mrs. Winchester was in her bedroom at the time; she thought part of the ceiling dropped, but escaped without injury after being trapped there for a short time.

When Sarah Winchester died in 1922 the house consisted of 160 rooms, 2,000 doors, 10,000 windows, 47 stairways, 47 fireplaces, 13 bathrooms, and 6 kitchens.

There still stands some 24,000 square feet consisting of rooms with odd angles, stairways leading to nowhere, secret passageways, doors and windows opening onto blank walls, and railing posts set upside down. There is also a small "séance room," where Sarah Winchester is said to have received building instructions from the spirit world. This is exited through what resembles a cupboard door (Nickell 20–24). Stephen King used the Winchester house as inspiration for his dismal four-hour TV miniseries, *Rose Red* (2002).

A SELECTION OF HAUNTED HOUSE NOVELS

The House of the Seven Gables

The House of the Seven Gables is the father—or one might say grandfather— of all haunted house novels. Nathaniel Hawthorne weaves the haunted house theme so finely into the fabric of the story that it dominates the novel without overpowering the plot and characterizations.

The book's opening paragraphs are devoted to a description of the House of the Seven Gables, its history, and the role it has played in the relations between the rival Pyncheon and Maule families. Thus, between the book's title and its opening, it is clear that the house will play more than an ordinary

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A person of imaginative temperament, while passing by the house, would turn, once and again, and peruse it well: its many peaks, consenting together in the clustered chimney; the deep projection over its basement-story; the arched window, imparting a look, if not of grandeur, yet of antique gentility, to the broken portal over which it opened; the luxuriance of gigantic burdocks, near the threshold; he would note all these characteristics, and be conscious of something deeper than he saw. He would conceive the mansion to have been the residence of the stubborn old Puritan, Integrity, who, dying in some forgotten generation, had left a blessing in all its rooms and chambers, the efficacy of which was to be seen in the religion, honesty, moderate competence, or upright poverty and solid happiness, of his descendants, to this day.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables

part in the story. The omniscient third-person narrator remarks as an aside: "The aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me like a human countenance, bearing the traces not merely of outward storm and sunshine, but expressive also, of the long lapse of mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes that have passed within" (6). Later he adds: "The deep projection of the second story gave the house such a meditative look, that you could not pass it without the idea that it had secrets to keep, and an eventful history to moralize upon" (25).

Indeed, as events in the novel occur, the aspect of the house seems to oscillate from dismal to convivial, whichever is appropriate to a particular event. The dwelling seems alive in some sense, if perhaps only as a textual signifier. Hawthorne does not confirm or deny that the house is haunted, or animate in some other way; he does not need to, so deft is he at situating the house within the narrative. He does slyly hint at the disposition of the house in the context of the Gothic, by remarking that the house has been "the scene of events more full of human interest, perhaps, than those of a gray feudal castle" (11).

It transpires that Matthew Maule the elder had originally cleared the land upon which the House of the Seven Gables would stand, erecting there a log-built hut. But Maule was hung for witchcraft (unjustly, it is implied), and so his foe Colonel Pyncheon obtained the land, demolished the Maule house, and set to build his own. This was not a wise idea according to the locals: "His home would include the home of the dead and buried wizard, and would thus afford the ghost of the latter a kind of privilege to haunt its new apartments, and the chambers into which future bridegrooms were to lead their brides, and where children of the Pyncheon blood were to be born. . . . The terror and ugliness of Maule's crime, and the wretchedness of his punishment, would darken the freshly plastered walls, and infect them early with the scent of an old and melancholy house" (9–10).

As for the appearance of the house itself, at first it seems benign. But trouble begins immediately, as a result of the Maule hanging. With a noose around his neck, Matthew Maule the elder had cursed Judge Pyncheon; and on the very first day the house is opened for a grand reception its front door "was flung wide open by a sudden gust of wind that passed, as with a loud sigh, from the outermost portal through all the passages and apartments of the new house" (14). Inside, Pyncheon is found dead immediately thereafter.

Thirty years later, another wealthy Pyncheon (Jaffrey Pyncheon the elder) dies, and his nephew Clifford Pyncheon (seen as an sympathizer to the Maule family) is unjustly convicted of the murder and sentenced to prison. Hepzibah, Clifford's sister, remains living in the House of the Seven Gables, being forced to run a retail shop out of a lower room of the house as money dwindles.

A Pyncheon relation, Phoebe, makes a surprise visit to the house, and the latter brightens with her presence. Hepzibah talks at length to Phoebe about

Alice Pyncheon, who is believed to haunt the house and whose spectral harpsichord is sometimes heard.

Holgrave, a daguerreotypist who boards at the house, tells Phoebe that houses as old and ill storied as the Pyncheon House should be torn down and replaced. He says:

> Now, see! under those seven gables, at which we now look up,—and which old Colonel Pyncheon meant to be the house of his descendants, in prosperity and happiness, down to an epoch far beyond the present,—under that roof, through a portion of three centuries, there has been perpetual remorse of conscience, a constantly defeated hope, strife amongst kindred, various misery, a strange form of death, dark suspicion, unspeakable disgrace,—all, or most of which calamity, I have the means of tracing to the old Puritan's inordinate desire to plant and endow a family. (159)

Holgrave reveals to Phoebe that he wants to publish a piece about the Pyncheon history in a magazine, and he begins to read it aloud. It is a story about Matthew Maule the younger, grandson of the hanged wizard. At one point the younger Maule remarks that "Old Matthew Maule...had an inveterate habit of haunting a certain mansion, styled the House of the Seven Gables, against the owner of which he pretended to hold an unsettled claim for ground-rent" (163). Hawthorne leaves the reader uncertain as to whether Holgrave's narrative is fact or fiction. In the end, when it comes out that the original Judge Pyncheon probably died from natural causes (thus absolving the supposed transgressions of certain Maule and Pyncheon family members over the years), a deed is rediscovered behind a painting in the house (thus freeing up a long-disputed plot of land to be used by the Pyncheons), and the enmity between the families is resolved. Holgrave (actually a Maule relation) and Phoebe are betrothed, and take Clifford, Hepzibah, and Uncle Venner away to start a new life.

The House on the Borderland

William Hope Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland* (1908) is unique among haunted house tales in its scope of vision. Two men come upon the ruins of an ancient Irish edifice on the edge of a cliff over a cataract, "perched almost at the extreme end of a huge spur of rock that jutted out some fifty or sixty feet over the abyss. . . . [T]he jagged mass of ruin was literally suspended in midair" (9). The bulk of the story is from a bound manuscript they find there. Its author, the owner of house, speaks of "the quaintness of its structure, which is curious and fantastic to the last degree. Little curved towers and pinnacles, with outlines suggestive of leaping flames, predominate; while the body of the building is in the form of a circle" (15). But the bulk of the tale recounts owner's experiences as he defends himself and his sister from invading pig-like

creatures who dwell beneath in "a gigantic well or pit going sheer down into the bowels of the earth" (11). Thematically, the novel speaks to the dangers of isolating one's self, of the persistence and ultimate victory of "outside" forces. The cosmic imagery and unusual concepts make the book an interesting read, despite its relative lack of polish in terms of structure and style.

The Haunting of Hill House

Widely recognized as perhaps the greatest haunted house novel ever written, Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) is only the culmination of her efforts to probe the wonders and terrors of dwellings. Jackson had previously written numerous short stories about strange houses—including "The Lovely House" (1952), in which a young woman visiting the home of a college friend appears to have become woven into the fabric of the house by means of a tapestry made by the friend's mother—and would subsequently write *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), a nonsupernatural tale of a family ostracized in their Gothic house because of past crimes. But *The Haunting of Hill House* is emphatically supernatural in its premise: four individuals sensitive to psychic phenomena come to Hill House to explore its apparently bizarre manifestations, and one of them—the lonely and troubled Eleanor Vance—seems to become so psychically fused with the house that she is unable to leave it. Jackson's handling of the supernatural manifestations is extraordinarily subtle and effective, and her continual use of the Shakespearean tag "Journeys end in lovers meeting" takes on an ominous significance as we realize that it is the house itself that Eleanor has come to love, and that any attempt to leave it—as she does in a commandeered car at the end—can only lead to her death. *The Haunting of Hill House* was masterfully filmed by Robert Wise in 1963 as *The Haunting*.

Burnt Offerings

In Stephen Jones and Kim Newman's *Horror: 100 Best Books* (1988), Stephen King marked Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* (1973) as a haunted house novel second only to Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (160). The elements are familiar. Husband, wife, son, and aunt find summer rental—strange old house—for unusually cheap rate; mysterious grandam upstairs is never seen; wife becomes attached to grandam and to house; house seems to regenerate; husband gets violent; everyone ends up dead except the wife, who has been subsumed by the house and detained her family to be immolated. King finds the novel outstanding because the sense of the unreal is intensified by "very real fears," in this case the notion that "our possessions actually own us" (160–61). In reality the novel is indifferent, the one effective touch being a photo gallery of the house's many victims, all with facial expressions straight out of Grant Wood's "American Gothic."

The House on Nazareth Hill

So rich and complex are Ramsey Campbell's novels that it becomes difficult to box any given work into the haunted house category. Stephen King cites *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* (1975) as a favorite haunted house novel (160). Here, the protagonists discover that the villain, the cannibalistic Christopher Kelly, is the illegitimate child of Satanist and that the depraved past of Kelly's home has helped forge his malignant disposition. The solitary, bitter maiden great-aunt Queenie in *The Influence* (1986) dies in her long-time residence; it is implied that the dwelling has absorbed an evil that affects her grand-niece Rowan. Best of all, however, is *The House on Nazareth Hill* (1996). Here Campbell deploys all the skill he has accrued over a forty-year writing career that has put him among the ranks of Algernon Blackwood and M. R. James. Nazareth Hill is an apartment house on the former site of a monastery, a mental hospital, and a prison. One resident is Amy Priestly, a teenager at odds with her increasingly tyrannical father Oswald. Amy already fears the site from a childhood incident, and she experiences escalating terror as supernatural events seem to infest the new building. As Amy and Oswald's relationship becomes increasingly bitter, it liberates an evil, and horrible events of the past begin to reconstitute themselves. Her father ultimately loses his mind to the specter of an evil Witchfinder General, whose acts of torture have left a lingering paranormal blight on Nazareth Hill. The fire that burned down the mental hospital with all inside is echoed in modern events as the domestic tragedy reaches its end—both protagonists die, but with unexpected implications. The book is deepened by its themes of family discord, intolerance, and the pestilence of hatred. *Nazareth Hill* is one of the most successful recent haunted house novels and takes a place among the finest in the genre.

Coldheart Canyon

Coldheart Canyon (2001) by Clive Barker has the makings of masterpiece, but its execution is not equal to its conception—strange considering this novel is the author's nineteenth attempt at the form. Theoretically an indictment of Hollywood Babylon, in which superficial fleshly pursuits corrupt the soul, it comes off as an unfortunate mixture of Jacqueline Susanne and Hieronymus Bosch. Todd Pickett, a fickle, vain actor past his prime, is recovering from a botched facelift at a rented estate in a canyon on the outskirts of Hollywood. The house was built six decades earlier by beautiful silent film star Katya Lupi. Lupi can throw a party like nobody else, because she has a fantastic but dangerous underground room that bestows timeless youth upon those who enter it. Her basement walls are covered by an enchanted mosaic reassembled from thousands of tiles from an ancient monastery in Romania. The scene depicts a realm within which the Queen of Hell has condemned a nobleman to hunt forever, or until he entraps her son—a world populated by predatory

hybrid monsters engaged in bizarre sex with humans and animals. Pickett becomes entrapped by Lupi, who introduces him to the dangerous mutants that roam her estate, and to the ghosts of former guests who engage in human-beast-revenant orgies while hoping to get back into rejuvenating magic room. The head of Pickett's unofficial fan club is Tammy Lauper (stereotypically overweight and unhappily married), who detects something amiss. She ends up the Nancy Drew of the piece, saving the day with the unlikely assistance of Pickett's supercilious manager.

In the hands of a more capable writer, *Coldheart Canyon* could have been a great haunted house book. A concise treatment of much of the material could have made a tremendous impact. The idea of blending the glamor of early Hollywood with the fantasy element of the mosaic has tremendous potential. Barker also seems to have difficulty drawing and developing his characters. Lupi has the makings of a really compelling and memorable character, but is by turns unnaturally powerful, emotionally needy, supremely evil, and insipid. Pickett's character also oscillates among shallow, sympathetic, callous, and attractive. The other players, from a cryptic Romanian priest to a slimy film agent, are mostly one-dimensional. When the shades of Veronica Lake, George Sanders, Mary Pickford, and other real stars make cameos, one can only wince. Even the expected triple-X content is tedious—despite Barker's stated intention "to excite," the advent of Internet pornography in the years since he published the *Books of Blood* makes his perverted tableaus seem tame and pointless.

House of Leaves

Mark Z. Danielewski *House of Leaves* (2000) consists of nested narratives connected by footnotes and other textual apparatus. A man named Zampano dies, leaving behind a manuscript about a film called *The Navidson Report*. The film is photojournalist Will Navidson's documentary of his family's move to an old house in Virginia. He captures the events by placing motion-sensitive cameras in each room. Navidson finds that the measurements of the house's interior do not match those of its exterior. He recruits a team of people to investigate. The house seems to moan as it reconfigures its space and creates mazes of new rooms, hallways, and stairways. There are hints of an unseen, malignant entity. As the expeditions turn deadly, Navidson loses his mind. A second, nested story is told mostly in footnotes. Zampano's manuscript is being edited and annotated by his neighbor, one Johnny Truant. Truant becomes obsessed with the manuscript and tries to track down its sources. He too drifts towards psychosis. While the tropes are familiar, the physical aspects of the book are unusual. Typographical layouts reminiscent of Dada are used. But when one lets all the hot air (patchworks of texts in different fonts, lists, pages with one word, poems, photos, footnotes, appendices, an index, etc.) out of the 700-page book, very little substance remains. The author seems

The Art of the Haunted House

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) was an Italian artist and architect. Vast, nightmarish architectural fantasies are depicted in his *Carceri d'invenzione (Imaginary Prisons*, begun c. 1745, reworked 1761), a series of sixteen prints featuring immense, bizarre structures, great subterranean vaults with tortuous staircases, and gigantic machines—all colossal in size but of indeterminate purpose

Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901), of Switzerland, painted five versions of his mystical ''Island of the Dead'' (1880–1886) depicting two people in a small boat approaching a tiny island covered by a rock mausoleum. Also notable are his ''Ruins by the Sea'' (1881)—in which the dark shell of a villa bathed in green light is surrounded by cypress trees tossing in the wind—and ''Ruins in a Moonlit Landscape'' (1849).

Louis Michel Eilshemius (1864–1941)—called by critic Clement Greenberg ''one of the best artists we have ever produced''—was subject for much of his life to manic spells that resulted in odd and freakish paintings. In his ''Haunted House'' (c. 1917), a dilapidated farmhouse sits in the middle distance, a dirt road drawing the eye toward it from the lower left of the painting; the vista is enclosed by a painted frame that conveys a sense of furtive inquiry by the viewer.

Edward Hopper (1882–1967), the best-known realist painter of the inter-war period, often featured Second Empire houses in the unnervingly silent space of his paintings. In the most famous of these, ''The House by the Railroad'' (1925), a sort of over-determined representation shades into fantasy. The low perspective and railroad tracks in the foreground—with their connotation of movement—create an uncanny sense of inertia about the dwelling. Hopper's model for the painting was the Garner Mansion (c. 1825) at 18 Railroad Avenue in West Haverstraw, New York. ''The House by the Railroad'' is said to have influenced the design of the houses in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and the Addams Family comic strip; and so the Garner Mansion may be said to be the archetype of the modern haunted house icon.

Grant Wood (1892–1942) painted ''American Gothic'' in 1930, little imagining it would become one of the most recognized images in the world. The home that inspired it still stands in Eldon, Iowa. The house's pointed arch window is echoed in the pair of figures—in the man's face, his overalls and shirt, and his pitchfork. The blank countenances and ambiguous relationship of the couple (man and wife, or brother and sister) contribute to a vague sense of the moribund.

Ohio's Charles Burchfield (1893–1967) is undoubtedly the master of the haunted house painting. He wrote in his journal in 1916 that houses are ''often more moody than nature. In the daytime they have an astonished look,

at dusk they are evil, seem to brood over some crime committed or begun.'' In ''The Night Wind'' (1917) the houses have central doorways like mouths, flanked by windows like eyes, and seem to be melting and screaming. The steeple in ''Church Bells Ringing, Rainy Winter Night'' (1917) evokes a mad bird, with a parrot-like beak below circular windows that resemble a lunatic's eyes. Dwellings in other paintings, such as ''House of Mystery'' (1924) and ''Sulphurous Evening'' (1922–1929), seem to have congealed into a sort of bilious, corpse-like dissolution. Other notable Burchfield haunted house images are seen in ''Rainy Night'' (1918), ''Cat-Eyed House'' (1918), and ''The Turn in the Road'' (1918).

Morris Kantor (1896–1974), a Russian-born American artist, painted ''Haunted House'' (1930) as a pendant to his ''Captain's House'' of the previous year. In a concept calling to mind the iconic *doppelgänger* trope of weird fiction, the two paintings echo one another—floral wallpaper, mantle, a picture of a ship under sail. But whereas ''Captain's House'' pictures a man sitting in a chair reading, ''Haunted House'' has replaced him with a portrait, the chair now vacant.

Achilles G. Rizzoli (1896–1981) worked as an architect's draughtsman in San Francisco. From 1935 to 1944, the eccentric Rizzoli produced a unique body of fantastic architectural renderings of absurdly ornate houses in grand Beaux-Arts style. Done in colored ink on rag paper, some drawings were intended as ''symbolic portraits'' depicting friends as buildings.

Joseph Mugnaini (1912–1992) created a classic haunted house image for the cover of Ray Bradbury's *The October Country* (1955). Three very vertical Second Empire houses recede into the distance from left to right, while a caped figure in the foreground leans left into the wind, its shape echoed by a leafless tree immediately behind it to the right. Mugnaini drew other Second Empire houses including ''Heritage Home in Pasadena,'' ''The House of Usher,'' ''Homecoming,'' and ''Touched with Fire.''

Charles Addams (1912–1988) was born and raised in Westfield, New Jersey, and it is believed that Second Empire homes on Dudley Avenue and Elm Street inspired the design of his famous mansard-roofed ''Addams Family house.''

undecided whether his "novel" is a metafiction, a spoof, or a phenomeno-logical essay on ontology.

A SELECTION OF HAUNTED HOUSE SHORT STORIES

Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe has the distinction of writing both the greatest haunted house short story ("The Fall of the House of Usher") and the greatest haunted

house poem ("The Haunted Palace"). But beyond these much-discussed creations, he used the haunted house powerfully elsewhere in his work.

"Metzengerstein" ([Philadelphia] *Saturday Courier*, January 14, 1832), though perhaps minor in the context of Poe's canon, is a tale of animistic possession and revenge that has a strange, perverse beauty about it. The decadent Baron Metzengerstein torches the rival Castle Berlifitzing, and the only apparent survivor is a strange, wild horse, "gigantic and fiery-colored" (137), captured by the Baron's servants. The Baron is unfazed: "perhaps a rider like Frederick of Metzengerstein, may tame even the devil from the stables of Berlifitzing" (138).

In Palace Metzengerstein, there is a tapestry that shows a horse in the foreground while in mid-frame its rider is knifed by a member of the Metzengerstein family. But when the Baron glances at it again, something has changed:

> To his extreme horror and astonishment, the head of the gigantic steed had, in the meantime, altered its position. The neck of the animal, before arched, as if in compassion, over the prostrate body of its lord, was now extended, at full length, in the direction of the Baron. The eyes, before invisible, now wore an energetic and human expression, while they gleamed with a fiery and unusual red; and the distended lips of the apparently enraged horse left in full view his sepulchral and disgusting teeth. (137)

The Baron takes the captured horse out for a ride in an attempt to break it; while he is gone his Castle catches fire. The servants go in haste to find him, and find him they do:

> Up the long avenue of aged oaks which led from the forest to the main entrance of the Palace Metzengerstein, a steed, bearing an unbonneted and disordered rider, was seen leaping with an impetuosity which outstripped the very Demon of the Tempest. The career of the horseman was indisputably, on his own part, uncontrollable. The agony of his countenance, the convulsive struggle of his frame, gave evidence of superhuman exertion: but no sound, save a solitary shriek, escaped from his lacerated lips, which were bitten through and through in the intensity of terror. One instant, and the clattering of hoofs resounded sharply and shrilly above the roaring of the flames and the shrieking of the winds—another, and, clearing at a single plunge the gate-way and the moat, the steed bounded far up the tottering staircases of the palace, and, with its rider, disappeared amid the whirlwind of chaotic fire. (142)

Soon after the fire and smoke suddenly and unaccountably subside. The building is enveloped in "a glare of preternatural light; while a cloud of smoke settled heavily over the battlements in the distinct colossal figure of—a horse" (142). Thus Poe concludes with a tip of the hat to the gigantic helmet in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.

J. Sheridan Le Fanu

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's best horror stories have a certain sensibility that is unique to the writer, and puts him in the first rank of the field. The sensibility is difficult to label—harrowing; demented; demoniacal; draconian; fiendish; maniacal; pitiless; relentless; ruthless; unmerciful. This is no aspersion on Le Fanu's character, but the highest praise as a writer of horror stories.

In "Ghost Stories of the Tiled House" (chapters 8 and 9 of *The House by the Churchyard*, 1863), a woman is literally scared to death in what may be the worst possible encounter of its kind:

> [S]he was kept awake all the night with the walking about of some one in the next room, tumbling about boxes and pulling over drawers and talking and sighing to himself, and she, poor thing, wishing to go asleep, and wondering who it could be, when in he comes, a fine man, in a sort of loose silk morning-dress, an' no wig, but a velvet cap on. . . . [O]ver he comes to the side of the bed, looking very bad, and says something to her—but his speech was thick and queer like a dummy's that id be trying to spake—and she grew very frightened, and says she, 'I ask your honour's pardon, sir, but I can't hear you right,' and with that he stretches up his neck nigh out of his cravat, turning his face up towards the ceiling, and—grace between us and harm!—his throat was cut across like another mouth, wide open and laughing at her; she seen no more, but dropped in a dead faint in the bed, and back to her mother with her in the morning, and she never swallied bit or sup more, only she just sat by the fire holding her mother's hand, crying and trembling, and peepin' over her shoulder, and starting with every sound, till she took the fever and died, poor thing, not five weeks after. (400–401)

That is Le Fanu at his most merciless. Even infants—as in "An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street" (1853) and "The Narrative of the Ghost of a Hand" (from *The House by the Churchyard* [1863])—are not spared Le Fanu's terrors.

In Le Fanu's "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh" (*Dublin University Magazine*, 1838), yet another demonic individual torments the protagonist. Le Fanu sets the tale in the fastnesses of the wooded mountains of County Limerick:

> There is one point at which the glen becomes extremely deep and narrow. . . . This spot was not unwisely chosen, as a point of no ordinary strength, for the erection of a massive square tower or keep, one side of which rises as if in continuation of the precipitous cliff on which it is based. Originally, the only mode of ingress was by a narrow portal in the very wall which overtopped the precipice, opening upon a ledge of rock which afforded a precarious pathway, cautiously intersected, however, by a deep trench cut with great labour in the living rock; so that, in its original state, and before the introduction of artillery into the art of war, this tower might have been

pronounced, and that not presumptuously, almost impregnable. . . . [T]he hall entrance had been for nearly fifty years disused as a mode of ingress to the castle. The situation of this gate . . . opening upon a narrow ledge of rock which overhangs a perilous cliff, rendered it at all times, but particularly at night, a dangerous entrance. This shelving platform of rock, which formed the only avenue to the door, was divided . . . by a broad chasm, the planks across which had long disappeared by decay. (341, 344)

Sir Robert, a fast-living gambler, is accompanied to horse races by "a certain strange-looking person . . . whose relation to Sir Robert was never distinctly ascertained." Sir Robert has an "extraordinary run of luck—a success which was supposed to result from the suggestions and immediate advice of the unknown [person]." Unfortunately, Sir Robert suffers from periodic "paroxysms of apparent lunacy": "He sometimes carried the indulgence of his evil dispositions to such a height that it bordered upon insanity. During these paroxysms he would neither eat, drink, nor sleep . . . sometimes he would, for hours together, walk to and fro . . . , with wild gesticulations and agitated pace, in the manner of one who has been roused to a state of unnatural excitement by some sudden and appalling intimation" (342–43).

One night the servants hear a quiet but persistent knocking upon the long disused hall entrance. After much vacillating they open the door to find "a low, square-built figure, apparently that of a man wrapped in a large black cloak. . . . [H]is dress appeared foreign, the skirt of his ample cloak was thrown over one shoulder; he wore a large felt hat, with a very heavy leaf, from under which escaped what appeared to be a mass of long sooty-black hair; his feet were cased in heavy riding-boots." The servant ascends to Sir Robert's room, but the latter merely stares at him in horror, asking: "In God's name, what are you?" Told that he has a visitor, "Sir Robert, starting on his feet and tossing his arms wildly upwards, uttered a shriek of such appalling and despairing terror that it was almost too fearful for human endurance; and long after the sound had ceased it seemed to the terrified imagination of the old servant to roll through the deserted passages in bursts of unnatural laughter." Daylight reveals the remains of Sir Robert "with hardly a vestige of a limb or feature left distinguishable" at the foot of the precipice outside the hall entrance—not immediately under it, "but dragged some way up the glen" (345–47).

Guy de Maupassant

"Who Knows?" (*Echo de Paris*, August 6, 1890) is a unique haunted house tale that is both horrifying and amusing in manner unique to Maupassant. The narrator explains that he is something of a loner and is very attached to his house, "a world in which I lived a solitary yet active life, surrounded by

familiar objects, furniture, and bibelots as lovable to me as the visages of human beings" (277). Returning at night from the theater, he feels uneasy as he approaches his house and hears a commotion. Then he realized what the noise is:

> What I could now hear was the extraordinary sound of steps coming down the stairway and on to the parquet and the carpets—the sound not of shoes or of human footwear but the clatter of wooden and iron crutches clashing like cymbals, or so it seemed. Suddenly, what should I see waddling over the threshold of my own room but the big armchair in which I used to sit to read. . . . followed in turn by low settees crawling crocodile-like along on their squat little legs. All my other chairs leapt out like goats, with footstools lolloping alongside. My piano, my full-size grand piano galloped widely past me with a musical murmur in its flank; the smallest objects such as hairbrushes and crystal chandelier droplets crawled like ants on the ground . . . curtains, hangings, tapestries spread like pools and stretched out octopus-like tentacles of fabric as they swam past.
>
> My desk hove into view. . . . I threw myself on it and held it down as if it had been a burglar or a woman attempting to flee. . . . I was thrown to the ground, then rolled over and dragged along the gravel. In no time, the rest of the furniture in its train began to trample all over me . . . (279–80)

This is one of the most "uncanny" passages in horror literature. The narrator is distraught at having lost his possessions and takes a vacation to a town quite a distance from his home. Browsing in antique stores, he spots some of his furniture in a store that appears to be unattended. Peering inside he sees lurking there "a very small man, phenomenally fat, and extremely ugly. He hd a meager, ill-trimmed, yellowing beard and not a hair on his head. . . . In his puffy face there were deep furrows into which his eyes had disappeared" (284). Inquiring with a local he is told that the man usually spends his evenings at the house of a neighbor—"a real old witch, the widow Bidouin" (285).

Unable to find the proprietor, the narrator returns to the store first thing the next day with the police. But there has been a change. "What I simply cannot understand," he says, "is that all the space taken up by my furniture is now filled completely with other stuff." Baffled, he returns home, where he is informed by his manservant that "last night something occurred here that no one, not even the police, can understand. . . . All the furniture has come back; all, without exception and down to the smallest article. The house is now exactly as it was on the day before the robbery. . . . The paths are all trampled over as though everything had been dragged from the gate to the front door" (286).

The story ends as the narrator concludes: "I could not go on living that way" (287) and commits himself to a psychiatric hospital.

Ralph Adams Cram

"In Kropfsberg Keep" (1895), by Ralph Adams Cram, tells of two young friends, Rupert and Otto, who are on a ghost-hunting excursion in Germany. The local people explain that in Castle Kropfsberg the two lower floors have fallen into the crypt, but the third floor remains. "The peasants said it could not fall, but that it would stay until the Day of Judgment, because it was in the room above that the wicked Count Albert sat watching the flames destroy the great castle and his imprisoned guests, and where he finally hung himself in a suit of armor that had belonged to his mediæval ancestor, the first Count Kropfsberg" (39). The keep, they say, is now haunted by Count Albert's ghost.

When the travelers arrive in the room, they find a canopied bed of black wood with rotting damask hangings, the bedclothing undisturbed, and a

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Around the long, narrow hall, under the fearful light that came from nowhere, but was omnipresent, swept a rushing stream of unspeakable horrors, dancing insanely, laughing, gibbering hideously; the dead of forty years. White, polished skeletons, bare of flesh and vesture, skeletons clothed in the dreadful rags of dried and rattling sinews, the tags of tattering grave-clothes flaunting behind them. These were the dead of many years ago. Then the dead of more recent times, with yellow bones showing only here and there, the long and insecure hair of their hideous heads writhing in the beating air. Then green and gray horrors, bloated and shapeless, stained with earth or dripping with spattering water; and here and there white, beautiful things, like chiselled ivory, the dead of yesterday, locked it may be, in the mummy arms of rattling skeletons. Round and round the cursed room, a swaying, swirling maelstrom of death, while the air grew thick with miasma, the floor foul with shreds of shrouds, and yellow parchment, clattering bones, and wisps of tangled hair. And in the very midst of this ring of death, a sight not for words nor for thought, a sight to blast forever the mind of the man who looked upon it: a leaping, writhing dance of Count Albert's victims, the score of beautiful women and reckless men who danced to their awful death while the castle burned. In a final blaze of vivid, intolerable light, in a burst of hellish music that might have come from Bedlam, Rupert stepped from the corridor into a vast and curious room where at first he saw nothing, distinguished nothing but a mad, seething whirl of sweeping figures, A prancing horror, dead some dozen years, perhaps, flaunted from the rushing river of the dead, and leered at Rupert with eyeless skull. "Dance!" Rupert stood frozen, motionless. "Dance!" His hard lips moved. "Not if the devil came from hell to make me." Count Albert swept his vast two-handed sword into the foetid air while the tide of corruption paused in its swirling, and swept down on Rupert with gibbering grins.

Ralph Adams Cram, "In Kropfsberg Keep"

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book, open and face downward, resting upon it. Among the other items in the room is a large hook on which "for twelve years, twelve long years of changing summer and winter, the body of Count Albert, murderer and suicide, hung in its strange casing of mediæval steel; moving a little at first, and turning gently while the fire died out on the hearth, while the ruins of the castle grew cold, and horrified peasants sought for the bodies of the score of gay, reckless, wicked guests whom Count Albert had gathered in Kropfsberg for a last debauch, gathered to their terrible and untimely death" (50). Hearing noises in the next room, Rupert opens the door and sees a ghastly costume-ball of corpse-dancers in various states of organic decay.

In the morning, "They found him kneeling beside the mattress where Otto lay, . . . quite dead" (52).

Algernon Blackwood

Algernon Blackwood's "The Empty House" (1906) is one of the most masterful examples of the haunted house short story, elegant in its simplicity and conciseness. Shorthouse is visiting his aunt, who has a penchant for, of all things, haunted houses. He agrees to accompany her in an overnight vigil. Nothing physically scary about this house—Blackwood makes it a point to note up front that the house is "precisely similar to its fifty ugly neighbours" (2). He then kindly tips us off to what is going to happen, by revealing the backstory at the beginning of the tale rather than at the end. There are rumors of "a murder committed by a jealous stableman who had some affair with a servant in the house. One night he managed to secrete himself in the cellar, and when everyone was asleep, he crept upstairs to the servants' quarters, chased the girl down to the next landing, and before anyone could come to the rescue threw her bodily over the banisters into the hall below" (5–6).

The story thus works its magic in the handling of the incidents and the succinct prose. As soon as Shorthouse and his aunt cross the house's threshold, the action begins. "A man had coughed close beside them—so close that it seemed they must have been actually by his side in the darkness" (10). They put it down to nerves. As they explore several floors and dozens of rooms in the abandoned dwelling, "something about the size of a cat jumped down with a rush and fled, scampering across the stone floor into the darkness" (15). Then, in the doorway of a room, they see "the figure of a woman. She had disheveled hair and wildly staring eyes, and her face was terrified and white as death." But they attribute this only to "the beastly jumping candlelight" (16). Shorthouse's candle goes out, but "before it was actually extinguished, a face thrust itself forward so close to his own that he could almost have touched it" (19).

Taking position in an upstairs room, they sense that "movement was going on somewhere in the lower regions of the house" and hear "the sound of feet, moving stealthily along the passage overhead" (24–25). Soon after comes a

booming noise that accompanies the shutting of heavy doors, followed by the sharp catching of a door latch. The narrator and his aunt go out into the landing to investigate, where they hear "a sound of rushing feet, heavy and very swift," as if "two persons, with the slightest possible interval between them, dashed past at full speed" (29). There are two sets of footsteps, light and heavy. The light tread is heard to enter into "the little room which Shorthouse and his aunt had just left. The heavier one followed. There was a sound of scuffling, gasping, and smothered screaming; and then out on to the landing came the step—of a single person treading weightily. . . . A dead silence followed for the space of half a minute, and then was heard a rushing sound through the air. It was followed by a dull, crashing thud in the depths of the house below—on the stone floor of the hall" (30).

W. F. Harvey

"The Ankardyne Pew" (1928) by W. F. Harvey is distinguished by a perverse sensibility that borders on the grotesque. The reverend narrator is moving into the vicarage at Ankardyne House, connected underground to a chapel with an unusual enclosed pew. The homeowner, Miss Ankardyne, is "seventy-five . . . with the graceful, alert poise of a bird" (152). She is a lover of animals, but poultry seem to fear her. She also suffers from an uncanny and intermittent burning pain of the eyes and tongue. Muffled voices, avain shrieks, and human screams of an anomalous character are heard. The narrator uncovers the story of one Francis Ankardyne, a hard-living ancestor whose hobby was cock-fighting. He had make a drunken challenge to a friend to match their birds; and leading his companion to the chapel, causes the cocks to fight in the enclosed pew. When his bird loses, he is so enraged he skewers the animal's eyes and mouth with a hot poker. "He then fell down in some form of apoplectic fit." Subsequently he suffers from an "impediment in his speech" such that "when he was enraged . . . [he] utter[ed] a sound like the crowing of a cock." Soon Ankardyne is killed by a fall from a horse that bolts, despite his rider's admonitions: "the noise that came from his throat only seemed to terrify his horse the more" (167).

M. P. Shiel

H. P. Lovecraft described M. P. Shiel's "The House of Sounds" (1896; rev. 1911) as "vaguely like, yet infinitely unlike, Poe's 'Fall of the House of Usher' " (56). On one level he was being kind: it is very much like "Usher." But on another level he was correct: the story earns the descriptive "unique." Again we have an eccentric, his sister, and an ancestral home about to disintegrate. The backstory of the house involves a familial curse, and the drip-drip-drip of a mechanism that gauges the time until the inescapable destruction of the house. But the genius of Shiel's story is the singularity of its setting

(a sub-arctic island near Norway) and its menace (the incessant din of wind and wave). Harfager, an old friend of the narrator, is compelled to live in a house haunted by eternal, deafening white noise. The narrator can see Harfager's lips moving, but can hear absolutely nothing of the words. Yet Harfager's hearing has grown so sensitive that he can hear the merest whisper. Those in the house are so engulfed by the sound that they cannot think—there exists neither past nor future, only an infinite present of cacophony.

Walter de la Mare

Walter de la Mare's "A Recluse" (1926) is a very strange story, and very strangely disturbing. The narrator, a Mr. Dash, out for a ride, pulls over to look at what appears to be an unoccupied house. But is it unoccupied? This will become the central question of the tale. Out steps Mr. Bloom. "He was an empty-looking man," thinks the narrator; "[I]f his house had suggested vacancy, so did he" (7). Mr. Dash finds that his car key is missing, and becomes annoyed to think that "this recluse [is] peppering me with futile advice" (10). But why does the narrator label Mr. Bloom a recluse? Given the way he tries to detain Mr. Dash, Mr. Bloom does not seem to be a recluse in the sense of "a person who avoids others."

Over dinner with his unwilling guest, Mr. Bloom alludes to his occult "experiments" with his departed colleague Mr. Champneys. The word "recluse" is originally from the Old French, "a person shut up from the world for purposes of religious meditation." So perhaps Mr. Bloom's religious meditation is upon the spirit world. Mr. Bloom hints that he and his late colleague have succeeded in summon up spirits. It is later implied that having arrived, these spirits have declined to depart. It is not just that Mr. Bloom's house is simply haunted—it is "infested" (27).

As for Mr. Champneys, his fate remains mysterious. He is described by Mr. Bloom as having had an "unusual flair" (13) for the occult. His bedroom remains, and Mr. Dash is to sleep there. When he awakens in the middle of the night, all is not well:

> [I]t was as if a certain aspect—the character of the room, its walls, angles, patterns, furniture, had been peculiarly intensified. Whatever was naturally grotesque in it was now more grotesque—and less real. Matter seldom advertises the precariousness imputed to it by the physicist. But now, every object around me seemed to be proclaiming its impermanence. . . . And then he heard voices speaking, echoing hollow in some distance of the house; one of the voices Mr. Bloom's, the other like it. (24–25)

"What made him so extortionately substantial, and yet in effect, so elusive and unreal?" (11), Dash had wondered at the outset. Mr. Bloom and his house are simultaneously solid and . . . the opposite of solid. Hollow? Empty?

In Late Latin, the sense of the word recluse is "to shut up, enclose," but in classical Latin, the sense of the word is "to throw open." So Mr. Bloom's state is indeterminate. He is indeed a recluse, one retired from the world—the physical world: "But on the pillow—the grey-flecked brown beard protruding over the turned-down sheet—now showed what appeared to be the head and face of Mr. Bloom.... It was a flawless facsimile, waxen, motionless; but it was not a real face and head. It was an hallucination. How induced is quite another matter" (26). Early in his conversation with Mr. Bloom, the narrator had quickly dismissed spiritualism as silly. By the end of his stay at the house, Mr. Dash sheepishly realizes that his position "seemed now to have been grotesquely inadequate" (27).

Ray Bradbury

Ray Bradbury created a poignant new variant of a haunted house in his story "There Will Come Soft Rains" (*Collier's*, May 6, 1950; included under the title "August 2026" in *The Martian Chronicles*, 1950). The house remains standing after a nuclear blast: "The entire west face of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick up flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him, a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down." Because it is mechanized, the house continues to go through its daily routine and undertake domestic maintenance tasks for the now-vaporized residents. "The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, servicing attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly." The house has a personality: "Nine-five [o'clock]. A voice spoke from the study ceiling: 'Mrs. McClellan, which poem would you like this evening?' The house was silent. The voice said at last, 'Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random.' Quiet music rose to back the voice. 'Sara Teasdale. As I recall, your favorite...'" (79).

However, this is the last day in the life of the house:

> Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had inquired, "Who goes there? What's the password?" and, getting no answer from lonely foxes and whining cats, it had shut up its windows and drawn shades in an old-maidenly preoccupation with self-protection which bordered on mechanical paranoia. It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house! (77)

But the wind knocks down a tree, which falls through a window and spills flammable liquid onto a hot surface. The house mobilizes and tries to fight the

fire with a battery of internal systems, but it cannot outpace the flames. Its last words are an infinitely looped playback: "Today is August 4, 2026."

Robert Aickman

Of Robert Aickman's contribution to the haunted house genre it is difficult to assess—he considered himself a writer not of supernatural horror but of "strange stories." His horror seems free-floating, it seems to have no locus— something required in a haunted house tale. In many stories a sense of unease slowly develops without anything actually "happening," or the supernatural emerges as the characters in the story are developed. In "Meeting Mr. Millar" (1975), which is about as close as Aickman comes to a haunted house story, the narrator explicitly addresses the issue at the outset: "I have faintly disguised the address because it is potentially libelous to designate a named house as haunted. I believe mine to be the narrative of a haunted man rather than of a haunted house" (2.94). The story tells of a young writer who becomes obsessed with a businessman, Mr. Millar, who has offices in the same building where the writer lives. The young man sees and hears peculiar and unaccountable things before he finally discovers Millar's corpse in the deserted office. No clarification regarding his death is provided.

Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh chose Aickman's "The School Friend" (1964) for inclusion in their *House Shudders* anthology. The female narrator Mel welcomes her school friend Sally Tessler back to town after a period of about two decades. Sally had returned for her father's funeral—she had been raised by him, her mother having passed away—and decided to stay. As a girl Sally was bright, beautiful, well groomed, and somewhat naïve—except that she seemed to know more about sex than the other girls. Mel thinks that even upon her return she looks "absurdly virginal" (1.76). Sally invites Mel over her father's house—the first time Mel has been inside. It is a mess, cluttered and filthy. Several days later Mel sees Sally in the market and the latter looks similarly disheveled. Then Sally is injured—"stepped right under a lorry" (1.79). The hospital matron asks Mel to go to Sally's home and fetch some items for use during her recovery there. Exploring the house, Mel finds massive padlocks securing heavy doors on all the interior rooms, a nursery with barred windows and dismembered stuffed animals, and a sort of stronghold in a back room fortified with stone masonry. On leaving she glimpses a figure in the window, partially turned away—pure white skin pulled tightly over the face, wisps of black hair, frock coat. Mel learns that Sally is pregnant. During Mel's next visit to the house she faints as footsteps approach, not knowing Sally has returned unexpectedly. When she regains consciousness, Sally is watching her, and the snuffling and clawing of an animal can be heard above. Sally looks gray and skeletal, and asks with a hysterical edge in her voice if Mel would like to see her child. Sally says: "It's possible for a child to be born in a manner you'd never dream of" (1.86).

Mel struggles with Sally and escapes. The implication is one of incest and miscegenation—or bestiality—or crossbreeding—or necrophilia. Whatever your choice, the story succeeds.

Ramsey Campbell

Ramsey Campbell has written innumerable fine short stories that may be classed as haunted house tales, though it is usually the person and not the place that is haunted in his work. The very early ''The Second Staircase'' (1973), a man forced to stay over at an old bed-and-breakfast retires in the wrong room, where he sees a spectral re-enactment of a murder. The much better ''Ash'' (1969) tells of a rented house that whose incessant accrual of grime is the legacy of an evil event that occurred long ago in the cellar. In ''The Proxy'' (1977), a gardener discovers the foundation of a bombed-out building in which a child has died but not left.

Thomas Ligotti

The work of the talented Thomas Ligotti, like than of Aickman and Campbell, is so subtle and enigmatic in terms of ''subject matter'' that it is

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Ten Unjustly Neglected Haunted House Tales

''The Last of Squire Ennismore'' (1888) by Mrs. J. H. Riddell. An evil squire who appropriated a cask of liquor from among the washed-up corpses of a ship-wreck finally polishes it off with a strange looking man. '' 'I'll go home with you to-night by way of a change,' says the Squire. 'Will you so?' asked the other,'' and together they walk straight into the sea.

''The Little Room'' (1895) by Madeline Yale Wynne. An charming variant of the well-worn ''morphing house'' concept used in M. R. James's ''Number 13,'' Stephen King's *Rose Red*, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, and many others; charming Aunt Hannah denies the sitting room has even been anything else but: '' '[Y]ou said the *china-closet* had always been here?' 'No,' said Hannah, pleasantly but unemotionally, 'no, I don't think you ever asked me about any china-closet.' ''

''The Ghost of Guir House'' (1897) by Charles Willing Beale. A man happens upon the shunned mansion of a savant and his daughter, all of which inhere *''only in the minds of those who perceive them, and upon whose plane they exist.''*

''The House That Was Not'' (1898) by Elia W. Peattie. A young wife trans-planted to an isolated ranch on the plains becomes so lonely she seeks out her neighbor's house on the horizon. ''It didn't appear to come any nearer, but

the objects which had seemed to be beside it came closer into view. . . . It faded and dimmed before her eyes.'' She learns from a rather imprecise local that woman who last lived there killed her family and herself and the house apparently burned down. '' 'You guess it burned!' 'Well, it ain't there, you know.' ''

''The House That Was Lost'' (1908) by Tom Gallon. A man returning home from an errand through an uncanny fog enters the wrong row home in his cul-de-sac, and interrupts a crime being committed by a being ''so villainously ugly that I had a thought that he was not a man at all, but some hideous thing out of a nightmare;'' later he is unable to identify the house or even whether it ever existed.

''The Other Bed'' (1908) by E. F. Benson. In a dismal hotel, room service brings the narrator a bottle of whisky he did not request. That night he awakes suddenly and sees ''the face of a man, sallow and shrunken, who lay in the other bed, staring at me with glazed eyes. . . . [H]is throat was cut from ear to ear; and the lower part of the pillow was soaked in blood, and the sheet streamed with it.'' The next day he finds no less than three dozen empty whisky bottles in a cabinet; the previous guest, it seems had cut his throat with a razor in an attack of delirium tremens.

Jimbo (1909) by Algernon Blackwood. Young James ''Jimbo'' Stone is exploring an empty house when he panics, thinking he is chased by some malevolent being. Knocked unconscious, he has a series of delirious dream visions, accounts of his aerial adventures beyond the house. The novel is neither fish nor fowl—neither a child's novel nor a horror story—but a unique fantasy with deep insight into the psychology of fear.

''The Bad Lands'' (1920) by John Metcalf. A man on vacation is repeatedly drawn toward a remote area of surreal, desolate sand dunes where stands a mysterious tower; the latter seems to take on weirdly human characteristics, including ''a jester whose best joke has fallen deadly flat'' and ''a jovial old gentleman laughing madly.'' At the last he not does re-emerge from this ''new kind of *terre-mauvaise*, of strange regions, connected, indeed, with definite geographical limits upon the earth, yet somehow apart from them and beyond them.''

''A Haunted House'' (1921) by Virginia Woolf. A brief, impressionistic piece about a ghostly man and woman—previous residents—who are pleased to find a new couple happily ensconced in their home, in love as they had been: ''The treasure yours.''

''The Virgin in the Rose-Bower; or, The Tragedy of Glen Mawr Manor'' (in *Mysteries of Winterthurn* [1984]) by Joyce Carol Oates. This gruesome tale speaks of the death of a newborn baby and the resulting insanity of its mother, apparently under the influence of a trompe-l'œil mural in the hotel room where they stayed and the five restive infant souls from the attic above.

difficult to parse out into categories. These are prose poems as much as tales. We may class as "haunted house stories" things like "Dr. Locrain's Asylum," "The Night School," "The Bungalow House," "The Red Tower," and "In the Shadow of Another World." The latter, in particular, has magnificent atmosphere worthy of Poe, set in a house that acts as sort of cosmic lens concentrating "*the stars and the shadows*" (298).

A SELECTION OF HAUNTED HOUSE POEMS

The little-known Madison Cawein (1865–1914) is actually one of our best poets of the haunted house, writing many poems of good quality on the subject. Unfortunately, Cawein wrote himself right out of the American literary cannon, producing more than thirty volumes of poetry and as many as 2,700 poems on diverse subjects. His sense of meter and rhyme is good; his imagination vivid, especially when dealing with nature; and he has a refreshing sense of fantasy.

In "Feud" a rural path leads

> With wrecks of windows, to a huddled house,
> Where men have murdered men.
> A house, whose tottering chimney, clay and rock,
> Is seamed and crannied; whose lame door and lock
> Are bullet-bored; around which, there and here,
> Are sinister stains.—One dreads to look around.—
> The place seems thinking of that time of fear
> And dares not breathe a sound.
> Within is emptiness: The sunlight falls
> On faded journals papering the walls;
> On advertisement chromos, torn with time,
> Around a hearth where wasps and spiders build. —
> The house is dead: meseems that night of crime
> It, too, was shot and killed. (222–23)

In Robert Frost's "The Witch of Coös" (named for a county in northern New Hampshire), the narrator relates the supernatural events told him by a witch when she grows tired of keeping a long-held secret: forty years past her late husband had killed the woman's lover and buried him under the house. Soon afterwards, says the witch, the skeleton locked in the cellar carried itself "like a pile of dishes" up two flights of stairs. When the woman first hears the bones walking up the cellar steps, she confronts them:

> So suddenly I flung the door wide on him.
> A moment he stood balancing with emotion,
> And all but lost himself. (A tongue of fire

> Flashed out and licked along his upper teeth.
> Smoke rolled inside the sockets of his eyes.)
> Then he came at me with one hand outstretched,
> The way he did in life once; but this time
> I struck the hand off brittle on the floor,
> And fell back from him on the floor myself.
> The finger-pieces slid in all directions. (190)

The bones, she says, proceed to the attic. Though he cannot see or hear them, the husband bolts the attic door as if to support her claim that the skeleton has chosen to go there. This recalls Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall Paper" in that is shows how the repression or restriction of women may compel them into exercises in irrationality.

The skeleton is also a symbol of frustrated sexuality caged in a house with a married couple: she says "I made him [her husband] nail the door shut, / And push the headboard of the bed against it" (191).

In "An Old Man's Winter Night" Frost posits a confused, lonely old man as the ghost of his own solitary home:

> And having scared the cellar under him
> In clomping there, he scared it once again
> In clomping off;—and scared the outer night,
> Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar
> Of trees and crack of branches, common things,
> But nothing so like beating on a box.
> A light he was to no one but himself
> Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what,
> A quiet light, and then not even that. (105–6)

Of all those who have written on the haunted house, Walter de la Mare may rank supreme, as he has done so well and so much in both prose and verse. De la Mare's "The Listeners," about a rider who gets no answer at his destination, is justly famous:

> But only the host of phantom listeners
> That dwelt in the lone house then
> Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
> To that voice from the world of men:
> Stood thronging the moonbeams on the dark stair,
> That goes down to the empty hall,
> Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
> By the lonely Traveller's call:
> And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
> Their stillness answering his cry,
> While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
> 'Neath the starred and leafy sky.

Among de la Mare's other haunted house poems are "Nostalgia," "The Bombed House," "The Dark Chateau," "The Empty House," "The Ghost," "The House," "The Last Guest," "The Others," "The Tower," and "The Vacant Farmhouse."

Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Haunted House" is in the sonnet form of which he is a master. It is about a house in which a woman was murdered with an axe, but the meter is awkwardly handled. Robinson does better in "The Dark House." In an ironic reversal the Dark House, whence it is desirable to escape, represents life. "Where a faint light shines alone, / Dwells a Demon I have known. / Most of you had better say / 'The Dark House,' and go your way. / Do not wonder if I stay." After describing the room, he makes note of "his friend" and others within "Who are striving to be wise / While a Demon's arms and eyes / Hold them as a web would flies." But "a music yet unheard" is soon to drift through: "Then the door will open wide, / And my friend, again outside, / Will be living, having died."

SELECTED HAUNTED HOUSE FILMS

The "old dark house" genre has its roots in Mary Roberts Rinehart's first bestseller, *The Circular Staircase* (1908). The novel was dramatized as *The Bat*, which was then filmed several times. Thie story is the source of much of the familiar apparatus of the genre: guests who unwillingly stay overnight because of a broken-down car or nocturnal storm, hidden corridors, sliding panels, spiral staircases, and unknown perils. *The Cat and the Canary* (1927), a silent film directed by the talented Paul Leni from the Broadway play of 1922 by John Willard, is supposed to be the archetypal "old dark house" movie, but it has dated badly. Guests are summoned to the house for the reading of the deceased millionaire's will, and strange things involving sliding panels and a masked maniac start happening. It is difficult to believe that the film was so popular it was remade only three years later. Today the most interesting thing about it is the uncannily resemblance between housekeeper Mammy Pleasant (Martha Mattox) and housekeeper Mrs. Dudley (Rosalie Crutchley) in *The Haunting* (1963). Eventually played out, the old dark house became the setting of comedies featuring the Three Stooges, Abbott and Costello, the Bowery Boys, and so on. Even Francis the Talking Mule had an adventure in a spooky dwelling in *Francis in the Haunted House* (1956), in which the mule (voiced by Chill Wills) saves his dim-witted human friend from some typical ghostly perils.

The best film adaptation of Poe to date is *La Chute de la maison Usher* (1928), directed by Jean Epstein with Luis Bunuel. It captures the spirit, if not the letter, of its text. Elements of "The Oval Portrait" have been woven in: the focus now not on the house but on Usher's relationship with Madeline (here, his wife rather than his sister). A physician and a manservant are added. As

Usher completes a painting of his ailing wife, her vitality wanes. She is put in the tomb (here, outside the house). During a lightening storm she returns from the grave to save her husband from the fire that is destroying the house. The tonality of the film is poetic; the vast interior sets, rooms with draperies billowing in slow motion, are beautiful. The casting is very credible. Unlike others, the film does not disfigure Poe's vision beyond recognition.

The Old Dark House (1932), though nonsupernatural, is one of the best of its genre. Based on the novel by J. B. Priestley (1927), it displays all the wit and style of director James Whale and a perfect cohort of character actors. Whale plays the talents of Ernst Thesiger (Horace Femm), Eva Moore (Rebecca Femm), and Boris Karloff (mute, violent butler Morgan) like a virtuoso. The supporting players—beautiful Gloria Stuart (Margaret), hale and hearty (and hammy) Charles Laughton (Sir William Porterhouse), happy-go-lucky Lillian Bond (Gladys DuCane, Porterhouse's "friend")—are also superb.

Whale's distinctive frame composition and cutting are again on display, best in a scene where Miss Femm accompanies Margaret upstairs to change out of her wet clothes. Eva Moore's character declines to leave as Stuart strips down to her lingerie and puts on a low-cut, floor-length white gown (Whale wanted her to be like a "candle flame" moving through the darkness of the house). Instead, Moore delivers a tour de force monologue about her mad family.

> My sister Rachel had this room once. She died when she was twenty-one. She was a wicked one—and wild as a hawk. All the young men used to follow her about, with her red lips and her big eyes and her white neck. But that didn't save her. She fell off her horse hunting—hurt her spine. On this bed she lay, month after month. Many the time I sat here listening to her screaming. She used to cry out to me to kill her, and I'd tell her to turn to the Lord. But she didn't. She was godless to the last. They were all godless here. They used to bring their women here, brazen lolling creatures in silks and satins. They filled the house with laughter and sin, laughter and sin. If I ever went down among them, my own father and brother, they would tell me to go away and pray. They wouldn't tell Rachael to go away and pray. I prayed, and left them with their lustful red and white women.... You're wicked too—young and handsome, silly, and wicked. You think of nothing but your long straight legs and your white body and how to please your man. You revel in the joys of fleshly love, don't you?...[Touching Margaret's dress:] That's fine stuff, but it'll rot. [Touching Margaret's chest:] That's finer stuff still, but it'll rot too, in time.

Miss Femm leaves the room—pausing briefly to arrange her hair in the mirror. Whale then recapitulates the crazed speech with multiple jump cuts of Femm reflected in a broken, distorted mirror—interspersed with two tight close-ups of Morgan's face in shadow—as Femm's words echo in Margaret's head: "laughter and sin . . . laughter and sin." It is among the most effective scenes in any "haunted house" film.

As the mad brother Saul descends the staircase, we first see just a hand on the rail; but there appears not a monster but a slight, rather timid man. At first he begs for sympathy and help, but then suddenly flips: "I want to tell you a story, heh heh heh. . . . Are you interested in flame? I've made a study of flame. I know things about flame nobody else in the world knows. . . . Flames are knives—but they're cold, my friend, sharp and cold as snow." He succeeds in setting fire to the house, but all the guests survive. (Priestley's hero, Pendrell, dies in the book, but not in the film.)

The lost print of *The Old Dark House* was rediscovered in the early 1970s, but copyright problems kept it from being screened on television until 1994. It ranks with Whale's best horror films, *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *The Invisible Man* (1933).

One must marvel at Boris Karloff's acting talent when contrasting his performance as the brute Morgan with the diametrically opposite sophisticated Hjalmar Poelzig two years later in *The Black Cat* (1934). Directed by Edgar G. Ulmer, this film was the first screen pairing of the great Karloff (architect/satanist Hjalmar Poelzig) and Bela Lugosi (Dr. Vitas Verdegast). When his train derails, Verdegast assist a married couple to shelter in Poelzig's ultramodern house.

Years earlier, Poelzig had betrayed his country and provided information to the enemy that caused the death of some 10,000 soldiers, and the imprisonment of Verdegast. Poelzig then built his Bauhaus-inspired glass and steel house on the ruins of the battle site, stole Verdegast's wife, and subsequently married her daughter when she died. He also worked becoming a satanist into his busy schedule. Verdegast is back for revenge, and plays a game of chess for the visiting woman's life as sacrifice in a satanic ritual. Poelzig wins the game, but Verdegast overcomes him and flays him alive in the dungeon as the fort beneath the house explodes. The movie is truly bizarre—perverse, sadistic, and manic, with fascinating Expressionist touches. Karloff takes Lugosi on a tour of the modernized subcellar in which his past lovers are suspended in glass. The sequence is accompanied by a classic voice-over monologue by Karloff ("Are we not both, the living dead?") to the somber strains of Tchaikovsky.

The Innocents (1961), a powerful and polished adaptation of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, is a period piece shot in black and white. Everything in the film seems so charming, elegant, and wholesome—the house, grounds, and the people are so attractive—that when the evil enters it is heightened by contrast. The film is well shot, often using tight, tracking close-ups shots of governess Miss Giddens (superbly played by Deborah Kerr) from slightly below; these then contrasting with static, steeply tilted shots up towers or down stairways. The first appearance of the evil valet Peter Quint—his face emerging out of the dark outside a glass door and coming within inches—is a memorable moment. The child actors—Pamela Franklin (age 11)

and Martin Stephens (age 12, but already a seasoned villain from his lead role in *Village of the Damned* [1960])—are remarkable.

The Legend of Hell House (1973), like *The Haunting* and *The Innocents*, was made in England, but it has an American tough-mindedness about it lacking in either of its predecessors. This reflects the sensibility of its author—Richard Matheson, who adapted the screenplay from his novel *Hill House*. It also differs from the others in that was filmed in color, is paced at a refreshingly brisk clip, and is leavened with more explicit sex and violence.

In this scenario, a wealthy businessman has acquired Belasco House and employs three specialists for one week to determine—for his own edification—whether the afterlife exists. Belasco was a decadent involved in everything unwholesome you can think of, and threw wild revels for his friends. After one such fete in 1927, twenty-eight guests were found dead. Eight more have died in subsequent attempts to analyze the abandoned dwelling, Belasco having disappeared.

Dr. Chris Barrett, physicist and skeptic, brings along his wife Anne to cover the scientific angle, while psychically sensitive Florence Tanner and physical medium Ben Fischer look out for the supernatural. Florence Tanner becomes convinced that the evil spirit of Belasco is controlling many other ghostly entities in the house. One of these is the shade of his son Daniel, who begins to communicate with Florence and begs for her help to be released from the house. But Florence's psychic perceptions end up to be a trick played by Belasco himself—it is his immensely powerful shade alone that can make anything occur in the house. And things do indeed occur, in a much more physically threatening manner than prior films—glass breaks, tables are lifted, objects fly through the air, flame jumps from a fireplace.

In a connection that causes shudders of its own, cute-as-a-button eleven-year-old Pamela Franklin of *The Innocents* reappears here, now as a twenty-three-year-old, to portray spirit medium Florence Tanner. Roddy McDowall is effective as Fischer, the doom-saying medium still emotionally damaged from a prior psychic experience at Belasco House.

The Shining (1980) was among top grossing films of 1980, and for good reason. By now the plot is well known to most: Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson), with his wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall) and psychic son Danny (Danny Lloyd) in tow, takes a job as the winter caretaker at the remote Overlook Hotel in the hope that the isolation will help him be more productive a writer. A prior caretaker has slain his family and himself at the hotel—something perceived as insignificant by Jack. Jack sets up his "office" in an immense central room, but finds it difficult to concentrate. Danny senses the spiritual unrest around him as he explores the labyrinthine house.

Jack, unable to write, frequents the hotel bar and becomes increasingly unpredictable and threatening. Danny is plagued by progressively more horrifying visions of the hotel's past. Aided by Danny's psychic soul mate

who races to the hotel when he has a premonition of trouble, Wendy and Danny kill Jack. But the final scenes imply that Jack has a ghoulish connection with the hotel of long standing, and will continue to do so.

Nicholson seems born to play his character, and provides a powerful frisson with his trademark fervid blend of lunacy and levity. The result is a chilling set piece of physical, emotional, and spiritual violence, with tragic overtones of regarding the ills of child abuse and alcoholism.

Kubrick exploits Steadicam technology for long, fluid shots that follow Danny cruising endless hallways on his Big Wheel tricycle, and for Wendy and Danny's windings through a huge topiary maze on the property. His intense but emotionally detached style with the camera—a willingness to listen intently in silence and look fear full in the face—makes the Overlook a dreadful locus of profoundly physical and emotional disorientation. Few scenes as simple as the title sequence—a long aerial tracking shot of Jack's car traveling the mountain road to the Overlook—have generated so much suspense using so little. The powerful score was composed by Wendy Carlos and Rachel Elkind, and featured compositions by Krzysztof Penderecki (The Awakening of Jacob; Utrenja—Ewangelia; Utrenja—Kanon Paschy; De Natura Sonoris Nos. 1 and 2; Polymorphia), György Ligeti (Lontano), and Béla Bartók (Music For Strings, Percussion and Celesta [movement III]).

Kubrick eliminated certain supernatural episodes from novel and changed the ending; apparently Stephen King was unhappy with the result. Consistent with King's critical sensibility in general, the Kubrick film is now widely considered a masterwork, while King's own 1997 TV remake is widely considered a failure.

The Changeling (1980) has a reputation for being among the best of haunted house movies, though it is difficult to see how anyone would class it with *The Haunting* or *The Innocents*. The wife and daughter of classical musician John Russell (George C. Scott) are killed in a car accident. Russell attempts to carry on by relocating to Seattle and teaching, and finding a quiet place to rest and compose. Referred by a local Historical Society to older homes, he purchases a large dwelling in a remote rural district. With new inspiration, Russell composes an uncharacteristically delicate piece for piano. Scouting around the house seeking the source of strange noises, he finds a hidden room in the attic with an old juvenile wheelchair. Also in the room is a music box that plays the self-same melody he has just written. A medium holds a séance. They find that a man had drowned his own enfeebled son upstairs in a bathtub, replacing him with a long-lived boy whose condition would help ensure his receipt of an inheritance. This boy has grown up to become a politician who does not want the matter revealed.

To its credit, the film does not lean on violence or bloodshed for its effects, but uses sounds and visual cues (like ball suddenly bouncing down a set of steps). But the overall feel—the way the scenes are staged, lighted, filmed, and cut—is that of a made-for-TV movie. Though many ghost stories have used

children in a very moving manner, the idea of crippled-lad-in-wheelchair-drowned-in-bath-by-dad turns pathos into bathos. The person who cast George C. Scott for the role of a sensitive classical pianist might have recommended Noel Coward to portray General George Patton. One redeeming feature is that Senator Carmichael is played by none other than Melvyn Douglas—wearing the same pencil-thin moustache he wore half a century earlier when as Roger Pendrell in the immortal The Old Dark House he learned from Saul Femm that "flames are knives."

Poltergeist (1982) familiarized the world with the concept of the "noisy ghost," as well as creating an annoying catch phrase ("They're heeeere!"). This movie was among top grossing films of 1982, in a market hungry for the next Stephen Spielberg special-effects blockbuster in the line of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Here we have the suburban Freeling family: dad, mom, sixteen-year-old daughter, eight-year-old son, and five-year-old daughter. Strange events begin to occur—freak storms hit, the pet canary keels over, and most seriously, the youngest daughter starts talking to the television and is eaten by a closet. Dad consults a parapsychologist from a nearby college, who in turn sends for reinforcements in the form of a kooky clairvoyant-exorcist. The b-list cast—Craig T. Nelson (of TV's "Coach"), JoBeth Williams (of TV's "The Guiding Light"), Beatrice Straight (of TV's "Wonder Woman"), and Zelda Rubinstein (of TV's "Picket Fences")—is difficult to watch, and the scares are few and far between.

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LE JUIF ERRANT.

The Immortal

by Brian Stableford

INTRODUCTION

Awareness of inevitable death is one of the most awkward aspects of human self-consciousness; the consequent *angst* is the fundamental condition of human existence, in the reckoning of existentialist philosophy. The prospect of avoiding death forever seems, therefore, to be more suited to hopeful wish-fulfillment fantasy than the darker kinds of supernatural fiction. Religious

believers committed to the idea of an eternal afterlife are, however, well aware that the notion can only function as a reward if the afterlife in question can be spent in an analogue of Heaven; if it has to be spent in Hell it becomes the ultimate deterrent. Reincarnation only functions as a reward if the fleshy envelope to come is preferable to the one presently occupied.

The attractiveness of the prospect of Earthly immortality—or of any degree of unusual longevity—is similarly dependent on one's assessment of the lodgings, both in terms of the utility of the carcass in which one has to spend eternity, and in terms of the pleasantness or otherwise of the surroundings. Literary images vary quite sharply in their estimates, especially on the first count. Optimistic images of hypothetical longevity envisage a corporeal habitation secure in the prime of life, permanently free of serious injury and chronic disease. One of several pessimistic alternatives imagines the infinite durance of worsening decrepitude, without the prospect of release or remission. The notion is illustrated by the Hellenic myth of Tithonus, the brother of the Trojan king Priam, who was granted immortality by the gods in response to the prayers of Eos, but did not obtain immunity to the aging process, and could only find release from eternal misery in being transformed into a cicada.

Other pessimistic alternatives are equally cruel. The prospect of life as an immortal babe-in-arms, a cripple, or a leper is just as unattractive as infinitely protracted dotage; it does not require much expertise in statistics to observe that random immortality would prolong far more miserable lives than happy ones. Given the manner in which human life is generally lived, it is perhaps surprising that there have not been more literary polemicists like T. F. Powys, whose religious fantasies routinely argued that the only credible argument for forgiving God the crime of Creation is that he has provided an inviolable escape clause.

Powys's *Unclay* (1931)—in which "John Death" is temporarily prevented from taking any further action—is more elegiac fantasy than horror story; its horrific component is an observation of extraordinary human sadism, to which only Death can bring a merciful end. The folktale whose most familiar modern version is the 1939 movie of L. E. Watkin's novel *On Borrowed Time* (1937), in which Death has to plead for release when he is trapped in a magical apple tree, takes an equally dim view of the prospect of a world in which all living things are immortal, as does S. Fowler Wright's *conte philosophique* "The Rat" (1929), but such sweeping condemnations are rare. The vast majority of treatments of the theme are confusedly ambivalent.

Literary attitudes to the prospect of human immortality are confused by the fact that the prerogative of death-avoidance, as represented in myth, legend, and folklore, is promiscuously gifted to non-human individuals, while human beings are virtually defined as "mortals." Although gods and various fairy folk tend to be very variable in form and moral character, it is extremely rare for them to be credited with the least pang of regret for their immortality; it is simply their natural condition, which they take for granted. The same does not apply to humans, whose extreme reluctance to take mortality for granted

is coupled with an intense paranoia regarding the unreliability of any gift of longevity, proffered or received.

Folklore is rich in such devices as the fountain of youth and the elixir of life, by means of which vulgar nature can be cheated; both devices usually involve judicious rejuvenation, the former by definition, but their discoverers rarely get much joy from their use. Such devices are routinely represented as objects of obsession, worthy of a whole lifetime's endeavor as a tireless expeditionary or a reclusive alchemist, but the suspicion always haunts such fantasies that the objective will turn out to be a poisoned chalice, a bunch of sour grapes, or the prelude to some horrid reversal of fortune. This anxiety is easily translatable into horror fiction, and it is therefore unsurprising that the iconography of the immortal in supernatural fiction is deeply troubled.

Attitudes to the idea of immortality are further confused by the fact that consciousness very easily falls prey to the delusion that its essence is merely a passenger in the flesh, which ought to be able, even if it is not actually destined, to move on when the body fails. This prospect too is afflicted by profound anxieties. The rich tradition of afterlife fantasy is far richer in images of Hell and its purgatorial subsidiaries than it is in images of Heaven, partly because it is so very difficult to imagine a Heaven that ex-mortals would really find pleasant, or even bearable. The standard summary formula of an uplifting narrative ending is ''and they lived happily ever after,'' but the extreme rarity of detailed accounts of how that might be done is not entirely attributable to the insatiable narrative thirst for melodrama and dramatic tension. The principal problem that arises in using unearthly immortality as a reward for the virtuous in literary works is not that it is incredible—most narrative rewards are improbable in the extreme—but that its promise is nebulous and implicitly treacherous by comparison with property, money, or even marriage.

Most wish-fulfillment fantasies turn into cautionary tales sooner or later, because one of their key functions is to issue warnings against the vanity of human wishes. The powerful psychological attractiveness of the notion of immortality is sufficient guarantee in itself of a profoundly ironic and tacitly hostile press in folklore and literature alike, but further complications arise because immortality is quite unlike other, more easily measurable, wishes. Its essential vagueness and limitless scope render it uniquely vulnerable to ironic corrosion and perverse subversion—but a similar uncertainty afflicts the arguments leveled against it. The combination of these effects ensures that folkloristic and literary assaults on the utility of immortality or unusual longevity are often unclear and unconvincing, even when they are not flagrantly irrational.

TEDIOUS PUNISHMENTS AND ACCURSED WANDERERS

Classical mythology is rich in images of unbearable immortality. As punishment for delivering the metaphorical fire of the gods (technology) to

humankind, Prometheus was sentenced to be chained to a rock for all eternity; every morning an eagle was sent to tear open his breast and eat his liver, and every night that organ would grow again so that the torture might be repeated on the following day. The story became the subject of one of the most indignant Greek tragedies, although the two elements that once preceded Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* in the trilogy have been lost. *Prometheus Bound* is a particularly poignant story, from the viewpoint of a human audience, because Prometheus is not condemned for any selfish act of greed or violence, but for his altruism in enabling humankind to make mortal existence a little more comfortable.

Other torments inflicted in Greek myths are slightly gentler, but similar in their repetitive quality. Ixion, who invited a creditor to dinner and caused him to fall into a fiery pit, was bound to a wheel that was set to roll forever round and round the underworld's perimeter. Tantalus betrayed secrets confided to him by Zeus, and was placed in the shallows of a lake whose waters receded every time he lowered his head to drink, beneath a fruit-laden branch that similarly retreated out of reach whenever he reached upwards. Sisyphus, the details of whose bad character and dissolute life remain uncertain, was condemned to roll a rock up a hill, which always rolled back down again as soon as it reached the summit. The common factor in all these afflictions is not pain but tedium, in recognition of the fact that one might grow accustomed to ceaseless agony, but not to the sheer relentless of an eternity without opportunity. The ultimate enemy, in this existential philosophy, is not boredom but frustration—the frustration that converts passive *ennui* into seething *spleen*.

It is not surprising that Christian legendry, born out of the ideological ashes of Graeco-Roman culture, wrought a complex fusion of the Hellenic attitude to the prospect of human longevity with the Judaic attitude intrinsic to the Old Testament. The Hebrew scriptures have no more to say about the prospect of earthly immortality than they have about the possibility of an afterlife—although they wax lyrical on the subject of the longevity of the patriarchs—but Jewish legend was not so closely confined. The most notable recipient of legendary immortality was Cain, whose punishment consisted in being cursed to wander eternally, without any possibility of settlement, by virtue of a stigmatizing mark that made his fellow men recoil from him in horror.

It is from these tangled roots that the establishment of the immortal as an icon of supernatural fiction mostly proceeded, although the myth of Tithonus also played its part, its most famous literary extrapolation being the depiction of the Struldbrugs of Luggnagg in Jonathan Swift's *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World in Four Parts...by Lemuel Gulliver* (1726), better known as *Gulliver's Travels*, which offers a calculatedly unappealing account of the tribulations of an inconclusive old age. By the time Swift's satire appeared, however, a rich literature had already grown up in Europe in

When they came to fourscore years, which is reckoned the extremity of living in this country, they had not only all the follies and infirmities of other old men, but many more, which arose from the dreadful prospect of never dying. They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative, but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural affection, which never descended below their grandchildren. Envy, and impotent desires, are their prevailing passions. But those objects against which their envy seems principally directed, are the vices of the younger sort, and the deaths of the old. By reflecting on the former, they find themselves cut off from all possibility of pleasure; and whenever they see a funeral they lament and repine that others are gone to a harbour of rest, to which they themselves never can hope to arrive. They have no remembrance of anything but what they learned and observed in their youth and middle age, and even that is very imperfect; and for the truth or particulars of any fact it is safer to depend on common traditions, than upon their best recollections. The least miserable among them appear to be those who turn to dotage, and entirely lose their memories; these meet with more pity and assistance, because they want many bad qualities which abound in others. . . .

At ninety, they lose their teeth and hair: they have at that age no distinction of taste, but eat and drink whatever they can get, without relish or appetite; the diseases they were subject to still continuing, without increasing or diminishing.

Jonathan Swift, Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World
in Four Parts . . . by Lemuel Gulliver

which the immortal—or, at least, one particular immortal—was held up for the specific purpose of inspiring horror-stricken awe.

Given that the Israelites were a nomadic tribe who decided to settle down—whose religion was therefore obsessed with the divine allocation of, and their eventual acquisition of tenure in, a land flowing with milk and honey—it is perfectly understandable that the punishment inflicted on Cain should be the curse of eternal restlessness. It is equally understandable, in consequence, that Christian legend's archetypal image of the Jew who refuses to accept Christ as the messiah should be the *Wandering* Jew, cursed to roam the world until the opportunity might arise to settle his account. It was the Wandering Jew who became the most important image of immortality in Christian fiction, although opinions as to his original identity were somewhat various.

George K. Anderson's comprehensive account of *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* asserts that the legend first began to circulate in written form in the thirteenth century, although it presumably flourished as an item of oral tradition for some time before then, and there is an earlier reference in a sixth-century manuscript. In some versions of the legend the Wandering Jew is apparently Judas, in accordance with a scriptural warrant provided by John 21:20–22, in

which Peter, having heard "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John) ask Jesus who would betray him, adds "And what shall this man do?" Jesus replies: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." The next verse of the gospel comments that the disciples took this to mean that John would not die, but suggests that they were mistaken—thus encouraging the inference that it would be Jesus' betrayer who would tarry indefinitely.

Another version of the legend took its inspiration from John 18:22, which states that when Jesus was questioned by the high priest after being arrested in the garden, one of the officers who had brought him slapped him. The thirteenth-century legend of the Wandering Jew is a descendant of this version; a Latin chronicle from Bologna dating from 1223 tells of a Jew encountered by pilgrims in Armenia, who had taunted Jesus as he was going to his martyrdom and was told "I shall go, but you will await me until I come again." Since then, the Jew in question had been rejuvenated, to the apparent age of thirty, at hundred year intervals. Shortly afterwards, the English monk Roger of Wendover, one of a sequence of writers working at the Benedictine monastery at St. Albans, claimed that his monastery had been visited by an Armenian archbishop, who was questioned on the subject of rumors about an immortal man. The archbishop replied that he had actually met the man in question, who had been a hall-porter in the service of Pontius Pilate, named Cartaphilus. Cartaphilus had struck Jesus as he was being removed to be crucified, urging him to move faster, whereupon he was condemned to wait until Jesus returned.

Roger of Wendover's account was reproduced by his successor as chronicler at St. Albans, Matthew Paris, who augmented later versions with endorsements by other supposed witnesses who had visited or come from Armenia. Matthew's versions of the St. Albans chronicle were copied and distributed abroad, but their early distribution was subject to the limitations of the manuscript medium; the advent of printing allowed its proliferation on a larger scale. It was translated into German for a printed version in the 1580s, at a time when plague was running riot in parts of Germany.

In 1602, fifteen years after the publication of the pamphlet that popularized the legend of Faust, a pamphlet performing a similar function for the Wandering Jew appeared; both items were elements of an *angst*-ridden flood of popular Millenarian literature anticipating an imminent apocalypse. The 1602 pamphlet calls the Wandering Jew Ahasuerus, claiming that he had been a shoemaker in Jerusalem who cried out in anger when Jesus, carrying his cross, had stopped for a moment to rest against the wall of his house. Its contents were very widely reprinted, translated and paraphrased, continually bolstered— after the manner of modern urban legends—with news of more recent and local sightings of the immortal wanderer.

The German legend acquired a new lease of life during the German Romantic Movement. J. W. von Goethe planned to make Ahasuerus the subject

of an epic poem, to complement his *Faust*, but found the project even more difficult to complete, only producing a few fragments of the projected poem in 1774–1775. Christian Schubart similarly set out to produce an epic that he never completed, but a section of it published in 1783 was widely circulated and translated, helping to inspire further exercises in the same vein. Schubart's wanderer has often been driven by his misery to seek death, but even though he has thrown himself into the mouth of a volcano he has been unable to find oblivion. Later Romantic writers produced dozens of further versions, whose profusion inevitably gave rise to many new variations. Clemens Brentano added an element of quest fantasy by promising the wanderer release if he could locate a series of magical artifacts, while other German works credited Ahasuerus with an assortment of superhuman powers to increase the dramatic potential of his interventions in present-day events. Sometimes he appeared as a Satanic figure of menace, but in other works he played the hero, his struggle against his fate becoming a noble attempts to claim and assert human rights in the face of divine persecution.

THE POPULARIZATION OF THE WANDERING JEW

The German pamphlet of 1602 was translated into French in 1605, and a *complainte*—a lyric lament—was attached to reprints from 1609 onwards. The *complainte* spawned numerous descendants, the most important of which was a Belgian version recounting an alleged sighting of Ahasuerus in Brussels on April 22, 1774. This "Brabantine ballad" was spread far and wide throughout France by means of an *image d'Épinal*: a pictorial print illustrating the Jew's confrontation with the burghers of Brussels, captioned by the twenty-four stanzas of the ballad. Another lyric composed in 1831 by Pierre de Béranger, initially intended to be sung to a familiar tune, was provided with new music by Charles Gounod. Béranger's poem was given a further lease of life in 1856, in an expanded version illustrated by a series of woodcuts by Gustave Doré. In the meantime, the literary career of the Wandering Jew took vast strides in France.

The Wandering Jew became a popular figure in theatrical melodramas, but was elevated to a higher level of literary significance in Edgar Quinet's *Ahasvérus* (1834), an epic verse drama that presented an entire history of the world, with a frame narrative set in Heaven 3,000 years after the Day of Judgment. Quinet's eponymous protagonist is equipped with an immortal horse, and is eventually joined by an angel named Rachel, who has been expelled from Heaven because she has taken pity on him; their eventual marriage is followed by a witches' sabbath held in Strasbourg Cathedral. In the futuristic fourth act—which offers an account of the apocalypse very different from the Revelation of St. John—Ahasuerus becomes representative

of all mankind in facing divine judgment. (In the epilogue that concludes the frame narrative, God dies in His turn and His limited Creation is swallowed by the abyss of cosmic time.)

Quinet's symbolic Wandering Jew was like none that had gone before, and bore little enough resemblance to any that were to come after him, but he was the immediate inspiration of two spectacular attempts to adapt the character to popular fiction: Eugène Sue's *Le juif errant* (1844–1845) and Alexandre Dumas's *Isaac Laquedem* (1853). Sue's was by far the more successful; *Le juif errant*'s serialization in a daily newspaper, following directly after the ground-breaking success of *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–1843; trans. as *The Mysteries of Paris*), firmly established the credentials of popular fiction as a circulation-builder and medium of mass entertainment. Dumas intended *Isaac Laquedem* to be his masterpiece, begun in the heady years following the Revolution of 1848, to whose ideals he was firmly committed. Unfortunately, its serialization was rudely interrupted Louis Napoleon's censors following the *coup d'état* of 1851. Like Sue, Dumas was exiled from Paris; although he took advantage of an amnesty to return, he was not permitted to resume work on *Isaac Laquedem*—the extant text only offers tantalizing hints of the nature and extent of the panoramic view of European history that Dumas had in-tended his protagonist to provide.

Sue's Wandering Jew makes only fleeting appearances in the text; rather than representing all mankind he is symbolic of the specific predicament of the working class; he is provided by a female counterpart, Herodias—the wife of Herod who procured the death of John the Baptist, as related in Matthew 14:3–12—who symbolizes the plight of women in a male-dominated world. The curse of restlessness that afflicts them is augmented by a further penalty, in that wherever Ahasuerus goes, plague follows. His attempts to pass on a fortune (accumulated by the effects of compound interest over the centuries) to the descendants of a man who one befriended him are eventually damned—after more than half a million words of pettier frustrations—by the fact that his presence brings cholera into Paris, with devastating effects on the poor and downtrodden.

Dumas presumably read Sue's novel, and decided to make his Wandering Jew as different from Sue's as he could. His character is literal rather than symbolic, and his story includes a long biography of Jesus. Once the curse has been pronounced on the eponymous antihero, however, the story takes off in a very different direction. Isaac takes up with the neo-Pythagorean philoso-pher Apollonius of Tyana, who had acquired a posthumous reputation as a magician and miracle-worker by virtue of an extremely fanciful account of his life by Philostratus. Dumas's Apollonius, in company with Isaac, encoun-ters various witches, and their journey becomes progressively more phantas-magoric as they recruit the aid of a sphinx to seek out Prometheus, then raise the spirit of Cleopatra from her tomb—at which point the narrative breaks off.

The third-ranking member of the company of *feuilletonists*, after Dumas and Sue, was Paul Féval, who doubtless felt obliged to produce his own Wandering Jew story, making sure that his was different from both of theirs. He re-emphasized the differences by making his version a comedy rather than a melodrama. Initially serialized as *Vicomte Paul* (1864; a.k.a. *La Fille du juif errant*; trans. as *The Wandering Jew's Daughter*), it pays wry homage to the proliferation of images by introducing an entire company of Wandering Jews. Féval's Ahasuerus is a more orthodox figure than Sue's or Dumas's equivalents, but his sufferings do not prevent him operating as a kind of superhero, locked in combat with his eternally unrepentant adversary, Ozer. The other immortal wanderers featured in the novella are accumulated from various fragments of legend and literature, and from reports of impostors who claimed to be the Wandering Jew—who were not uncommon in the nineteenth century.

The Wandering Jew made headway in high culture as well as popular culture—an opera was premièred in Paris in 1852, with music by Fromental Halévy and a libretto by Eugène Scribe and Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges—but it was the extensions of the legend in popular fiction that stressed the horror of his plight most fervently. That horror was, however, usually intended to arouse sympathy; straightforward figures of menace cast in the mold of Féval's Ozer were rare. The accursed wanderer of French popular culture was, in effect, a counterpart to Christ, embodying the old saying that if one cannot be a shining example, one can always serve, with similar effect, as a horrible warning. Because the horrific aspects of his plight were used to evoke sympathy, the Wandering Jew was usually redeemed by his literary employers; Sue eventually delivered him conclusively from his punishment, as Quinet had, and Dumas probably intended to. Even Féval allowed him the consolation of putting an approximate date to the termination of his—and humankind's—trial by ordeal.

A similar but patchier process of popularization occurred in England, where the Wandering Jew was adopted into the flourishing genre of Gothic romance. He plays a cameo role in Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), in which he exorcizes the malevolent spirit of the Bleeding Nun by means of the image of a burning cross emblazoned on his forehead. Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote a verse soliloquy on his behalf in 1810 and further popularized the legend's substance in *Queen Mab* (1813) and "Hellas" (1822). Henry Neele's "The Magician's Visiter" must have been written in the same period, although its first publication remains obscure. George Croly's novel *Salathiel* (1827; a.k.a. *Tarry Thou Till I Come*) used the character as a witness to history, tracking his exploits from the pronouncement of the curse until the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. New variations originated in Britain included the revelation of Robert Buchanan's narrative poem *The Wandering Jew: A Christmas Carol* (1893) that its protagonist is Christ, condemned to take a dose of his own medicine in recompense for the awful catalogue of crimes committed in his name.

In America, the Wandering Jew was employed satirically in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "A Virtuoso's Collection" (1846), in which Ahasuerus is a guide in a museum of absurd antiquities, and "Ethan Brand" (1850), in which he is one of the experts consulted by the eponymous seeker of the Unpardonable Sin. David Hoffman planned a major work, but only completed two of six projected volumes of Chronicles Selected from the Originals of Cartaphilus (1853–1854). The legend was also summarized in Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* (1869). Moncure Daniel Conway produced the first major study in English of the legend and its literary versions, *The Wandering Jew* (1881), after which several other novelists took up the theme, including H. M. Bien, a rabbi who transformed the legend into the tale of the Wandering Gentile in *Ben-Beor: A Story of the Anti-Messiah* (1894). Eugene Field put a definitive account of the Wandering Jew's plight into the character's own mouth in "The Holy Cross" (1893).

Anderson's study describes hundreds of literary examples additional to those cited, testifying to the fact that the legend was one of the most popular and the most infinitely mutable of all the motifs that written literature inherited from oral tradition. As Anderson's record reaches the end of the nineteenth century, however, it grows much thinner; the motif had become over-familiar by then, and its apparent credibility had waned with Romanticism. Many late-nineteenth-century works—including George MacDonald's *Thomas Wingfold, Curate* (1876) and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's "The

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Then of a sudden (quoth the old man) a horror filled my breast, and a resistless terror possessed me. So was I accursed forevermore. A voice kept always saying to me: "Moe on, O Jew, move on forever!" From home, from kin, from country, from all I knew and loved I fled; nowhere could I tarry,—the nameless horror burned in my bosom, and I heard continually a voice crying unto me: "Move on, O Jew, move on forever!" So, with the years, the centuries, the ages, I have fled before that cry and in that nameless horror; empires have risen and crumbled, races have been born and are extinct, mountains have been cast up and time hath levelled them,—still do I live and still I wander hither and thither upon the face of the earth, and am an accursed thing. The gift of tongues is mine,—all men I know, yet mankind knows me not. Death meets me face to face, and passes me by; the sea devours all other prey, but will not hide me in its depths; wild beasts flee from me, and pestilences turn their consuming breaths elsewhere. On and on I go,—not to a home, nor to me people, nor to my grave, but evermore into the tortures of an eternity of sorrow. And evermore I feel the nameless horror burn within, whilst evermore I see the pleading eyes of him that bore the cross, and evermore I hear his voice crying: "Move on, O Jew! Move on forevermore!"

Eugene Field, "The Holy Cross"

Mystery of Joseph Laquedem'' (1900)—took the trouble to cultivate the possibility that their enclosed stories might be tall tales inspired by the legend rather than continuations of it. The character did, however, remain available for twentieth-century use in horror stories such as Bernard Capes's ''The Accursed Cordonnier'' (1902), explicit delusional fantasies such as O. Henry's ''The Door of Unrest'' (1911), and moralistic melodramas such as E. Temple Thurston's *The Wandering Jew* (1920), which great success on the stage before being filmed in 1933, with Conrad Veidt in the lead.

OCCULT PRACTITIONERS AND FAUSTIAN IMMORTALS

The legend of the Wandering Jew was not the only source of impostors who posed as survivors from earlier eras of history. Anyone who posed as a successful alchemist was likely to feel obliged to support the contention that he was in possession of the philosopher's stone by claiming that he was much older than he seemed. One such poseur who made a particular point of emphasizing his antiquity was the Comte St. Germain, who appeared in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century, following in the footsteps of Count Cagliostro.

By this time, alchemy had been absorbed into a more general ''occult science'' descended from neo-Platonic philosophy, which had taken on a powerful syncretic thrust under the sway of Iamblichus. The Jewish mystical tradition of the Kabbalah had also been adopted into this new synthesis, which came to be called the Hermetic tradition because of its alleged origins in the works of the legendary Hermes Trismegistus. The *Corpus Hermeticum*, fabricated in the fifteenth century, became very popular among Christian mystics, and the tradition's hospitability to further elaboration was exploited by such opportunists as Paracelsus and J. V. Andreae, the presumed author of the Rosicrucian pamphlets published in 1615–1616. Would-be heirs to this great tradition routinely sought—and sometimes became convinced that they had found—teachers whose mastery of occult wisdom had allowed them to live covertly for hundreds of years.

The cannibalistic tendencies of the occult tradition led to its posthumous co-option of various Renaissance philosophers and scientists, especially those who taken an interest in alchemy, such as Albertus Magnus and John Dee. Legendary figures seemed even fairer game, so Faust was added to the list as soon as the pamphlets celebrating his pact with the Devil appeared in 1592–1593. Given that the modern renewal of the legend of the Wandering Jew emerged from the same source, it is not surprising that the literary usage of the two characters overlapped. In parallel with the proliferation of characters explicitly identified as the Wandering Jew or Faust, a significant tradition arose of stories in which immortality—or, more usually, protracted longevity—was the price exacted by a diabolical bargain.

Unlike witchcraft, alchemy was never considered by orthodox Christian dogma to imply a diabolical pact, but it was treated with considerable suspicion nevertheless. The notion that immortality won by means of the philosopher's stone was the result of a tacit or explicit diabolical pact assisted legend-mongers and literateurs desirous of representing it as a deeply frustrating existential state. Diabolical pacts and alchemical adventures both became staple motifs of Gothic fiction, and it was in this context that the most memorable early images of "Faustian longevity" appeared. In William Godwin's *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799) a dying stranger imparts the secret of the philosopher's stone to the eponymous wastrel, who is enabled to enrich himself materially by making gold, although the corollary gift of extended life estranges him from his fellow men, isolating him from all amity and making him an object of permanent suspicion.

St. Leon's "immortality" is significantly different from the Wandering Jew's. Living under Christ's command, the Wandering Jew is forbidden to destroy himself—even volcanic fire spits him out, unharmed—but St. Leon merely has the *potential* to live forever, without aging, provided that no fatal violence intervenes. When he falls into the hands of the Spanish Inquisition, he is very nearly executed. This sort of potentially infinite longevity—for which Alvin Silverstein coined the term "emortality" in *Conquest of Death* (1979)—is markedly different from true immortality. On the one hand, the ever-present option of suicide ameliorates the horror of infinite frustration; on the other, the effects of existential *angst* can be exaggerated into a continual paranoid dread of all possible agents of mortality. The literary development of emortal longevity tends, in consequence, to be somewhat different from contemplations of the Wandering Jew's predicament.

Some of Ahasuerus's nineteenth-century literary rivals were mere clones, like Ladurlad in Robert Southey's *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) and the protagonist of Caroline Norton's "The Undying One" (1830), but once the link with the original was broken such characters began to diversify, lending themselves to philosophical analyses untroubled by the Wandering Jew's ideological baggage. Works featuring Faustian emortals are even more various. The most effective and influential Gothic image of Faustian longevity proved to be Charles Robert Maturin's depiction of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), whose function is to materialize when the subsidiary stories making up the novel reach their climactic moments, to offer characters *in extremis* the opportunity of exchanging their own imminently dire fates for his protracted one. They all refuse, unwilling to traffic with the Devil, and in the end he has to meet his fate.

Melmoth the Wanderer is by no means emortal; his bargain with the Devil only entitled him to a fixed term of 150 years. His particular *angst* arises from the knowledge that he is doomed to Hell and the frustration of his continued failure to sell on his contract. The many variants and sequels inspired by the

> He dreamed that he stood on the summit of a precipice, whose downward height no eye could have measured, but for the fearful wave of a fiery ocean that lashed and blazed, and roared at its bottom, sending its burning spray far up, so as to drench the dreamer with its sulphurous rain. The whole glowing ocean below was alive—every billow bore an agonizing soul, that rose like a wreck or a putrid corse on the waves of earth's oceans—uttered a shriek as it burst against that adamantine precipice—sunk—and rose again to repeat the tremendous experiment! Every billow of fie was thus instinct with immortal and agonizing existence,—each was freighted with a soul, that rose on the burning wave in torturing hope, burst on the rock in despair, added its eternal shriek to the roar of that fiery ocean, and sunk to rise again—in vain, and—for ever!
>
> Suddenly the Wanderer felt himself flung half-way down the precipice. He stood, in his dream, tottering on a crag midway down the precipice—he looked upward, but the upper air (for there was no heaven) showed only blackness unshadowed and impenetrable—but, blacker than that blackness, he could distinguish a giant outstretched arm, that held him as in sport on the ridge of that infernal precipice, while another, that seemed in its motions to hold fearful and invisible conjunction with the arm that grasped him, as if both belonged to some being too vast and horrible even for the imagery of a dream to shape, pointed upwards to a dial-plate fixed on the top of that precipice, and which the flashes of that ocean of fire made fearfully conspicuous.
>
> *Charles Robert Maturin,* Melmoth the Wanderer

story, however, routinely address the notion of spoiled immortality. One such supplement, by William Godwin's daughter, Mary Shelley—"The Mortal Immortal" (1834)—attempts to establish a paradoxical condition of "half-immortality." A similar move was made by Honoré de Balzac in "L'Elixir de longue vie" (1830; trans. as "The Elixir of Life"), in which a partial application of the balm in question is adequate to preserve its recipient's head while his body proceeds to die. In "Melmoth reconcilié" (1835; trans. as "Melmoth Reconciled"), however, Balzac turned horror into farcical comedy with the observation that Melmoth would have no trouble at all passing on his bargain in contemporary Paris, and that it would probably be traded from hand to hand with remarkable rapidity.

A pastiche of *Melmoth* was attempted by W. Harrison Ainsworth, who began serializing his novel *Auriol* in his own magazine in 1844 but abandoned it half way. Here, the immortality gained by means of the diabolical pact is conditional on a periodic human sacrifice—a device borrowed from modifications made to French stage adaptations of John Polidori's novelette *The Vampyre* (1819). There is a whole series of such texts, in which the focus

is so decisively shifted from blood-drinking to the preservation of conditional immortality that they are more appropriately considered here than in the essay on vampires; the key examples are two versions of *Le Vampire* (1820), the first scripted by Charles Nodier, Achille de Jouffroy, and the director of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, Jean-Toussaint Merle, while the second was penned by Alexandre Dumas for production in 1851. Others include Heinrich Marschner's opera *Der Vampyr* (1828) and Smyth Upton's prose version of its libretto, *The Last of the Vampires* (1845). Even in the days before serial-killer stories became the everyday currency of thriller fiction, however, it was as difficult to imagine that murder would exact too heavy a tax from the conscience of a dedicated immortal as it was to imagine that Melmoth would have found it very difficult to hand on his bargain.

The notion of rejuvenative immortality for which a price must be paid was often reinterpreted in the late nineteenth century in terms of "life-force vampirism," as in Sabine Baring-Gould's "Margery of Quether" (1884), J. Maclaren Cobban's *Master of his Fate* (1890), and Claude Farrère's *La Maison des hommes vivants* (1911; trans. as *The House of the Secret*). It lost none of its horrific force in transfiguration, and it was taken for granted that anyone possessed of such a leech-like ability would certainly use it. This subspecies of fiction gave birth to the rapid aging motif that was later to be transferred to the cinema with great effect in such movies as Frank Capra's 1937 dramatization of James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933), becoming a standard means of subjecting emortal adversaries to rough poetic justice.

The most famous quasi-Faustian substitute for the Wandering Jew was the legendary Flying Dutchman, a sea captain who allegedly cursed God while attempting to round the Cape of Good Hope in poor weather and was damned to eternal frustration in consequence. Notable literary extrapolations of the story include Heinrich Heine's fragmentary "The Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski" (1834), Captain Marryat's *The Phantom Ship* (1839), and W. Clark Russell's *The Death Ship* (1888), although none is as effective as the adaptation of the legend into an item of American "fakelore" in William Austin's account of "Peter Rugg, the Missing Man" (1824; expanded edition 1827), in which the story is transferred to land—specifically to the roads around Boston, along which Rugg and his luckless daughter are condemned to drive, pursued by a storm.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, who partnered Peter Rugg with Ahasuerus in "A Virtuoso's Collection," also toyed with the alchemical elixir of life in the allegorical "Doctor Heidegger's Experiment" (1837), and always intended to make more substantial use of it in a quasi-Gothic context. Like Ainsworth, though, he was unable to complete his romance, whose various fragments were published posthumously and patched together by his son Julian into *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* (1882).

The difficulty so many writers found in completing their projected epics and romances of immortality afflicted those who took a positive view of the

prospect as well as those dedicated to its darker extrapolation. Edward Bulwer-Lytton nearly joined their number when he abandoned the serial version of his Rosicrucian romance *Zicci* in 1841, but he started over and brought the story to completion as *Zanoni* (1842). The second version falters in a different way, though; the eponymous character, despite appearing to be as successful in his longevity as anyone could wish, gladly trades it in for the love of a good woman.

The occult quest for immortality also plays a key role in Bulwer-Lytton's other occult romances, "The Haunters and the Haunted" (1859; a.k.a. "The House and the Brain") and *A Strange Story* (1862), but direct confrontation with its implications is carefully avoided. This became the general trend in late-nineteenth-century occult fiction; those works that placed the quest for the elixir of life center stage routinely consigned its eventual attainment—whatever the implications of that attainment might be—to the margin of the narrative or the undetailed hinterlands beyond. Alexandre Dumas's *Joseph Balsamo* (1846; trans. as *Memoirs of a Physician*), F. Marion Crawford's *The Witch of Prague* (1891), and Guy Boothby's *A Bid for Fortune* (1895) are typical in their use of this kind of evasion, although all three give the appearance of having started out with more robust intentions. Bulwer-Lytton's hesitancy did not prevent *Zanoni* from becoming an enormously influential work, inspiring the lifestyle fantasists of the late-nineteenth-century "occult revival" as well as numerous literary imitators.

The occult revival moved into top gear in the 1880s, when the increasing popularity of spiritualism was supplemented by the advent of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy, with its corollary popularization of "Eastern mysticism." This popularization encouraged the intricate entanglement of the imagery of immortality with that of reincarnation in such popular romances as H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886), Edgar Lee's *Pharaoh's Daughter* (1889), Edwin Lester Arnold's *The Wonderful Adventures of Phra the Phoenician* (1891), Charles Godfrey Leland's *Flaxius: Leaves from the Life of an Immortal* (1902), and William Holt-White's *Helen of All Time* (1905). While spiritualist fantasies fanned the flames of faith in an immortal afterlife, Haggardesque karmic romances helped to renew enthusiasm for the prospect of earthly immortality, and for its more frequent representation as a desirable possession.

The popular variant of reincarnation fantasy in which Egyptian mummies turn out to be emortals held in suspended animation—as in Theo Douglas's *Iras: A Mystery* (1896), Clive Holland's *An Egyptian Coquette* (1898), and Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899)—increased literary scope for bringing characters from the distant past, although the notion that immortality might be the prerogative of people frozen—often literally—into existential stasis also provided another telling instance of ironic frustration. The image of frozen beauty, whose preservation depends on the cessation of aging, became common in twentieth-century fiction, although almost all stories of this type involve the return of the object of desire to the stream of time.

The seeming impossibility of the dream of opposing time's ravages produced such agonized allegories as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Wilde's protagonist learns to count the cost of his own narcissism by observing the effects of his just desserts on the portrait hidden in his attic, and ultimately cannot abide the horror of that awareness. The most effective fantasy of existential arrest produced in the early twentieth century, on the other hand, made no attempt to traffic in horror, preferring to extrapolate a new kind of poignancy. The central character of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904; novelization as *Peter and Wendy*, 1911) was swiftly elevate to the status of a modern myth.

The costs of Peter Pan's indefinitely preserved innocence are clearly manifest, in spite of their scrupulous understatement, but their revelation only excites pity and piquant regret for the inevitable loss of youth. Barrie's *Mary Rose* (1924), which features a far less radical temporal dislocation, threw the potential pain consequent upon remaining young while others age into much sharper focus, but that too was cast as a tragedy rather than a horror story. As in the case of the Wandering Jew, other supernatural immortals were increasingly employed in the twentieth century to claim sympathy rather than to excite distress.

LEARNING TO LOVE LONG LIFE

The occult revival was aided in its effect on the literary uses of longevity by rapid progress in medical science, which offered hope that material means of preserving mortal life might prevail where supernatural ones had not. This seemed to some literary observers to be an intrinsically horrific prospect—a thesis graphically dramatized in Georges Eekhoud's extravagant moral allegory of serial heart-transplantation "Le Coeur de Tony Wandel" (1884; trans. as "Tony Wandel's Heart"), and argued more earnestly in Walter Besant's *The Inner House* (1888). Its more obvious effect, however, was to introduce a more matter-of-fact attitude into such comedies of immortality as Frank R. Stockton's *The Vizier of the Two-Horned Alexander* (1899) and such Utopian romances as J. Emile Hix's *Can a Man Live Forever?* (1898).

As the twentieth century advanced, literary images of immortality were increasingly transferred from a supernatural context to a speculative one, although the ideological consequences of the shift were initially confused. The horrific aspects of hypothetical medical technologies of longevity were given a significant injection of horrific potential in the 1920s, when Serge Voronoff proposed that aging was caused by a decline in the functionality of the endocrine system, which could be reversed by the transplantation of animal testicles (euphemistically known in press parlance as "monkey glands"). Literary responses to the prospect did include such squeamish horror stories as Robert Hichens's *Dr. Artz* (1929), but thy also included cheerful farces such as

Bertram Gayton's *The Gland Stealers* (1922) and Thomas le Breton's *Mr Teedles, the Gland Old Man* (1927), which refused to be intimidated by the notion. Gertrude Atherton's *Black Oxen* (1923)—in which the heroine's endocrine system is rejuvenated in a more palatable fashion, by X-rays—also took a dim view of the prospect, but could not muster much conviction in so doing.

Notwithstanding the customary effects of the "yuck factor" on medical fantasies, the inevitable trend of fiction that represented emortality as a realizable goal of technology was to encourage more welcoming attitudes. The process of transformation was slow, but it was definite. The Wandering Jew put in a guest appearance in Harold Scarborough's *The Immortals* (1924), to protest against a medical method of immunization against death, while E. Nesbit's *Dormant* (1911), George Allan England's "The Elixir of Hate" (1911), Martin Swayne's *The Blue Germ* (1918), and Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939) all made similar cautionary recommendations, but the tide was running against reflexive negativity.

A vigorous ideological countercurrent to the cautionary tradition was established by such works as Marie Corelli's wholehearted wish-fulfillment fantasy *The Young Diana* (1915), George Bernard Shaw's propagandistic *Back to Methuselah* (1921), and C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne's amiable *Abbs: His Story through Many Ages* (1929). Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) and George C. Foster's *The Lost Garden* (1930) retained a sharper

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EMILIA: It's unbearable. You can put up with it for a hundred years, for a hundred and thirty years, but then…then you realise that.…And then your soul dies within you.

VITEK: What do you realise?

EMILIA: Oh God, there are no words for it. And then there's nothing more for you to believe in. Nothing more. And that's what causes the boredom. You remember, Bertie, you said that I sing as if it froze me. Art, you see, has some point only as long as you haven't mastered it. As soon as you've mastered it, completely mastered it, then it becomes useless. It's just as idle, Krista, just as idle as snoring. To sing is the same as to keep quiet. It's all alike. There's not the slightest difference.…

VITEK: But allow me…surely there are…higher values…ideals…

EMILIA: There are, but only for you. You cannot go on loving for three hundred years. And you cannot go on hoping, creating, gazing at things for three hundred years. You can't stand it. Everything becomes irksome. It is irksome to be good and irksome to be bad. Heaven and earth are equally irksome to you. And then, you see, nothing really exists. Nothing exists. Neither sin, nor pain, nor earth—nothing whatever.

Karel Čapek, The Macropoulos Secret

sense of irony, but still favored the view that the privileges of limitless opportunity would far outweigh the penalties. Shaw's polemical introduction to *Back to Methuselah* prompted Karel Čapek to add a preface to his own play, *Věc Makropulos* (1922; trans. as *The Macropoulos Secret*), arguing that immortality would be an unmitigated curse, but such diehard pessimism was already beginning to seem out of place.

The camp that considered immortality to be a wholly desirable condition achieved a significant breakthrough when it produced its first best seller in the 1920s. George S. Viereck and Paul Eldridge's *My First Two Thousand Years* (1928) brought the Wandering Jew back to center stage yet again, morally rearmed with a far healthier attitude to his condition. The calculatedly provocative novel summarizes the memoirs of a Cartaphilus who has long relished his eternal conflict with the Great God Ennui and rejoiced in the opportunities afforded him by longevity, especially the search for the secret of "unendurable pleasure, indefinitely prolonged." His sometime companions, whose parallel stories were told in a similarly combative spirit in *Salome, the Wandering Jewess* (1930) and *The Invincible Adam* (1932), agreed with him wholeheartedly.

The casual salaciousness and determined irreverence of the Viereck/Eldridge trilogy succeeded in irritating the American audience it set out to offend, who were in the process of losing their long war against all kinds of self-indulgence, in spite of the temporary victory won in the battle for Prohibition. The series' mocking pretence of offering a serious philosophical allegory of the relations between the sexes increased its capacity to infuriate, and it provided a clamorous challenge to the contention that immortality must eventually become intolerably tedious.

The generic popular fiction that developed in the pulp magazines alongside the success of the Viereck/Eldridge trilogy mostly went along with the same ideological current. Its authors were mostly content to slot the idea of human immortality into the formulaic specifications of the thriller, and they were perfectly prepared to use immortals as menacing adversaries or puppets in ironic *contes cruels*, but they rarely struck an ideological pose that regarded immortality as an intrinsically bad idea. Variants of the fountain of youth and the elixir of life cropped up regularly as targets in quests featured in the new popular fiction. The quests were very often frustrated—and when they were not, the acquisition of the reward was usually used as a closing device rather than a topic for investigation—but such projects were usually represented as perfectly sane endeavors, conducted in a spirit of pragmatism that contrasted strongly with the Faustian ambience of their nineteenth-century antecedents.

The possibilities inherent in the experience of acquired emortality were rarely interrogated, but even the most self-consciously downmarket works of fiction are sometimes wont to dabble in philosophical rhapsody. Works of popular fiction from the pulp era that attempted some modification or consolidation of the iconic status of immortality included Jack Williamson's *Golden Blood* (1933), Robert Bloch's "Slave of the Flames" (1938) and

"Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" (1943)—both of which added extra turns of an ironic screw to the motif of immortality bought by murder—Jack Mann's *Maker of Shadows* (1938) and *The Ninth Life* (1939), and Wyndham Martyn's *Stones of Enchantment* (1948).

The pulp-originated subgenre of sword and sorcery fiction helped lay the ideative foundations for the eventual development of American generic fantasy, in which longevity is one of the standard rewards of magical power, though rarely entirely cost-free. The subgenre completed the long-ongoing absorption of the traditional image of the alchemist into the image of the all-round practitioner of the occult arts: the wizard. The stereotype of the wizard formulated by popular fiction of the period accepted a Tithonian component in his characterization; the most powerful and long-lived magicians usually manifest the appearance of extreme old age. The image of the witch was still handicapped by associations with diabolism that dated back to the days of the great European Witch-Hunt of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the witches of pulp fiction moved inexorably in the direction of becoming female equivalents of wizards. Witches, however, tended to make far more use of glamour in maintaining appearances, so that they could continue to function as *femmes fatales* as well as hagwives and wise women, no matter how old they might actually be.

Immortality was centralized as a key theme in some of the more upmarket works that assisted the evolution of sword and sorcery into generic fantasy—most notably Fletcher Pratt's *The Well of the Unicorn* (1948; initially bylined George U. Fletcher)—but it was more usually integrated into a much more elaborate magical fabric. The work that became the commodified genre's key exemplar, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), included one of the archetypal images of ancient wizardry in the character of Gandalf. Although Gandalf was obviously modeled on the traditional figure of Merlin, he became a key model in a twentieth-century reconfiguration of Merlin's image, which was associated with the wholesale adoption of Arthurian fantasy into the body of modern generic fantasy. The integration of emortality into the standard pattern of magical attributes deployed within the genre was soon taken for granted, to the extent that Diana Wynne Jones's satirical *Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996) is able to induce the rule that "the longer a person marinades her/himself in Magic, the longer she/he lives."

The relegation of the emortal human being to this kind of standard and largely uninterrogated role in supernatural fiction reflected a tacit acceptance that the rapidly evolving modern genre of science fiction provided a more appropriate and convenient medium for direct approaches to the existential questions that arose in connection with the notion. Science fiction stories foregrounding the topic, and dwelling elaborately on its implications, increased in number as supernatural fiction doing likewise went into a relative decline. Some mid-twentieth-century works of supernatural fiction carried forward the evasive strategies developed in the nineteenth century, after the

fashion of Karen Blixen's neo-Gothic thriller *The Angelic Avengers* (1946, bylined Pierre Andrezel) and Vaughan Wilkins's sentimental fantasy *Valley Beyond Time* (1955), but such works already seemed quaintly old-fashioned at the time of their composition. There were, however, exceptions to the rule.

One significant group of exceptional texts comprised accounts of Biblical immortals akin to, and often including, the Wandering Jew. Like Viereck and Eldridge, several other writers decided that such figures were more easily adaptable to the priorities of modern narrative if they came in sets, and were prone to argue with one another. The stratagem was employed in C. E. Lawrence's "Spikenard" (1930), which imagines that a company accursed wanderers might one day inherit the Earth when the human race has had its day, and M. P. Shiel's *This Above All* (1933), in which various individuals gifted with immortality by Jesus—including Lazarus and his beloved John—while away the time in markedly different ways while awaiting his return. The lone wanderer still had some mileage left in him, though, as demonstrated by Pär Lagerkvist's version, introduced in *Sibyllan* (1956; trans. as *The Sibyl*) and brought into sharper focus in *Ahasverus' död* (1960; trans. as *The Death of Ahasuerus*). Lagerkvist's immortal is far less happy with his plight than Eldridge and Viereck's Cartaphilus—he is sexually impotent—but he is defiantly unrepentant, considering his fate palpably unjust. Stefan Heym's *Ahasver, der Ewige Jude* (1981; trans. as *The Wandering Jew*) is even more assertive in reconsidering the notion in a post-holocaust context.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Although twentieth-century supernatural fiction lost its monopoly on human emortals to science fiction, and was comprehensively overtaken in the quest to investigate the existential implications of the emortal condition, it kept its monopoly on an important spectrum of non-human immortals, and the philosophical initiative associated with that custody. While science fiction could invent undying aliens as easily as undying humans, it had great difficulty in taking aboard the traditional mythological images of immortal gods, godlings, and fairy folk; they remained the near-exclusive property of supernatural fiction.

The manner in which supernatural fiction deals with non-human immortals is inevitably conditioned by the narrative status of the mythic past in any particular text, and by the situation of the mythical past in the text's literary-historical context. These matters are not as simple as they may seem at first glance, and the close affiliation of the concept of non-human immortality with the ambience of the mythic past makes literary representations of non-human immortality into a very effective indicator of the changing fortunes of that milieu.

The history of modern literature—particularly the recent history of prose fiction—is a narrative of the gradual displacement of the mythic past by the

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Ten Leading Novels about Immortality

William Godwin, *St. Leon* (1799)

Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)

Eugène Sue, *The Wandering Jew* (1844–1845)

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)

George S. Viereck and Paul Eldridge, *My First Two Thousand Years* (1928)

William Miller, Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960)

Roger Zelazny, *This Immortal* (1966)

Richard Cowper, *Son of Man* (1971)

Diana Wynne Jones, *The Homeward Bounders* (1981)

James Morrow, *Only Begotten Daughter* (1990)

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historical past in such genres as the novel. The historical novel first materialized in opposition to fiction dealing with the mythical past, and the Gothic novel can easily been seen as a battleground on which the virtuous historical past engaged in a titanic struggle with the draconian mythical past, eventually triumphing in terms of literary prestige, while the mythical past retired to lick its wounds in the despised fields of children's fiction and horror fiction. Even in folklore, though, the mythical past is customarily represented as something dead and gone; the formula "once upon a time" does not signify mere historical distance, but the removal of a story into a world when everything was different. Even in oral traditions of myth and folklore, let alone their literary extrapolations, there is a marked dissonance between the world described within the text and the world in which the storyteller meets his audience. Long before the evolution of literacy, let alone the evolution of print, magic was seen as something that no longer worked, and miracles as events that no longer happened.

All fantastic fiction is conscious of this kind of implicit dynamic, but post-Enlightenment fantastic fiction exaggerates the consciousness into hypersensitivity. In consequences, all literary images of the mythical past represent it as a world in the process of what John Clute calls "thinning": a world whose inherent enchantment has been dwindling inexorably since time immemorial. This affects all the motifs and icons of supernatural fiction, but it has a very particular and somewhat paradoxical effect on the notion of immortality. When it is subjected to thinning, the taken-for-granted immortality of gods, godlings, and fairy folk inevitably threatens to run to exhaustion, thus rendering them mortal in spite of the appearances of their existential state. Immortality cannot be gradually diluted, as most kinds of magic can; it is either absolute or a sham. For this reason, all supernatural fiction—especially

post-Enlightenment supernatural fiction—routinely deploys the paradoxical motif of the twilight of the gods: the notion of the fateful day when the immortals will vanish from a world that can no longer entertain magic and miracles.

The unprecedentedly loud and pretentious celebration of the twilight of the gods undertaken by Richard Wagner's operatic Ring cycle (1853–1874) stands at the head of a rich tradition of elegiac supernatural fiction, in which the inevitable death of the ancient immortals, and the mythic Golden Age they symbolize, is mourned in much the same spirit of nostalgia that adults tend to mourn their golden youth. It is no coincidence that the god of Arcadia, Pan, was the only Greek god whose passing was explicitly recorded in Hellenic mythology, nor that there was a very obvious resurgence of Arcadian fantasy—especially fantasies in which Pan is represented as a tragic figure—as the end of the nineteenth century approached and passed. When Pan was not personally present in such works his place was often taken by his trivial stand-ins, fauns and satyrs, or by their traditional female counterparts, nymphs. The outstanding items of this tradition include such passionately definitive accounts of the thinning of immortality as Richard Garnett's "The Twilight of the Gods" (1888), Anatole France's "Saint Satyr" (1895), and Justin Huntly McCarthy's *The Dryad* (1905), counterweighted with the occasional resistant fantasy such as Eden Phillpotts's *The Girl and the Faun* (1916).

Although the substance of pagan mythology is obviously more amenable to use in parables of thinning, the advancement of science ensured that Christian mythology was by no means immune to the process. God was highly resistant to thinning Himself, but the apparatus supporting Him—including His notorious adversary—was far more vulnerable. Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895) offers a wryly-heartfelt portrait of a depleted Devil. Anatole France followed his earlier experiments in religious fantasy with a striking account of *La Révolte des anges* (1914; trans. as *The Revolt of the Angels*), in which Satan eventually explains to a remustered army of rebel angels what long life has taught him about the wisdom of letting the decay of the mythic past take its natural course. Helen Beauclerk's *The Love of the Foolish Angel* (1929) countered Phillpotts's account of a conscienceless priapic faun with the first of an extensive sequence of twentieth-century narratives in which an angel voluntarily surrenders the privilege of immortality for the privileges of human love.

When the ancient gods did retain their immortality in twentieth-century fantasies, they became increasingly alienated from the world in which they found themselves. Even those who retained their function as incarnations of aspects of human psychology were compelled to an awareness of threats to their traditional roles, as in such works as Stephen McKenna's *The Oldest God* (1926), Murray Constantine's *The Devil, Poor Devil!* (1934), John Erskine's *Venus, the Lonely Goddess* (1949), Susan Alice Kerby's *Mr. Kronion* (1949), George S. Viereck's *Gloria* (1952), and William Gerhardi and Brian Lunn's *The Memoirs of Satan* (1932). The last-named acquired

considerable weight as its story unfolded, in spite of the fact that it had begun as an amiably farcical parody of *My First Two Thousand Years*.

Many works of this sort carried forward a tradition of literary satanism derived from Percy Shelley's polemical reassertion of William Blake's judgment that John Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it" when he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Novels that featured God and the Devil as characters routinely took leave to wonder whether the history recorded by the winners of the war in Heaven was entirely accurate, and attempted to offer the Devil the right of reply. Works such as Jonathan Daniels's *Clash of Angels* (1930), in which Lucifer becomes a heroic freedom fighter rather than a vicious terrorist, rarely introduced the immortality of their protagonists as a specific topic for discussion or analysis, but it remained a significant aspect of their worldviews.

The dissonance between the present and mythic past provides the fundamental parameters of one of the major subcategories of fantastic fiction, which Farah Mendlesohn calls "intrusive fantasy." In an intrusive fantasy some aspect of the mythic past intrudes into the present, where its incongruity inevitably makes it a "bringer of chaos." The chaos in question may be comic or horrific—or, of course, both—but its narrative value in either case is that it equips the whole generic subcategory with a ready-made story-arc aimed towards the restoration of order. Across the spectrum of intrusive fantasy, immortality functions as a narrative means of contriving intrusion: entities from the mythical past can only arrive in the present by virtue of unnatural endurance in a state of dormancy or by magical time travel; the former is the preferred option in the great majority of horror stories. The adversaries of intrusive fantasy, therefore, are almost always tacitly immortal—but the fact that they no longer belong in the world often licenses their eventual destruction, in spite of the seeming paradox entailed therein.

Many intrusive fantasies do not take advantage of this license, sometimes because it seems unsporting to do so, but often because there is an advantage to authors in retaining the option of returning adversaries to the fray so that the ritual of their defeat can be repeated—several times over, if necessary, as sequels generate series. For this and other reasons a return to dormancy is routinely preferred to final destruction as a means of closure in intrusive fantasies. The non-human immortals of supernatural fiction, in consequence, are more likely to fall asleep than they are to fade away or meet actual destruction; while their immortality may remain absolute, their entitlement to consciousness and active authority is not—a circumstance that gives them something in common with those human immortals who can only retain their status and their beauty in suspended animation.

The second major category of fantastic fiction identified by Mendlesohn is portal fantasy, in which a mythic world continues to coexist with the historical past and present, but is displaced into another dimension, tentatively connected to ours by portals of some kind. One set of such portals—proverbially

envisaged as a gate of ivory and a gate of horn—is said in folklore to separate the waking world from the world of dreams; another separates the world of mundane experience from the land of Faerie. Portal fantasy has no need of immortality as a means of narrative delivery, but immortality often features as a key attribute of folk who live on the far sides of portals.

Unlike the immortals of intrusive fantasy, the immortals of portal fantasy do not often fall asleep—there is no need of any such artifice to remove them from the world of the story, given that the portals can simply be closed again—but they are frequently prone to a different sort of suspended animation, born of the fact that time often flows at a different rate on the far side of a portal. The most familiar versions of this motif are derivatives of two Scottish ballads, which may be variants of the same tale: ''Tam Lin'' and ''Thomas the Rhymer.'' Both tell of mortals beloved by the queen of Faerie, who are disconnected from their own world when she takes them into Faerie because time flows much more slowly there. While the days and months of their lives pass, years and centuries pass in the world they left behind. By this means, mortality and immortality are confused—a confusion translocated into twentieth-century science fiction by means of the theory of relativity and the scope it generates for time dilatation. Such narrative moves do not really make immortals of their mortal characters, although they may seem immortal to the descendants who glimpse them if and when they try to return, but it does make a considerable difference to the way the immortal characters are perceived within the narratives. The fairy queens who hold Tam and Thomas captive are prisoners of their own time-scheme, immune from progress in much the same way as any other victim of suspended animation, although they are blithely unconscious of the fact.

The transition from belief in a mythical past to knowledge of a historical past is by no means as smooth as the literary mechanism of thinning implies.

Ten Leading Short Stories about Immortality

Honoré de Balzac, ''The Elixir of Life'' (1830)

Mary Shelley, ''The Mortal Immortal'' (1834)

Nathaniel Hawthorne, ''Doctor Heidegger's Experiment'' (1837)

Richard Garnett, ''The Twilight of the Gods'' (1888)

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, ''The Mystery of Joseph Laquedem'' (1900)

S. Fowler Wright, ''The Rat'' (1929)

C. E. Lawrence, ''Spikenard'' (1930)

J. G. Ballard, ''The Lost Leonardo'' (1964)

Robert Silverberg, ''Born with the Dead'' (1974)

Richard Cowper, ''The Tithonian Factor'' (1983)

The manufacture of the mythical past did not stop when history was invented, and it has not stopped yet. History often gives rise to its own myths, deliberately and accidentally—and literature is itself a prolific source of new myths, which renew the magicality of the past even while acknowledging the inevitability of its thinning. As the legends of Faust and the Wandering Jew readily demonstrate, immeasurably ancient immortals are not the only ones to wander from the mythic past into the narrative present, and they are by no means alone. All great literary heroes—and many of their adversaries—are granted a metaphorical immortality, which is very easily transmuted into literal immortality within works of supernatural fiction.

Consignment to dormancy is the preferred narrative option not only for ancient immortals but also for more recent heroes such as Arthur—the "once and future king," who is purportedly ever-ready come to England's defense whenever he is needed—and sometimes does return in modern Arthurian fantasies. Authors in search of witnesses who can see history as a historian does, panoramically, or observers who can look at a particular period with clinical objectivity, have a ready-made list of candidates, expandable at will. Heroes slot into such roles comfortably enough, as in Peter Vansittart's *The Death of Robin Hood* (1981) and *Parsifal* (1988), but monsters may serve just as well, precisely because they are distanced outsiders, as Frankenstein's monster does in Michael Bishop's *Brittle Innings* (1994) and Daedalus's minotaur in Stephen Sherrill's *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break* (2000).

There is a considerable gray area between attempts to adopt the viewpoints of non-human immortals and accounts of human emortality, which is occupied by afterlife fantasies and posthumous fantasies. The second category is distinguished from the first by the fact that its viewpoint characters continue to exist on the margins of the real world—often not realizing immediately that they are dead—rather than proceeding to a further arena, but both types of story are, in essence, accounts of acquired non-humanity. Very few of the works in these subgenres are explicit studies of immortality, but again there is a sense in which that taken-for-granted circumstance colors everything seen from the narrative viewpoint—a fact that becomes obvious in such frankly existentialist examinations of the ghostly condition as Ashley Sampson's *The Ghost of Mr Brown* (1941) and G. W. Stonier's *Memoirs of a Ghost* (1947) and such sophisticated afterlife fantasies as C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (1945) and E.E.Y. Hales's *Chariot of Fire* (1977).

In the last decades of the twentieth century the philosophical contemplation of the emortal condition in supernatural fiction was dominated by the deployment exotic "post-human" individuals, especially vampires. As in the nineteenth-century texts in which blood-drinking is replaced as the focus of attention by the conditionality of immortality, many late-twentieth-century texts modify traditional versions of "undeath" in such a way as to place the issue of longevity center stage. A significant threshold was crossed in the mid-1970s

when several striking works of this kind appeared, including Pierre Kast's *Les Vampires d'Alfama* (1975; trans. as *The Vampires of Alfama*), Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), and the first item in Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's extensive series chronicling the history-spanning exploits of her vampire version of the Comte de Saint-Germain.

Many such stories avidly exploit the sexual symbolism as well as the conventionally melodramatic potential of blood-drinking, but there is a sense in which they have more in common with the tradition of ''psychic vampire'' stories and stories of rejuvenative immortality renewable by human sacrifice, which were more explicitly echoed during the revisionist era in such works as Fred Mustard Stewart's *The Mephisto Waltz* (1969) and Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* (1981). There is a sense in which fantasies of this sort constitute a reaction against the thinning process, some of the more extravagant examples hoping that a new dawn might follow the twilight of the gods. The fact that the ancient immortals have mostly retired to permanent slumber has created some scope for new ones to take their place—and whence can such replacements come, if not from the ranks of humankind, by means of death and transfiguration?

PROGRESS IN THE FLIGHT FROM FRUSTRATION

Most of the significant contributions to the further analysis of the narrative problems posed by the iconic immortal made in the last decades of the twentieth century were the produce of generic science fiction, but many of the most refined *contes philosophiques* produced in that context were hybrid or chimerical works. It does not matter much, in a tale whose primary purpose is philosophical argument, how its images are derived or supported.

Some science fiction writers were, in consequence, perfectly happy to adopt such supernatural archetypes as the Wandering Jew in order to facilitate their debates. He makes one of his classic cameo appearances in Walter M. Miller Jr.'s post-holocaust novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960), where he is one of several symbolic figures lurking in the background while a reconstituted Church provides both the social solidarity necessary to rebuild civilization, and the dogmatic stubbornness that facilitates its repeated destruction. In J. G. Ballard's ''The Lost Leonardo'' (1964), Ahasuerus becomes a subtle retoucher of Old Masters, seeking some fugitive hope of redemption in reconstructing the representations that preserve the record of his sin. In Diana Wynne Jones's *The Homeward Bounders* (1981) he is one of a continually augmented company of accursed wanderers, whose ultimate fate seems dependent on that of the imprisoned Prometheus.

Most of the new stories contained in the Dedalus anthology *Tales of the Wandering Jew* (1991) are seamlessly compounded from science-fictional and supernatural motifs and methods, the most significant new twists on the myth

being provided by Kim Newman and Eugene Byrne's ironic alternative history story "The Wandering Christian" and two stories that extrapolate the accursed wanderer's plight into the far future, Barrington J. Bayley's "The Remembrance" and David Langford's "Waiting for the Iron Age." The latter story is unusually uncompromising in its depiction of what literal immortality would actually imply in a universe that is not scheduled for closure by a Big Crunch, let alone Christ's imminent return.

A similar spirit is reflected in other science-fictional *contes philosophiques* that borrow or reflect religious imagery, including Richard Cowper's "The Tithonian Factor" (1983), in which the beneficiaries of an early technology of longevity discover that they have cheated themselves out of the preferable kind divinely donated to the human soul. Robert Silverberg's long preoccupation with the themes of immortality, resurrection, and rebirth extended from purely science-fictional investigations through hybrid religious fantasies to surreal metaphysical fantasies; his most significant mediations on the central notion include *Son of Man* (1971), *The Book of Skulls* (1972), "Born with the Dead" (1974), and "Sailing to Byzantium" (1985). Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* (1975), though marketed as a children's fantasy, is similar in its narrative strategy. Another science fiction writer possessed by a similar preoccupation, Roger Zelazny, generated a series of hybrid immortal protagonists in such works as *This Immortal* (1966), *Lord of Light* (1967), and *Isle of the Dead* (1969).

The most extravagant hybrid account of the existential plight of immortals taking the fight against the Great God Ennui to its ultimate conclusion is Michael Moorcock's Dancers at the End of Time sequence, which includes the trilogy of novels comprising *An Alien Heat* (1972), *The Hollow Lands* (1974), and *The End of All Songs* (1976), and various supplementary items. Moorcock's immortals have the power to amuse themselves in any manner they choose, and exploit every opportunity with gusto, continually mining the past for inspiration as one fad succeeds another in infinite succession. Their lifestyles combine the ultimate extrapolations of decadence with a kind of innocent zest reminiscent of Peter Pan, who was able to engross himself in perpetual play because he had never grow up—"growing up" involving, of course, a grudging acceptance of the inevitability of mortality as well as a supposedly-healthy respect for the responsibilities of making a living and building an inheritance for the benefit of future generations. In Moorcock's world of immortals there is, of course, no future generation to come, and they need acknowledge no responsibility to anyone but themselves.

The end of the twentieth century saw a remarkable glut of science-fictional images of immortality, including images of cyberspatial immortality such as those contained in Vernor Vinge's *True Names* (1981) and Greg Egan's *Permutation City* (1994), and images of immortality associated with Frank Tipler's revised version of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point, popularized in *The Physics of Immortality* (1994). Even in the presence of such

extravagant imagery, however, supernatural fiction continued to produce *contes philosophiques* rooted in traditional ideas. The quest for the fountain of youth continues in such romances as Tim Powers's *On Stranger Tides* (1987). James Morrow's *Only Begotten Daughter* (1990) offered one of the most effective extrapolations of T. F. Powys's apologies in its depiction of Jesus toiling incessantly in Hell to bring the relief of oblivion to the damned, while *The Eternal Footman* (1999) offered a sophisticated allegorical analysis of death-anxiety against a background in which the terminus of thinning is represented by God's suicide.

Although it had become distinctly fugitive, the old cautionary tradition still persisted in such works as the movie *Death Becomes Her* (1992), which exploits special effects in a graphic re-emphasis of the truism that the rewards of immortality depend on the quality of the vessel, and Patrick O'Leary's *The Impossible Bird* (2002), in which humans gifted with immortality by kindly aliens fight for their right to annihilation. The tradition of literary Satanism moved on to new extremes of boldness in such revisionist fantasies of twilight-resistant immortals as Catherine Webb's *Waywalkers* (2003).

Although frustration is by no means absent from the images if immortality contained in texts such as these, it is never relentless; where modern equivalents of Tantalus appear, there is always an assumption that something might, and ultimately must, be done to relieve his plight. In the twilight of divine power, when the thinning process has juxtaposed the mythic past not with a degraded version of its former self but with a historical present rushing headlong into a future where progress is, at least, possible, Prometheus has long since won the right of appeal, if not release on bail.

Enlightenment has not dismissed all of the doubts and confusions surrounding the icon of the human immortal, or his various non-human antitheses, but it has weakened them considerably. When medical science delivers technological emortality—as it surely will, to our not-so-remote descendants—the nostalgia and poignancy in which so many twentieth-century images of immortality were steeped will be further amplified John Death, and all his figurative brethren, will then be fully retired to the mythic past, from which they will only be able return as intruders requiring banishment.

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The Monster

by Richard Bleiler

A discussion of monsters should open with a definition of *monster* and *monstrous*, but frequently used though these terms are, they are not easily defined. The words themselves are of Latin and Old French in origin, the former carrying with it implications of deviation, malformation, and mis-shapenness, and the latter implying not only malformation and deformation but also immensity. Monsters can be human, animal, vegetable, and even mineral; they can be teratological, artificial, folkloristic, and of supernatural or religious origin; and though every known culture would appear to have its idea of monsters and the monstrous, these are not fixed but fluid: one generation's monsters are often the next generation's fairy tales or stuffed toys. Until relatively recently, humanoid monsters—for such will this chapter tend to focus upon—had something or somethings exaggerated or altered in such a way as to make the possessor exceptional. This something could be as routine

as exceptional height (i.e., giants and ogres) and exaggerated features (i.e., fangs or big teeth rather than the standard dentition), or it may be something extraordinary, as in the case of the majority of the beings from Classical Greece and Rome. Monsters are terrifying and monstrous generally only so long as they are not fully seen and are but dimly glimpsed, for then the reader's imagination is free to run wild. Once the monster has been revealed, the monstrosity and its monstrousness run the risk of becoming familiar or failing to horrify or impress the reader, results and reactions that are not desirable in a story one of whose primary purposes is to shock.

It should also be stressed that the physically monstrous serves as an explicit reminder that the shapes of humanity are mutable, variable, and at some level fragile and unstable. More: if disturbing physical differences exist, it is not unreasonable to assume that these might be accompanied by mental and moral differences that reveal themselves through aberrant behavior. The abnormal may put a different value on the worth of human life and endeavor and may further demonstrate the extent of their monstrosity by being homicidal maniacs and cannibals, or they may be sexually monstrous and violate all established norms. In general, the nature of the monstrosity and the actions it engenders often can be shown to mirror sociocultural fears and concerns, but this is not always the case: as noted above, the idea of "monstrous" has evolved; and in the hands of such twentieth-century writers as John Gardner, Thomas Harris, and Howard Waldrop, the physically monstrous may be the truly cultured and may offer pungent and poignant commentary about society's mores from the perspective of the observant but disenfranchised outsider.

It may be reasonably argued that the most famous and recognizable monster of the twentieth century originated in the early nineteenth century. This is Victor Frankenstein's Monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), the creature famously having no name. While audiences may no longer read Mary Shelley's novel, Boris Karloff's portrayal of the monster in James Whale's film *Frankenstein* (1931) is indelible and culturally iconographic. Nevertheless, a discussion of monsters and the monstrous must start not in 1818, nor in 1931, but millennia earlier, with the monstrous beings of Classical Greece and Rome. This is not an unwarranted beginning. As *Frankenstein*'s subtitle—*A Modern Prometheus*—indicates, Mary Shelley wished to draw attention to the Greek myths, and the strong thematic and metaphoric parallels between the Greek accounts and Shelley's novel must be mentioned, for acknowledging their existence provides *Frankenstein* with several of its significant subtexts.

There are two significant versions of the story of Prometheus, and there can be little doubt that Mary Shelley was aware of both accounts and wanted her readers to recognize her allusions. In the better known version, that presented in Hesiod's *Theogony* (eighth century B.C.E.), Prometheus, the divine offspring of Iapetus, is the fire-bringer who defies Zeus, leader of the gods, by restoring to humanity the fire which the vindictive Zeus has stolen. Prometheus's actions are intended to be beneficial—he is giving to humanity—but they have

unanticipated developments, for not all gifts are beneficial, and fire destroys as well as serves. In the parallel account of Pausanias (second century C.E.), Prometheus was also the divine craftsman who created humanity. In both versions, Prometheus is horribly punished: he is chained to a pillar, to which Zeus "sent a long-winged eagle to swoop on him / and devour the god's liver; but what the long-winged bird ate / in the course of each day grew back and was restored to its full size" (ll. 523–25).

Apart from recognizing the ambiguous nature and accomplishments of Prometheus, Mary Shelley's nineteenth-century readership would certainly have known that the Greek creation involves terrible deeds and monstrous beings that, in Edith Hamilton's words, are "unlike any form of life known to man" (79). According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, the offspring of Gaia (Mother Earth) and Ouranos (The Heavens) included the Cyclops (Kyklopes) Brontes, Steropes, and Arges, each of whom had "but one eye in the middle of their foreheads" (Hamilton 14) and

> three other sons, so great
> and mighty that their names are best left unspoken,
> Kottos, Briareos, and Gyges, brazen sons all three.
> From each one's shoulders a hundred invincible arms
> sprang forth, and from each one's shoulders atop the sturdy trunk
> There grew no fewer than fifty heads. (*Theogony* 147–53)

Monstrous bloodshed accompanies these beings and their actions. Kronos, another of Gaia's sons, hacks off his father's genitals and tosses them in the ocean. From Ouranos's blood appear the Giants and the Furies, generally depicted as having "writhing snakes for hair and eyes that wept blood" (Hamilton 80), and from the ocean appears fair Aphrodite, so called because "she grew out of *aphros*, foam, that is" (Hamilton 16), though her fleshly origins mean also that she is "fond of a man's genitals" (Hamilton 16). Kronos's monstrous behavior includes eating his children, one of whom is Zeus, but Gaia helps Zeus avoid this fate, and Zeus frees Brontes, Steropes, and Arges to battle for him. Zeus ultimately wins, the monsters are banished, and humanity appears.

Additional monsters of Classical Greece that Mary Shelley and her readers would have known—and that have survived largely untouched into the twenty-first century—include the gorgons (properly named Sthenno and Euryale), who were the immortal sisters of the mortal Medusa. Like their mortal sister, they could petrify those who looked at them. In general, most writers who have utilized the gorgons and Medusa's petrifying head have done so with appropriate horror as, for example, Clark Ashton Smith in "The Gorgon" (*Weird Tales*, April 1932) and "Symposium of the Gorgon" (*Fantastic Universe Science Fiction*, October 1958). Thorne Smith, on the other hand, saw the comic potential of petrification; *The Nightlife of the Gods*

(1931) presents inventor Hunter Hawk, who has discovered a "scientific" basis for turning flesh into marble and vice versa, introduces the Fury Megaera, whose supernatural powers complement Hawk's invention, and sets the two loose in a museum, where they bring to life a number of statues and engage in an alcohol-fueled sexual romp. Nelson Bond's "The Mask of Medusa" (*Bluebook*, December 1945) and Lord Dunsany's "The Shield of Athene" (1952) are also among those who have utilized a traditional form of the Medusa. C. L. Moore deserves mention for introducing a weird science component into the Medusa legend with "Shambleau" (*Weird Tales*, November 1933); set on Mars, the titular being is a red-haired alien, capable of draining one's life force while simultaneously providing ecstasies. William Tenn's "Medusa Was a Lady" (*Fantastic Adventures*, October 1951) is likewise science fiction, but Tenn takes a comic approach, describing the mishaps of one Percy S. Yuss.

Though they are arguably not monsters, minotaurs, centaurs, and fauns represent hybrids often considered monstrous, the blending of the human with the animal, and they are thus mentioned here. All were likewise known to Shelley's audience and have likewise been used in fantastic fiction. Of these, minotaurs—the monstrous bull-man hybrid offspring of Poseidon and Pasiphaë, wife of Minos, housed in a labyrinth—are perhaps the least used. Jack Williamson's "The Reign of Wizardry" (*Unknown*, March–May 1940) is set in Minoan Crete and features a heroic Theseus battling the magical kingdom for the hand of Minos's daughter Ariadne. Thomas Burnett Swann made recurrent use of minotaurs (among other mythic beings) in his Cretan cycle—*Day of the Minotaur* (1966), *The Forest of Forever* (1971), and *Cry Silver Bells* (1977)—showing the destruction of their world by the incursion of violent and insensitive humanity. More original in development is Stephen King's *Rose Madder* (1995), in which Norman Daniels, a sadistic, abusive, and murderous bull of a husband, transforms into a minotaur.

Centaurs, horse-human hybrids, have received somewhat more use by contemporary writers. Algernon Blackwood's *The Centaur* (1911) uses the centaur as a symbol of a mystical union with natural (chthonic) forces, but more often than not, as in Lord Dunsany's "The Bride of the Man-Horse" (1912), and Philip José Farmer's *World of Tiers* series (1965–1991), centaurs are simply alien and occasionally menacing figures. Harlan Ellison's "Gnomebody" (*Amazing*, October 1956) introduces the idea of a centaur to show a wish comically malfunctioning. Howard Waldrop's "Wild, Wild Horses" (*Omni*, June 1988), on the other hand, movingly uses a late classical Roman setting to show the elderly Chiron, the most educated of centaurs, in his quest for a final home. In order not to end in a zoo, Chiron needs the cooperation of humans; he enlists the assistance of P. Renatus Vegetius, who (with the assistance of a clever slave) helps him fulfill his last wish.

Fauns and Pan have been more heavily used by later writers, for whom the very names of these figures provide hints of humanoid beings possessing cloven

hooves, horns, and unbridled and destructive sexuality. Arthur Machen's "The Great God Pan" (1894) describes a woman, Mary Vaughn, who experiences Pan—in his purest and most destructive form—and dies horribly mad; her child, fathered by Pan, matures into something beautiful but utterly evil and devastatingly destructive. Barry Pain's "The Moon Slave" (1901) and Saki's "The Music on the Hill" (1911) show the fates that befall women who act independently, though the latter is the more powerful, its theme being the triumph of paganism (embodied in cloven-hooved beings) over more limited and restrictive modern Christianity. E. M. Forster's "The Story of a Panic" (1911) describes the spiritual awakening of a young man whose wooden whistle inadvertently summons Pan. Dion Fortune's *The Winged Bull* (1935) makes use of Pan's influence to counter magical forces. More prosaically, in Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* (1967), fauns are explained as feral radiation-deformed humans. Thomas Burnett Swann's *Where Is the Bird of Fire?* (1970) uses a faun as narrator; his observations of the founding of Rome convey a sense of magical loss and passing. The satyr narrator of Stephen Robinett's often amusing "The Satyr" (*Analog*, May 1978) is a bioengineered organism, intelligent, amoral, sexually insatiable, and definitely his own worst enemy.

Moving forward through time, a number of monstrous beings still very much with us appear in Homer's *Odyssey* (c. 800–500 B.C.E.). Perhaps the most notable of these is the Cyclops, mentioned earlier in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Additional monsters include the dread sea-beings Scylla and Charybdis; the Sirens, whose songs enchant and madden; and Circe, a witch whose magic transforms men to swine. Hundreds if not thousands of writers have made use of the *Odyssey*, either literally recapitulating its events and characters or by making metaphoric use of the characters and situations. An even partial list of these works would be enormous, but special mention must be accorded to H. Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang's *The World's Desire* (1890), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Robert Graves's *The Golden Fleece* (1945) and *Homer's Daughter* (1955), John Myers Myers's *Silverlock* (1949), R. A. Lafferty's *Space Shanty* (1968), Philip José Farmer's *Riverworld* series (1971–present), Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Firebrand* (1987), and Howard Waldrop's *A Dozen Tough Jobs* (1989), all of which take Homer's story and do something exceptional with it. The 2000 motion picture *O Brother Where Art Thou?* carries with it a barely concealed subtext in which the protagonist (Ulysses Everett McGill) recapitulates the classical Ulysses's voyage and deeds in the American South; the suitor of McGill's wife Penny (i.e., Penelope) is named Waldrip in perhaps a sly nod toward Howard Waldrop. Indeed, any work of fantastic fiction that involves a lengthy journey or that uses the word "odyssey" as part of its title—and these range from Stanley Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey" (*Wonder Stories*, 1934) to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)—may be linked to the wonders of Homer.

Old and Middle English texts likewise abound with monsters. The most famous of these is unquestionably Grendel from *Beowulf* (no later than the

tenth century). For all that he is remembered as a man-eating ogre of enormous strength, the exact nature of Grendel's monstrosity is largely undepicted, the narrative initially referring to him in human terms as "*wonsaeli wer*;" that is, "unfortunate man" (l. 105), and as a man deprived of joys (ll. 720–21). It is his monstrous actions, his physical introduction as a "shadow-walker" (*scridan sceadugenga*, l. 703) and as a fiendish destroyer who breaks open the sealed doors of Heorot, the hall of Hrothgar, to eat the humans within, that define him. Nevertheless, although he is physically monstrous and possessed of great powers, Grendel has a mother as monstrous and dangerous as he. Her presence is vital and essential: she changes what could hitherto be discounted as a supernatural tale into a story of a monster of this world. A mother means that Grendel was born, not created; he is "real," a being with a biological existence. Grendel and his mother—and their human destroyer Beowulf—have been used by numerous twentieth-century writers. A victorious Beowulf and Grendel's monstrous arm appear in Myers's *Silverlock*, and though Beowulf is presented heroically, the crucial actions have occurred just prior to the arrival of the narrator, who happily participates in the celebratory feasting and drinking; it is up to the reader to recognize the literary reference. John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971), on the other hand, retells the story from Grendel's perspective, with a sophisticated and intellectual (albeit physically monstrous) Grendel studying violent humans as they develop civilization and recognizing his own inevitable defeat at the hands of their pale-eyed leader. Michael Crichton's *Eaters of the Dead* (1988) combines the Beowulf story with the historical narrative of Ibn Fadlan, the first to describe the Vikings: the educated and civilized Fadlan falls in with some barbaric Northmen, led by Buliwyf, as they head north to the halls of old Rothgar. The cannibalistic attackers are wendols, Neanderthalish beings who live in caves adjoining the sea, and after acquitting himself heroically in battle with these, Buliwyf dies at the hands of their venomous mother. Neil Gaiman's "Bay Wolf" (1999), on the other hand, wittily euhemerizes the text as a punning narrative poem. The Bay is that of *Baywatch*, a television show featuring attractive and scantily clad actors largely in lieu of a plot; the Wolf is the narrator, Lawrence Talbot, the werewolf first introduced in Universal Studios *The Wolf Man* (1941); and the monster is Grand Al.

Beowulf and Grendel have survived comfortably into the twenty-first century. The story has been discovered and has been repeatedly filmed: the 1999 *Beowulf* is weakly acted and has little in common with the original epic save the names of the character, but the 2005 *Beowulf and Grendel* raises ethical questions about the nature of humans, monsters, and monstrosity, and 2007 should see the release of the big-budget *Beowulf,* with a screenplay by Neil Gaiman and Roger Avary. Grendel appears as a character in Jacquelyn Reingold's otherwise negligible *Jiley Nance and Lednerg,* a one-act play in which Grendel is a "nasty old creature … a monster in disguise pretending to be nice" (57). Most intriguingly, 2005 and 2006 saw the performance of three

separate operas based on *Beowulf*: *Beowulf* (2005) by Lenny Pickett (composer and lyricist) and Lindsey Turner (lyricist) has become a rock opera, whereas Elliot Goldenthal's *Grendel: Transcendance of the Great Big Bad* (2006) retells the story from Grendel's perspective. Edwardo Perez's *Beowulf* (2006), on the other hand, is faithful to the original text and is sung in Old English.

For all that *Beowulf*'s Grendel is the best-known medieval monster, many others existed. Three major texts likely to have been known to medieval scholars are *The Wonders of the East*, the *Liber Monstrorum*, and the *Travels* of Sir John Mandeville. *The Wonders of the East* occurs "immediately following *The Passion of St. Christopher* in the *Beowulf*-manuscript" (Orchard 18). It consists of thirty-seven paragraphs detailing the inhabitants and environment of a land, Antimolima, which is populated by serpents with "two heads, whose eyes shine at night as brightly as lanterns" (Orchard 187), half-dogs with "horses manes and boars' tusks and dogs' heads and . . . breath like a fiery flame" (Orchard 189), and a variety of unusual inhabitants. There are people born "who are six feet tall . . . with bears to their knees, and hair to their heels" (Orchard 189), as well as people who are "fifteen feet tall and have white bodies and two faces on a single head, feet and knees very red, and long noses and black hair" (Orchard 191); there are the cannibalistic Hostes, "big and tall, who have feet and shanks twelve feet long, flanks with chests seven feet long" (Orchard 193), and on another island, "are born men without heads who have their eyes and mouth in their chests. They are eight feet tall and eight feet wide" (Orchard 193). Other monstrous humans include people "in size fifteen feet tall and ten broad" with "large heads and ears like fans" and women who "have boar's tusks and hair down to their heels and ox-tails on their loins" (Orchard 201).

Dating from approximately the ninth century C.E., the *Liber Monstrorum* is, like *The Wonders of the East*, a catalogue of monsters and wonders of the natural world. There is mention of a "certain girl . . . fifty feet was the length of her body, and she was seven feet wide between the shoulders" (Orchard 267), as well as Icthyophagi ("humans hairy in their whole body, who are said to live on water and raw fish, covered in natural nakedness only by bristles like wild animals"); Cynocephali, who possess "the heads of dogs, and spoil every word they say with mingled barks"; and "Sciapods, who have only one leg each for their feet, and their knees harden in an inflexible joint" (Orchard 269). Though little is made of their origins, the Sciapods play a supporting role in C. S. Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952).

Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* (no later than the fourteenth century) is a spurious travel book, a pastiche in the way that Lucian of Samosata's *True History* (second century C.E.), purports be a genuine historical narrative. "Sir John Mandeville"—perhaps Liege historian Jean d'Outremeuse—sets out for Jerusalem but emerges instead in such places as Tartary, Turkey, Persia, Egypt, and India. He encounters numerous wonders: in Bactria beings "that

dwell sometimes on land, sometime in water, and are halfe a man and halfe a horse, and they fede on men, when they may get them'' (Mandeville, chap. 85); in the land Macumeran people with heads "like hounds" (chap. 61), and on the Pitan Islands, little men that cannot eat meat and where "the people are feathered, but their face and the palmes of their hands" (chap. 89).

Whether William Shakespeare had read *The Wonders of the East*, the *Liber Monstrorum*, or the *Travels* of Sir John Mandeville has been debated, but there is no doubt that their monstrous elements endured and permeated the culture of Elizabethan England. In describing his wooing of Desdemona, Othello states that he told her "of the cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (1.3.143–45), clearly echoing the *The Wonders of the East*'s "born men without heads who have their eyes and mouth in their chests" and Mandeville's "in another ile dwell men that have no heads, and their eyes are in their shoulders, and their mouth is on their breast. In another ile are men that have no head no eyes, and their mouth is in their shoulders" (chap. 62). It is undoubtedly coincidental, but *Othello* also contains the most monstrous of humans, Iago, whose motiveless malignity destroys the relationships between Desdemona, Othello, Roderigo, and Cassio, leaving the first three dead.

Iago appears normal, but he is exceptional, and the evil natures of the majority of Shakespeare's monsters are reflected in their distorted forms. Specially notable are Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* (1594), whose behavior follows what Wells and Taylor describe "as an ancient tradition, blackness...associated with sin and death" (Shakespeare 819) and the hunchbacked Richard III (*Richard III*, 1597), whose warped body leads him to declaim in his opening soliloquy that "since I cannot prove a lover / to entertain these fair well-spoken days, / I am determined to prove a villain" (1.1.28–30). Shakespeare did not generally depict literal monsters, but in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600) the idiotic weaver Nick Bottom is briefly transformed into a being with an ass's head, though the transformation is treated comically and is soon resolved.

Shakespeare's truest monster is Caliban of *The Tempest* (1611). Like Grendel, Caliban has a mother, the witch Sycorax, though she is never seen and her powers are never detailed. The exact nature of Caliban's monstrosity is disputable—he is several times described as possessing the characteristics of a fish, and he is apparently at home in water—but he is nevertheless perhaps the first fully realized monster in literature, possessing an extensive internal life. As depicted, Caliban's physical monstrousness has a mental counterpart, for he was banished when he attempted to rape Miranda, an act for which he feels no contrition, boasting early that "Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.350–51). Caliban has been noted as a partial anagram of "cannibal," and he has likewise been linked to Native Americans and the Caribes. A reasonable number of works of fantastic fiction have directly utilized the characters of Caliban and Prospero: Darrell

Schweitzer's "Caliban's Revenge" (1978) continues the events of the play from Caliban's perspective, as does Tad Williams's *Caliban's Hour* (1994). Far more writers, however, have made reference to the names in the not-unreasonable belief that their readers will recognize the allusion. One thus has such characters as Philip José Farmer's "Doc Caliban," introduced in *A Feast Unknown* (1969) and *The Mad Goblin* (1970), and Elizabeth Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* (2006).

As far as can be determined, the English literature of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not produce or introduce many memorable monsters. This, however, is not to say that literary monsters were not present. A reader encountering the work whose title begins *A Relation of a Terrible Monster Taken by a Fisherman Neere Wollage, July the 15, 1642, and Is now to Be Seen in King's Street, Westminster. The Shape Whereof Is Like a Toad, and May Be Called a Toad-Fish; but that Which Makes It a Monster, Is, that It Hath Hands with Fingers Like a Man, and Is Chested Like a Man* (1642) or *A Declaration, of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster: Born in Kirkham Parish in Lancashire (the Childe of Mrs. Haughton, a Popish Gentlewoman) the Face of It upon the Breast, and without a Head (after the Mother Had Wished Rather to Bear a Childe without a Head then a Roundhead) and Had Curst the Parliamnet* [*sic*] (1645) would find the former a genuine attempt at describing and categorizing a natural oddity, with the pamphlet paying more attention to the what the rest of the title aptly describes as the *Relation of a Bloudy Encounter betwixt the Lord Faulconbridge and Sir John Hotham, wherein the Duke of Richmond Is Hurt, and the Lord Faulconbridge Taken Prisoner.* The *Declaration* is of course political satire, for perhaps the first time monsters were consciously created purely as allegorical figures, to present a specific viewpoint while demonizing those who opposed it. The literature of the times is full of similar works, and the titles of these—*The Life and Death of Mrs. Rump, and the Fatal End of Her Base-Born Brat of Destruction, with her Own First Hatching, and Bringing forth from the Devil's Arse a Peake, It Being the Only Place, from whence this Illegitimate Bastard or Monster Had Its Nativity* (1660), and *New News of a Strange Monster Found in Stow Woods near Buckingham, of Human Shape, with a Double Heart, and no Hands; a Head with Two Tongues, and no Brains* (1679), and so forth—make lively reading.

The monsters created to capitalize on England's political and social climate were short-lived, for roughly coeval with the English Civil Wars was the very start of the English Enlightenment. Figures such as John Locke (1632–1704), Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), and Anthony Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury (1671–1713) attempted to rationalize and explain the natural world, and the French, in particular such philosophers as Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Voltaire (1694–1778), shared their ideas of rationality and their belief in scientific empiricism as a way to interpret the world. Diderot's editorship of *L'Encyclopédie* (1751–1776) was enormously influential, for the resulting work served to combat superstition and presented a world in which

supernatural monsters could not exist. In the world of the Enlightenment, the only place for monsters was in literature, and the only literature conceivable of supporting them was the Gothic novel, which had among other intents a desire to recapture the heightened emotions believed to exist during the medieval period. The first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) effectively begins with a death, when tyrant Manfred's son Conrad is crushed beneath a monstrously large helmet, "a hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers" (28). For all that the novel opens with such a stirring event, the remainder of *The Castle of Otranto* concerns the restoration of property and the working out of a curse, not the discovery of a clutch of monsters with huge heads. It is likewise thus with the Gothic novel as a whole: characters were threatened with rape, torture, and death; bandits and necromancers occupied ruined castles in darkened forests; and supernatural events could and did occur; but traditional monsters were surprisingly absent from its pages.

The monster story was reinvigorated and effectively reborn in the summer of 1816, when a group of English travelers settled into a house on the banks of Lake Constance, saturated themselves in German ghost stories, and agreed to create their own stories of the supernatural. Two works produced by these travelers—George Gordon, Lord Byron; Dr. John Polidori; Clare Claremont; Percy Bysshe Shelley; and Mary Shelley—can be said to survive. Polidori wrote *The Vampyre* (1819), which became a best seller when he let it be falsely attributed to Lord Byron, whose own effort was but an unfinished prose fragment. For all that it is flawed, *The Vampyre* is the first significant English vampire story, and it proved immediately popular: it was rapidly dramatized and adopted to the point where in 1828 it had become *Der Vampyr*, a remarkably bad opera by Heinrich Marschner.

The other work produced during the summer of 1816 was of course Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The story has the familiarity of archetype: Victor Frankenstein creates a Being from body parts and animates it with lightning. The Being's request for a mate being thwarted, it wreaks revenge on Victor Frankenstein and his family, an innocent woman is executed for the monster's depredations, and Frankenstein belatedly accepts that he is responsible for the monster and its havoc. Intending to destroy it, he pursues it into the frozen North. The narrative begins on an ice floe and the above events are recounted in flashback. For all that *Frankenstein*'s storyline is simple, the work is complex, largely because the character of the monster is far from simple and yields itself to many levels of interpretation.

Because of its destructive nature, Shelley's monster has been linked to the earlier Caliban. It has also been linked to the Jewish Golem, a clay monster supposedly created and animated by Rabbi Judah Loew (or Lowe) of Prague during the sixteenth century to protect the Jewish residents against a pogrom initiated by Emperor Rudolph II. Perhaps because it is not intrinsically

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips.
>
> —*Mary Shelley,* Frankenstein

exciting—a golem lacks volition—or perhaps because writers of the fantastic are ignorant of or consciously avoid utilizing ethnic Jewish folklore, the golem has been largely eschewed as a character. Nevertheless, Gustav Meyrink's *The Golem* (1914), Avram Davidson's "The Golem" (*F&SF*, March 1955), and Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000) have all made use of the golem, with superior results. Meyrink's novel operates on several levels, having the golem as the spirit of the Jewish ghetto of Prague as well as being a symbolic representation of rebirth and immortality and the Jungian shadow of the protagonist, who, dressing in the golem's discarded clothes, briefly becomes the golem. Davidson's story, told with exemplary brevity, is quasi-science fiction, with the reader recognizing that the being menacing an elderly Jewish couple is in fact either an android or a robot that has killed its maker. Chabon's story is a vast and sprawling metanarrative with a Jewish sensibility that concentrates on the development and rise of comic books; the actual golem figures only briefly, but it remains a potent offstage presence.

Mary Shelley's monster has additionally been seen as a metaphor for the necessity to accept responsibility; as standing for the French Revolution; as representing Mary Shelley's relationship with Percy Shelley; and finally, as a partial representation of Mary Shelley herself. All these interpretations possess some validity, though some are certainly more valid than others, but a few additional points should be made. First, so far as can be determined, despite its charnel origins, the Being is referred to as a monster but twice in Mary Shelley's initial text. In addition, the Being is consistently visible as a character, and this visibility familiarizes it to the reader and does much to undermine the creation of a sense of terror, horror, or wonder which traditionally tends to accompany a discovery or display of the monstrous. These are in all probability Mary Shelley's intentions: the Being is not to be considered monstrous, and the story is that of the Being and its interactions with Victor Frankenstein and those around him. It should be emphasized that the Being is highly intelligent and educable. From observation of the de Lacy family, he learns language and of human social interactions, and though initially amiable—he

provides the de Lacy family with firewood each evening—he learns of violence, ambition, ruthlessness, and arrogance from his reading, being corrupted by Plutarch's *Lives*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. When it is discovered and driven from the area, the Being has learned to hate and sworn revenge on humanity in general and its creator in particular.

Largely because of the complexity of the Being's character, *Frankenstein* remains alive as a text and has become what Brian Aldiss affectionately refers to as "A Monster for All Seasons." It is almost impossible to overstate *Frankenstein*'s monumental importance in a wide variety of literary genres, and the number of works that may be linked directly or indirectly to it is incalculable. Any narrative in which a creation turns on (and perhaps destroys) its creator may reasonably be said to have its roots in *Frankenstein*. At the same time, as noted near the beginning of this chapter, the novel appears to occupy a curious position in American culture. Its premise is generally known without the book being widely read, and this knowledge would seem to be largely derived from Boris Karloff's iconic portrayal of the monster in James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* and its sequels.

Frankenstein remained consistently in print and was repeatedly dramatized for English audiences in such plays *Frankenstein; or, The Man and the Monster*, a two-act melodrama first performed in 1826. As this was occurring, writers in the newly established United States of America began to develop their own literature, often utilizing horrific elements. The most famous early American stories utilizing monsters and the monstrous are almost certainly those of Washington Irving (writing as Geoffrey Crayon). Two of the stories in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1821) are American classics: "Rip Van Winkle" describes the titular character's encounter with a variety of "odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins." Not only are they outlandishly dressed, but "their visages, too, were peculiar: one had a large head, broad face, and small piggish eyes; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose; and was surmounted by a white sugarloaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colours" (775). More explicitly monstrous is "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," which climaxes with the scrawny schoolteacher Ichabod Crane being pursued by a Headless Horseman, an executed Hessian whose head "was carried before him on the pommel of the saddle!" (1083). That reasonable and rational explanations are provided for the events in both stories in no way undermines their importance in American fantastic literature or as monster stories.

Far less explicable is Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), which begins as a sea story but rapidly becomes a sensationalistic account of attacks and shipwrecks, then becomes a puzzle story, as Pym and his companions encounter completely black figures in a land in which the color white is absent. Their adventures conclude with a

misty encounter with a white "shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men" (206). For all that he is enormously important as a writer of supernatural fiction, Poe made relatively little additional use of monsters, though doppelgängers appear in "William Wilson" (*The Gift*, 1839), hypostatized death appears in "The Masque of the Red Death" (*Graham's Magazine*, May 1842), and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (*American Whig Review*, December 1845) describes a terminally ill man, hypnotized at the point of death, whose decaying body retains its consciousness.

The English and American fiction of the mid-nineteenth century tended to focus on depicting and sensationalizing social situations rather than limning the monstrous. Nonetheless, for all that monsters tend to be few, monstrous elements do exist and can be found in the writings of authors as diverse, and as notable, as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and Charles Dickens.

Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's short stories frequently contain monstrous and horrific elements, and his single most horrible work is probably "Schalken the Painter" (*Dublin University Magazine*, May 1839), which features an ambulatory corpse: "the face!—all the flesh of the face was coloured with the bluish leaden hue, which is sometimes produced by metallic medicines, administered in excessive quantities; the eyes showed an undue proportion of muddy white, and had a certain indefinable character of insanity; the hue of the lips bearing the usual relation to that of the face, was, consequently, nearly black; and the entire character of the face was sensual, malignant, and even satanic" (38). This being (Vanderhausen) is married to an attractive young woman (Rose Velderkaust) by her greedy uncle, and though she initially resists, when she is last seen, there is little doubt that she and Vanderhausen have a not entirely unwilling sexual relationship. Additional elements of the monstrous appear in virtually all Le Fanu's work; even the completely mainstream *Uncle Silas* (1864) contains a wonderful ballad about a lady with a pig's head:

> This lady was neither pig nor maid,
> And so she was not of human mould;
> Not of the living nor the dead.
> Her left hand and foot were warm to the touch;
> Her right as cold as a corpse's flesh! (32)

as well as characters tending towards the grotesque, with Uncle Silas the most grotesque of all: "tall and slight, a little stooped, all in black ... I can't convey in words an idea of this apparition, drawn as it seemed in black and white, venerable, bloodless, fiery-eyed, with its singular look of power, and an expression so bewildering—was it derision, or anguish, or cruelty, or patience?" (192).

Some Curious Facts about Monsters in Literature

The word *monster* was first used in English by Geoffrey Chaucer in ''The Monk's Tale,'' in which it is stated that ''Was neuere wight sith that this world bigan / That slow so manye monstres as dide he.''

The first published work in English to have the word *monster* as part of its title appeared in 1531: *This Horyble **Monster** Is Cast of a Sowe in Eestlande in Pruse Two Myle from Runyngbergh in a Vyllage which is called lebe[n]hayn: Whiche **Monster** Hathe Had a Great Wyde Mouth, with Two Eyen, Foure Eares, no Stomacke nor Guttes [and] Two Hertes, viii. Fete, and the Body was Growe[n] Togyther from the Nauyll vp to the Hede, [and] with Thys Foresayde **Monster** Were Broughte forth. v. Yonge Pygges Alyue, and These Two Fygures Be Cou[n]terfeyted after the Facyon of the Sayd **Monster** both Before and Behynde.* It is nonfiction broadside about a monstrous pig.

No pulp magazine had the word *monster* as part of its title.

Weird Tales began publication in March 1923. The first story in it to have the word *monster* in its title was ''The Hairy Monster'' by Neil Miller in the issue of October 1923.

The first genre science fiction story to have the word *monster* in its title was ''Monsters of Moyen'' by Arthur J. Burks in *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* (April 1930).

The first genre science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, started in April 1926, but not until its July 1931 issue did it publish a story with the word *monster* in its title: ''The Metal Monster'' by Otis Adelbert Kline.

Only one story by H. P. Lovecraft appearing during his lifetime had the word *monster* in its title, and it was a story he had ghostwritten: ''The Invisible Monster,'' as by Sonia H. Greene, appeared in the November 1923 *Weird Tales.* The title was in fact supplied by the editor, Edwin Baird; Lovecraft's title was ''The Horror at Martin's Beach.''

The word *monster* occurs only twice in the titles of stories by Clark Ashton Smith published during his lifetime: ''The Monster of the Prophecy'' was published in *Weird Tales* in January 1932, and ''A Prophecy of Monsters'' was published in the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in October 1954. (Smith's original title for the latter was ''Monsters in the Night.'')

The Swedish word *mönster* means pattern, model, or standard. A *stickmönster* is a knitting pattern.

Much of Bulwer-Lytton's fiction contained supernatural elements, but his *Zanoni* (1842), an expansion of his *Zicci* (1841), features a monstrous being, the malignant-eyed Dweller of the Threshold, summoned when the character Glyndon violates instructions given to him by the sorcerer Mejnour, whose

disciple he wishes to be. The Dweller of the Threshold haunts Glyndon until it is removed by Zanoni, another of Mejnour's disciples, but one who has violated teachings by falling in love with the beautiful actress and opera singer Viola Pisani, who might have been Glyndon's bride but for her lower social status. In addition to possessing a remarkably convoluted plot, *Zanoni* is immensely overlong and turgid in its writing; even the descriptions of the malign Dweller of the Threshold tend to be overwritten, relying on too-frequent use of exclamation points to generate their impact: "it cowers in the distance—a silent Horror! it rises, it creeps, it nears thee, dark in its mantle of dusky haze! and under its veil it looks on thee with its livid, malignant eyes,—the thing of malignant eyes!" (296). For all its flaws, *Zanoni* remains capable of surprising, and the descriptions of the monstrous Dweller of the Threshold and its behavior are still occasionally powerful.

Bulwer-Lytton's supernatural fiction is perhaps best described as romantic occultism often with Rosicrucian elements, and a linkage between it and the social fiction of Charles Dickens might seem unlikely, but the two were in fact fast friends from about 1838 until Dickens's death in 1870; indeed, Dickens's seventh son was named for Bulwer-Lytton, and it was Bulwer-Lytton who persuaded Dickens to alter the conclusion of *Great Expectations* (1861). Furthermore, Dickens's *All the Year Round* published Bulwer-Lytton's *A Strange Story* (August 10, 1861–March 8, 1862).

Though many of Dickens's characters are physically grotesque, very few can be described as genuinely monstrous, but particularly notable and original is the character of Daniel Quilp, of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841). Quilp is misshapen and nasty, "so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf, though his head and face were large enough for the body of a giant. His black eyes were restless, sly, and cunning . . . but what added most to the grotesque expression of his face, was a ghastly smile . . . [that] constantly revealed the few discoloured fangs that were yet scattered in his mouth, and gave him the aspect of a panting dog" (22). A moneylender, rent-collector, and ship-wrecker by trade, Quilp gets sadistic pleasure from tormenting his meek wife Betsy and his meddlesome mother-in-law, Mrs. Jiniwin. Nor is his appearance the only thing monstrous about him. At breakfast, for example, "he ate hard eggs, shell and all, devoured gigantic prawns with the heads and tails on, chewed tobacco and water-cresses at the same time and with extraordinary greediness, drank boiling tea without winking, bit his fork and spoon till they bent again, and in short performed so many horrifying and uncommon acts that the women were nearly frightened out of their wits and began to doubt if he were really a human creature" (40). Quilp's machinations drive Little Nell and her Grandfather from their home and ultimately lead to her death, for Quilp is convinced that the Grandfather conceals wealth and wishes to possess it for himself.

The last great monster of the nineteenth century appeared in early 1886 with the publication of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll*

and Mr. Hyde (1886). Like *Frankenstein*, the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is so familiar as to be virtually iconographic. After various incidents describe the horrific behavior of Edward Hyde, who is somehow connected with the honorable Dr. Henry Jekyll, Hyde's body is found, as are several manuscripts that ultimately explain the relationship between the men: the questing Dr. Jekyll created a formula that permitted his dormant evil nature to assume physical dominance. Unfortunately, Mr. Hyde grows in strength even as Dr. Jekyll weakens, and Jekyll ultimately kills himself to prevent Mr. Hyde's ascendancy. For all that the story is familiar, it is full of surprises. First, Dr. Jekyll's account reveals that evil feels good:

> There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill race in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. (78)

Next, for all that he is monstrous—"alone in the ranks of mankind . . . pure evil" (79)—Edward Hyde is never described at any length. One would anticipate a figure of pure evil to be a veritable brute, and that is indeed how he has been portrayed in countless motion pictures and stage adaptations. Nevertheless, all descriptions state that Hyde is a slight man, "particularly small and particularly wicked-looking" (47), and that he is no brute makes him more menacing as well as making his behavior more monstrous.

The majority of the nineteenth century may have been largely bereft of monsters, but—almost as if to atone and compensate for their absence—they reappeared dramatically at the close of the century, and they have never left; more monsters have appeared in twentieth-century literature than in the literatures of all the previous centuries. Though the very idea of the twentieth century may have been an unsettling motivator to many early writers, the appearance of monsters cannot otherwise be linked to a specific individual or event, though certainly rapid developments in technology, changes in ethical constants and constraints, and the recognition that the unknown was often a more powerful subject than the known would have motivated many writers. On a more mundane and pragmatic level, the acceptance of horror and fantastic fiction as viable literary genres provided many with an opportunity to write and with marketplaces for their prose.

Though H. G. Wells is traditionally and very reasonably considered a pioneering writer of science fiction, but as *Frankenstein* has shown there is sometimes a very fine line between the classifications of science fiction and horror fiction, and H. G. Wells must be included in the camp of writers who

created several enduring monsters. Indeed, Wells's first novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), has a significant horrific component: the Time Traveller steps from his machine in the year 802,701, when all seems peaceful and idyllic; he befriends and spends time with the innocent Eloi. Only gradually does he realize that beneath the fields and meadows lurk the Morlocks—"queer little ape-like figure[s] . . . it was dull white, and had strange large greyish-red eyes; also . . . there was flaxen hair on its head and down its back" (34)—for whom the Eloi are nothing more than cattle to be consumed. The Time Traveller's discovery has the effect of altering the entire narrative thrust: his is no longer a voyage of scientific discovery but a subterranean battle for survival against a dimly glimpsed cannibalistic foe.

Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau: A Possibility* (1896) effectively turns the idea of horror onto itself by questioning the natures of monstrosity and humanity. The novel opens with a series of events that deliver protagonist Edward Prendick to the island inhabited by Dr. Moreau. Screams of pain from Dr. Moreau's laboratory and glimpses of bestial servants convince Prendick that Dr. Moreau is vivisecting humans, turning them into animals. As Prendick ultimately discovers, he is completely wrong: Dr. Moreau is turning animals into humans. What had started as a work of biological horror has become a work that questions the nature and essence of humanity—but for all that, the surgically altered animals remain as conceptually monstrous as Victor Frankenstein's composite Being.

Additional horrific elements are found in Wells's *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). In the former, Griffin, an albino medical student discovers the formula for invisibility and behaves abominably, his megalomaniacal narrative demonstrating a monstrous nature that was held in check when he was visible and thus accountable to society and the world at large. In the latter novel, the invading Martians—barely glimpsed, destructive, lethal, seemingly invulnerable—are little more than traditional fairy tale monsters, arrogant giants crushing ants, unaware that a giant-killer is waiting in the wings.

Wells's contemporary was Irish writer Bram Stoker, whose *Dracula* (1897) is certainly the most famous vampire novel written, and Stoker was friendly with fellow novelist Richard Marsh. Indeed, *Dracula* was briefly outsold by Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), a ramshackle work in which an Egyptian woman transforms into "a monstrous beetle—a huge, writhing creature of some wild nightmare" (171) before the hero and the narrative lurch back to England. Both authors continued writing stories of the fantastic and horrific. Stoker's last novel, *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), features a genuine monster: the White Worm, a gigantic snake of more than human intelligence. It can manifest itself as a human, the beautiful Lady Arabella March, and it and she assault those who would interfere. Though the concept of the White Worm is original, *The Lair of the White Worm* is largely unsuccessful as a novel, but Stoker will be remembered for *Dracula*, whose epigones are without number.

An additional late-nineteenth-century monster was created by Arthur Machen. Machen, who has been mentioned for "The Great God Pan," frequently used monstrous and horrific elements in his fiction. Outstanding thus is "Novel of the White Powder" (a segment of *The Three Imposters*, 1895), a remarkably suspenseful novelette in which an incorrectly filled prescription has dreadful ramifications, turning its victim into a foul slimy monstrosity. The premise is potentially humorous—it continues to serve as the basis for cartoons by such artists as Gahan Wilson—but Machen's development and denouement are genuinely horrific. Nevertheless, for all that he was a fine writer with an excellent imagination, Machen was no H. G. Wells or Bram Stoker, and he failed to provide later generations with narrative patterns or beings that could be copied and adapted; his monsters thus remain fresh, for they are virtually without followers.

Wells, Stoker, Marsh, and Machen all wrote into the twentieth century, but the first great twentieth-century creator of monsters was William Hope Hodgson. The son of an Essex clergyman, Hodgson had while young gone to sea, but with disastrous results; he was apparently abused, the experiences leaving him psychologically scarred for life. He became a photographer and a physical culturist in Blackpool, and in 1902 he achieved some notoriety when Harry "Handcuff King" Houdini came to town claiming to be able to escape from any bonds: Hodgson's knowledge of musculature led to Houdini being imprisoned for over an hour and barely succeeding in freeing himself. Before he perished in the First World War, Hodgson published several collections of short stories, a number of which concern themselves with cleanliness and depict people transforming into nonhuman beings: most significant of these are "The Terror in the Water Tank" (*Blue Book Magazine*, September 1907), which involves lethal tentacled monsters emergent from unclean water, and "The Voice in the Night" (*Blue Book Magazine*, November 1907), which describes the horrible fate that befalls a shipwrecked couple, who end as little more than animated fungi.

Hodgson wrote four significant novels, all of which are horrific and concern monsters and the monstrous. *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* (1907) depicts the horrors that befall a group of castaways drifting through the weed choked Sargasso Seas: the first land they encounter has oddly shaped plants that have apparently subsumed all animal life, including previous castaways; these plants resemble their victims and scream and bleed when cut. A second land is the home of monstrous "human slugs," slimy Weed Men with tentacles instead of fingers. *The House on the Borderland* (1908), on the other hand, begins firmly on land, a frame narrative concerning the discovery of a manuscript in ruins by a chasm; the manuscript's narrative is cosmic horror, recounting terrible visions of a nightmarish landscape occupied by evil gods, after which monstrous swinish beings emerge from the chasm and besiege the house, ultimately destroying him and the house. (The novel has the emotional intensity of a prolonged shriek.) *The Ghost Pirates* (1909), is disturbingly

quiet, describing the fate that befalls a sailing ship and its crew, for the *Mortzestus* abuts another world, one containing ghost pirates inimical to humanity in general and the *Mortzestus* in particular. *The Night Land* (1912) is set millions of years in the future, long after the sun is extinct and most of humanity huddles in great pyramidal redoubts, but it too features monsters intent upon destroying what remains of humanity.

Hodgson's fiction operates on many levels but at its most basic it tends to depict dimly comprehensible horrors erupting into and disrupting the safe and established routines of our world; humanity thus exists precariously, for one never knows when, where, or how the monsters will attack. This viewpoint is consistent with those of Wells, Stoker, Marsh, and Machen, but it was completely at variance with the monster literature being written in the United States, which at that time tended to emphasize the physical aspects of horror and its monstrosities.

The most significant early twentieth-century American writer of these stories was better known for his historical novels and wrote only one collection of monster tales, but it remains a landmark work: Edward Lucas White's *Lukundoo and Other Stories* (1927). The title story involves an African curse delivered on a faithless suitor: Ralph Stone is doomed to have Balunda fetishmen emerge from his body, a monstrous, devastating, and ultimately fatal curse. "The Snout" is the narrative of a burglar whose friends and he attempt to rob the house of a wealthy recluse. They discover first that the owner collects and paints monstrous images—"they were human figures, but not one had a human head. The heads were invariably those of birds, animals or fishes, generally of animals, some of common animals, many of creatures I had seen pictures of or had heard of, some of imaginary creatures like dragons or griffons, more than half of the heads either of animals I knew nothing of or which had been invented by the painter" (120–21). They discover monstrous reinterpretations of classical and historical subjects, and then they encounter the owner, as monstrous as his artwork, and are fortunate to survive. "Lukundoo" and "The Snout" are chaste in their presentation of the monstrous—Stone's history is presented and dismissed in barely a paragraph, and the narrator makes a point of stating that no women figure in "The Snout"—but in "Amina" there is a remarkable sexual tension as Waldo, a tourist visiting the deserts of Persia, encounters a "bareheaded and unveiled" (227) woman, Amina. He observes her arms ("the most muscular he had ever seen on a human being" [227]), her nails ("pointed and long, both on her hands and feet" [227]), her hair ("black, short and tousled" [227]), and he admires her lips; when they walk, he notices how "her swathing garments clung to a lithe, shapely back, neat waist, and firm hips" (228). The story is awash in sexual tension as Amina takes Waldo to her dwelling, where Waldo meets her surprisingly numerous children—and then the entire focus changes with the fortuitous arrival of the American consul, who promptly shoots Amina. Waldo learns that he has just been saved from a terrible fate, for she has "not

human teeth, but small incisors, cusped grinders, wide-spaced; and long, keen, overlapping canines, like those of a greyhound: a fierce, deadly, carnivorous dentition, menacing and combative" (233). There is more: when Amina's clothes are stripped from her body, what Waldo sees is "not the front of a woman, but more like the underside of an old fox-terrier with puppies, or of a white sow, with her second litter; from collar-bone to groin ten lolloping udders, two rows, mauled, stringy and flaccid" (223). This is the stuff of nightmares, and in a brief afterword White reveals that is indeed their origin. Seabury Quinn's "Children of Ubasti" (*Weird Tales*, December 1929) clearly borrows much from White's "Amina," but for all that Quinn was White's inferior as a writer, the image holds its power: Amina is a memorable albeit minor monster.

For all that White was a twentieth-century writer, his monsters are small, personal, and material: there is no sense of the cosmic or the enormous, and there is no sense of inimical forces arrayed against humanity. This is not the case with the monstrous horrors created by Rhode Island writer H. P. Lovecraft, whose monsters are great and malevolent and occupy a pantheon all of their own of Lovecraft's creation. Though this pantheon is not consistent—some of Lovecraft's stories are fantastic, others weird fiction, still others science fiction—at the top of the hierarchy are Yog-Sothoth and Azathoth. The former is described in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" (*Weird Tales*, July 1934; written with E. Hoffmann Price) as being "limitless" (439), though in "The Dunwich Horror" (*Weird Tales*, April 1929) its child (with human Lavinia Whateley) is described as being like "an octopus, centipede, spider kind o' thing" (197) that looked "like the father" (198). Azazoth is, in "The Dreams in the Witch House" (*Weird Tales*, July 1933), a "mindless daemon sultan" (293) whose throne lies "at the centre of ultimate Chaos" (272), and who also appears in *The Dream-Quest of the Unknown Kadath* (written 1926–1927) and "The Haunter of the Dark" (*Weird Tales*, December 1936). Beneath Yog-Sothoth and Azathoth are "Shub-Niggurath," also known as "The Goat with a Thousand Young," and "Nyarlathotep," the latter of whom apparently originated in ancient Egypt but whose earthly form is inconsistent; on occasion, it manifests itself as a Black Man. Space does not permit the discussion of all the remaining deities in this pantheon, but the being whose name is often associated with it must be mentioned: Cthulhu. The leader of a race of aliens, the octopoidal Cthulhu and his minions built the city R'lyeh, but it sank, and the undying Cthulhu is imprisoned in the sunken city, waiting for it to rise again, at which point he will emerge and conquer the Earth. Lovecraft did not use the term "Cthulhu Mythos" to refer to his fiction—it was first used by his follower, August Derleth—but the term has stuck, particularly when it refers to the stories containing the monsters, and outstanding among these works are the aforementioned stories as well as "The Colour out of Space" (*Amazing Stories*, September 1927), "The Call of Cthulhu" (*Weird Tales*,

February 1928), *At the Mountains of Madness* (*Astounding Stories*, February–April 1936), and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (written 1927). Though it is not monstrous in and of itself, the beings mentioned above can be summoned by the *Necronomicon*, a volume written by the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred; those who possess it nearly always die unpleasantly.

The number of writers influenced by Lovecraft is almost countless and continues to increase. Little point can be served by attempting to list these—the curious are referenced to Chris Jarocha-Ernst, who provides 2,631 citations in *A Cthulhu Mythos Bibliography and Concordance* (1999)—but a few of Lovecraft's contemporaries deserve mention. In addition to August Derleth—a Wisconsin regionalist, none of whose Lovecraft pastiches is exceptional but who used Lovecraftian fragments in some of his efforts—mention must be made of Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard. Though they never met, they were among Lovecraft's many correspondents.

A California writer, Smith had a career as a poet and had published substantially prior to his introduction to Lovecraft in 1922. The majority of his fantastic stories are set in one of five locations: Averoigne, Hyperborea, Poseidonis, Zothique, and Mars. (Smith's Mars is alien and has nothing in common with the planet save the name.) Although the stories share the same fantastic locations, they are only occasionally connected, linked, or internally consistent. Nevertheless Smith spent time conceiving and differentiating these settings, and while Lovecraftian elements appear in the Averoigne stories, the works set in Hyperborea are often considered Smith's most explicitly Lovecraftian and introduce his most memorable creation. Hyperborea, a generally icy place, is inhabited by the malign deity Tsathoggua—described in ''The Tale of Satampra Zeiros'' (*Weird Tales*, November 1931) as ''very squat and potbellied, his head . . . more like that of a monstrous toad than a deity, and his whole body . . . covered with an imitation of short fur, giving somehow a vague suggestion of both the bat and the sloth'' (11)—whose appearance generally curtails the lives of all who encounter him.

Tsathoggua is Smith's most memorable addition to the Lovecraft pantheon, but Smith's fiction abounds with monsters and the monstrous, for he set himself to be as grotesque and visionary as possible. While the majority of these stories cannot be discussed in this space, ''The Colossus of Ylourgne''

The surface I uncovered was fishy and glassy—a kind of semi-putrid congealed jelly with suggestions of translucency. I scraped further, and saw that it had form. There was a rift where a part of the substance was folded over. The exposed area was huge and roughly cylindrical; like a mammoth soft blue-white stovepipe doubled in two, its largest part some two feet in diameter.

—H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Shunned House''

(*Weird Tales*, June 1934) deserves mention simply for its exuberantly grotesque and horrific central conceit, in which the sorcerer Nathaire takes vengeance against the people of Vyones. He summons animated corpses to him and merges their bodies into that of the Colossus: "from the fresh bodies of the dead, which otherwise would have rotted away in charnel foulness, my pupils and familiars are making for me, beneath my instruction, the giant form whose skeleton you have beheld. My soul . . . will pass into this colossal tenement through the working of certain spells of transmigration" (137). This comes to pass, and it is up to young Gaspard du Nord, a former pupil of Nathaire who has renounced his master's teachings, to stop the rampaging rotting monster. Equally memorable is "The Seven Geases" (*Weird Tales*, October 1934), a substantial work in which Smith permits his cruel humor to be leavened with an equally cruel moral: one may be impossibly brave and heroic and accomplish the impossible, but time and chance bring down all. The story describes the fate that befalls Ralibar Vooz, an arrogant nobleman who disturbs the mighty sorcerer Ezdagor, who sets the first geas upon him: "you must cast aside all your weapons and go unarmed into the dens of the Voormis; and fighting bare-handed against the Voormis and against their females and their young, you must win to that secret cave in the bowels of Voormithadreth, beyond the dens, wherein abides from eldermost eons the god Tsathoggua" (50). Vooz must then present himself to Tsathoggua saying, "I am the blood-offering sent by the sorcerer Ezdagor" (50). If Tsathoggua is hungry, Vooz will become its meal. Tsathoggua is not hungry, but Vooz's adventures are far from over.

Smith specialized in the exotic and esoteric; not so Robert E. Howard, a Texas writer, whose fantasies tended to be colorful and heroic, depicting a supernatural threat meeting a strong physical opposition. Soul-destroying creatures (inspired by Lovecraft) are glimpsed in the Roman revenge fantasy, "Worms of the Earth" (*Weird Tales*, November 1932), whereas the prehistoric fantasy "The Valley of the Worm" (*Weird Tales*, February 1934) introduces a gigantic snake as well as a horrific tentacled monster that emerges from a hole in the ground to wreak havoc. To sit next to the *Necronomicon*, Howard created an equally fictional volume, von Juntz's *Nameless Cults*; Lovecraft provided von Juntz's first and middle names. As with Smith, Howard's fiction abounds with monsters and the monstrous. His Puritan swordsman Solomon Kane encounters flesh-eating descendants of the harpies

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And the mass stirred a little at his approach, and put forth with infinite slothfulness a huge and toad-shaped head. And the head opened its eyes very slightly, as if awakened from slumber, so that they were visible as two slits of oozing phosphor in the black, browless face.

—*Clark Ashton Smith, "The Seven Geases"*

subdued by Jason in "Wings in the Night" (*Weird Tales*, July 1932) and takes a horrible vengeance on them. Howard's best-known creation is undoubtedly Conan the Barbarian who, while slaughtering his way to a crown, encounters a variety of monsters ranging from the relatively mundane—giant anthropoids in "Rogues in the House" (*Weird Tales*, January 1934) and giant snakes in "The Scarlet Citadel" (*Weird Tales*, January 1933)—to the exotic: dinosaurs in "Red Nails" (*Weird Tales*, July 1936) and elephantoid extraterrestrial beings in "The Tower of the Elephant" (*Weird Tales*, March 1933). The being in the latter tale owes much to Lovecraft.

Howard committed suicide in 1936, Lovecraft died in 1937, and Smith became largely inactive as a writer, dying in 1961. Their works were published by Derleth, who in 1939 established the still-operational small press Arkham House to print Lovecraft's writings. Other writers began to utilize Lovecraft's pantheon of monsters and the monstrous, and he posthumously became one of the most influential twentieth-century writers. So too did Howard, who effectively created what has become known as "heroic fantasy" or "sword and sorcery" fantasy, and whose epigones tended to provide stories featuring iron-thewed heroes battling wizards and monsters. Little point is served by listing these writers and describing their creations, for however technically skilled they could be, their pastiches ultimately trivialized the originals.

Lovecraft, Smith, and Howard appeared largely in the pages of pulp magazines, *Weird Tales* in particular, and from the 1920s until the 1950s American audiences interested in tales of monsters and the monstrous needed only to turn to the pulp magazines to find them. *Weird Tales*, and magazines with such names as *Strange Stories*, *Terror Tales*, *Eerie Stories*, and *Uncanny Tales*, were in some cases very short-lived, but all were open to and published their share of monster stories, lurid fiction with titles such as Frederic C. Davis's "The Mole Men Want Your Eyes" (*Horror Stories*, April/May 1938). English monster fiction remained largely unremarkable during this time, though there are moments of interest in Alan Hyder's *Vampires Overhead* (1935), in which humanity is besieged and largely exterminated by cold-eyed beings of unknown origin. Probably the most notable work of the period is J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), which introduces the devolved and predatory Gollum, a dragon (Smaug), and a were-bear (Beorn). Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954–1955) utilized not only Gollum but introduced such creatures as orcs (goblins) and a giant spider (Shelob) as well as a Balrog, a monstrous being of enormous magical power.

Motion pictures began to play a significant role in the introduction of durable monsters. James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) has been mentioned, but it was one of many motion pictures that utilized some aspect of the *Frankenstein* story; almost always these concluded with the death of Victor Frankenstein, the death of the monster, and the destruction of his laboratory or castle, for these motion pictures were highly conservative in their support of the status quo. None of them ever recognized the essence of the scientific

method, which states that experiments—whether forbidden or not does not matter—can be replicated by others.

During the 1950s, numerous monsters came from outer space, often with the intent of subjugating the human (read: American) race. Similarly, many monsters were the unintentional and unanticipated byproducts of exposure nuclear radiation; they are atomic mutants, often found lurking in caverns or caves. Critics and scholars have noted that both groups of monsters are expressions of manifest anxiety: they represent nuclear fears, and they can be seen as metaphors for communists and the communist threat, for this was near the beginning of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Many such monster movies were made, but the year 1954 was a banner year for them. It marks the first appearance of the Japanese monster whose name was anglicized to Godzilla when the movie was released in the United States (1956). First appearing in *Gojira* (1954), Godzilla was a gigantic fire-breathing saurian who (like great Cthulhu) lay dormant beneath the sea; he is awakened and proceeds to attack and destroy much of Tokyo before being destroyed himself: his is a cautionary tale, a warning of the dangers posed by atomic radiation. Godzilla has been resurrected in numerous sequels and has ultimately become a champion for humanity, battling gigantic crabs, other monsters, robots, and monsters from outer space, occasionally with the assistance of his young son. At times obviously a person in a rubber suit, at other times obviously a rubber model, Godzilla nevertheless retains his charm and is a durable cultural influence. (The exception is the 1998 big budget motion picture, which though faithful to a vision of what Godzilla can be, manages to be remarkably leaden—and commits the ultimate sin of using a CGI for Godzilla.)

Them! (1954) involves the discovery of gigantic ants in the deserts of the American Southwest. Created from exposure to atomic radiation, these ants prove resilient and deadly: escaping the destruction of her nest, the queen ant lays her eggs in the storm drains of Los Angeles. The resulting insect versus human battle undoubtedly inspired such writers as Robert Heinlein, whose *Starship Troopers* (1959) describes similar battles on other worlds, one of the themes being the battle between the insect hivemind and the human intellect.

The last successful monster introduced during the 1954 is the Gill-Man, introduced in the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954). Possessing gills and webbed flippers, the Gill-Man is slow and clumsy on land but swift and graceful under water, from which environment he lurks unseen and observes a scientific expedition. He is attracted to the female scientist in the expedition, and this attraction provides the ensuing story with a strong erotic element, almost as weird as that in White's "Amina." The Gill-Man was resurrected in *Revenge of the Creature* (1954) and *The Creature Walks among Us* (1956), and he remains a culturally familiar image, perhaps not so iconic as Boris Karloff's *Frankenstein* but sufficiently viable to be recognizable as an ancestor

to Stephen Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), one of the most successful of all monster movies, albeit not fantastic.

During the 1960s, monsters appeared on television shows with reasonable regularity. "The Twilight Zone" (1959–1964) and "Star Trek" (1966–1969) tended to treat them reasonably seriously, whereas "The Munsters" (1964–1966) and "The Addams Family" (1964–1966) played them for laughs. The latter two shows featuring beings whose appearances were monstrous—Herman Munster resembled Boris Karloff's portrayal of Frankenstein's monster, and others in his family were likewise exceptional, whereas the equally extraordinary Addams inhabited a bizarre world initially envisioned by cartoonist Charles Addams—but their values were "wholesome" and unexceptionally American. Though the shows continue to have fans, all are ultimately repetitive and largely unmemorable, a statement that, sadly, can be applied to virtually all the literature and motion pictures of the time. The sole exception was a low-budget black-and-white motion picture that had no pretensions or aspired to be anything more than a horror feature: *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) not only restored the dead to life, but brought them back as mindless flesh-eating ghouls. One of the most successful monster movies ever made, *Night of the Living Dead* has spawned numerous sequels and continuations.

The monster motion pictures of the 1970s began on an undistinguished note, the pictures featuring such creatures as missing links (*Trog*, 1970), frogs (*Frogs*, 1972), rabbits (*Night of the Lepus*, 1972), two-headed beings (*The Thing with Two Heads*, 1972), bats (*Chosen Survivors*, 1974), dogs (*Digby, the Biggest Dog in the World*, 1974), ants (*Phase IV*, 1974), and cockroaches (*Bug*, 1975, and *Damnation Alley*, 1977). The literature from the time was equally moribund, though some notable exceptions—for example, John Gardner's *Grendel*—have been mentioned. There are, however, two motion pictures from the 1970s that changed the way in which monsters were presented. The first, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) is, like *Night of the Living Dead*, an unpretentious horror movie, in which a group of attractive "average" young people encounters a terrifying family of cannibals led by the monstrous chainsaw wielding Leatherface. The second, *Star Wars* (1977), is traditionally considered a big-budget science fiction epic, but it created a new visual language and set a new standard for the portrayal of convincing aliens, and its most interesting character is the most villainous and least human: as introduced, Darth Vader is a masked being of uncertain but potent supernatural powers, a monstrous creature who thinks nothing of destroying entire worlds. Both movies continue to have sequels and continuations made that, while technically more proficient than the originals, are also less interesting.

Though their writing careers started in the 1960s, Stephen King and Dean Koontz became bestsellers during the 1970s and have remained so into the twenty-first century. Neither writer was at first particularly original in his creation of monsters and the presentation of the monstrous. Each had however an accessible and colloquial literary style and possessed the capacity to

think large and logically: King's *The Shining* (1977), for example, takes the traditional haunted house story and extends it to a haunted hotel, whose grounds are likewise haunted. King's most original monster is probably Randall Flagg, a being first introduced in *The Stand* (1978; rev. 1990) who later appears in *Eyes of the Dragon* (1984) and the Dark Tower/Gunslinger series (1982 f.); seemingly human, Flagg is in reality a dimension spanning force born of contemporary evil. His powers are inconsistent, but he can fly, shape shift, and hypnotize and madden with his voice. None of Koontz's monsters are as vast or as devastating as Flagg, but Koontz's characters battle encroaching demons in *Darkfall* (1984) and discover evil goblins lurking beneath human faces in *Twilight Eyes* (1985). *Phantoms* (1983) begins as a combination of horror and mystery, asking (among other questions) how the population of an entire town could have disappeared, but the answer is ultimately science fiction.

King and Koontz were largely responsible for establishing a boom in horror literature that endures. They also paved the way for a generation with more original literary creations. (This is not to disparage the work of King and Koontz.) One thus has such writers as Ramsey Campbell, for example, whose first significant work was the Lovecraft-inspired *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants* (1964) but who has gone on to write numerous psychological thrillers, sometimes not particularly fantastic, though he has never left Lovecraft behind. Campbell inspired Clive Barker, whose works are redolent with homages to Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Machen, Clark Ashton Smith, and H. P. Lovecraft, sometimes explicitly stated, sometimes lurking just beneath the text for an aware reader to seize upon. At the same time, they cannot be called derivative and are frequently highly original. Joe R. Lansdale's "Down by the Sea Near the Great Big Rock" (1984), for example, introduces a mineral monster with terrifying powers; "On the Far Side of the Cadillac Desert with Dead Folks" (1989), on the other hand, tells a western story in a world of the reanimated cannibalistic corpses of the *Night of the Living Dead*. Robert McCammon's *Boy's Life* (1992) casually introduces a raft of horror icons on a train ride but never identifies them; if the reader does not recognize the Mummy, the Vampire, and Frankenstein's Monster, much is lost. Similarly, Rhys Hughes references virtually all the writers mentioned in this chapter, making allusions to (and jokes about) the *Necronomicon*, Lovecraft, Machen, and *Frankenstein*, among others, yet in such works as "Elusive Plato" creating highly original and chimerical monsters.

For all that the above writers are original and innovative, they are often unfairly classed as genre writers, a term that permits critics to pigeonhole and dismiss them. The writer Thomas Harris is likewise sometimes classed and dismissed as a thriller writer, but he is also the creator of the most successful and enduring monster of the 1980s and beyond. Introduced in *Red Dragon* (1981), Dr. Hannibal Lecter is a peripheral character, but he manages to be significantly more interesting than the other characters, a fact that Harris must

have recognized, for in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and its sequel *Hannibal* (1999), Dr. Lecter assumes the role of a major character. He is a brilliant scholar, a gourmet cook, fluent in Italian, intimately familiar with art, medicine, literature, and music—in brief, he seems to represent an apex of Western culture. Yet Dr. Lecter is physically abnormal, possessing six fingers, red eyes, and senses so preternaturally acute that the smell of a new wristwatch band causes him discomfort; he is also an utter sociopath and an unrepentant cannibal. He is, in a word, a monster. Nor is he just any monster: he is the late-twentieth-century manifestation of Mr. Hyde, the depravity of his behavior contrasting vividly with the heights of his potentials and achievements. It is probably not coincidental that, like Mr. Hyde, Dr. Lecter is physically a small man.

Although serial killers existed and were written about prior to the advent of Dr. Lecter, he has become ubiquitous and standing behind virtually every work in which a brilliant killer is utilized or tracked by a law enforcement agent. That Dr. Lecter has been so successful and has become so immediately recognizable as a character shows that there is still a great cultural demand for the depiction of a monster and the monstrous. The present generation of writers is aware of this, and it not only draws upon the monsters created by the earlier generations, but also uses them in new ways, or consciously rejects them in an attempt to create new monsters. The present generation of monster writers has, become then, a postmodern generation, reinterpreting the ideas and tropes of fiction to create works that, in the words of Larry McCaffery, have "a shared heightening of artifice, a delight in verbal play and formal manipulation of fictive elements, the widespread use of fantasy and surrealism, a tendency to present obviously fictive characters working out their destinies in landscapes of pure language, dream, or other fiction" (xii). In the hands of this generation, anything may occur, and the writings of its most notable practitioners are remarkably and gratifyingly diverse. British writers Angela Carter and Patrick McGrath explore strange sexualities and warped personalities in often labyrinthine narratives, but they do not eschew the traditionally monstrous: Carter made frequent reference to the often gruesome fairy tales collected by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm; what is perhaps her best-known work, "The Company of Wolves" (1979), retells the story of Little Red Riding Hood, linking it with werewolves and questions of sexual identity. The stories in McGrath's *Blood and Water and Other Tales* (1988) make use of such beings as vampires and such monstrous tropes as hauntings and animated hands, whereas the narrators in such later works as *The Grotesque* (1989), *Spider* (1990), *Dr. Haggard's Disease* (1993), and *Asylum* (1997) are often utterly unreliable, forcing the reader to create an interpretation and a story that may differ substantially from the narrative that has been recounted.

Orson Scott Card is best known as a science fiction writer and a fantasist, but his early *A Planet Called Treason* (1979; revised as *Treason*, 1988) introduces Lanik Mueller, a "radical regenerative" (6) whose body grows extra

limbs and organs, to the point where, after prolonged imprisonment in a ship's hold, he is barely recognizable as human: "a new nose was growing alongside and partly joined to the old. On the left side of my head, three ears protruded from my shaggy hair. My body was a hodgepodge of arms and legs that had never been taught to walk or grasp" (104). Card is also the author of the remarkably nasty "Eumenides in the Fourth Floor Lavatory" (1979), in which a loathsome manipulative individual finds himself attacked by monstrous bloodsucking babies with tentacles which may not exist but certainly should be seen as metaphoric extensions and representations of him. "Eumenides in the Fourth Floor Lavatory" is a highly original story of guilt and punishment, and it is to be regretted that Card has concentrated his efforts elsewhere and left this particular vein of fiction unmined.

Welsh writer Rhys Hughes references virtually all the writers mentioned in this chapter, collections such as *Worming the Harpy and Other Bitter Pills* (1995) and *The Smell of Telescopes* (2000) and novels such as *Eyelidiad* (1996), making allusions to (and jokes about) the *Necronomicon*, Lovecraft, Machen, Poe, and *Frankenstein*, among others, yet in such works as "Elusive Plato" creating highly original and chimerical monsters, as when Bartleby Cadiz describes a disastrous gender changing operation: "Porlock had made a surprisingly messy job. The stitches warbled over my torso and thighs like strangled sobs. My stuffed hips were lopsided; my artificial vagina formed a sinuous curve; my breasts were lumpy and mismanaged. Even odder was the fact that whiskers radiated from my aureoles . . . my nipples were black noses" (118).

Hughes is friendly with American Jeff VanderMeer, many of whose most notable stories are set in the fantastic city of Ambergris and are presented in such works as *Dradin, in Love* (1996), *The Book of Lost Places* (1996), and *City of Saints and Madmen* (2002). VanderMeer's *Veniss Underground* (2003) is science fiction of a sort, and occurs in a world in which biological engineering is routine and often horrific; Quin, in addition to making enhanced Meerkats, has a circus in which "glass cages embedded in the walls glowed with an emerald light, illuminating a bizarre bunch of critters: things with no eyes, things with too many eyes, things with too many limbs, things with too many teeth, things with too many *things*" (22).

The world created by British writer China Miéville owes little to VanderMeer or any of the other writers mentioned in this chapter, but Miéville's city of New Crobuzon is as vast, teeming, and well realized as Ambergris. As described in *Perdido Street Station* (2000) and in *The Scar* (2002), New Crobuzon is full of sentient species co-existing with humanity; and magic can work, although some are more magically gifted than others. Much of the conflict of *Perdido Street Station* concerns the results arising from the hatching and inadvertent release of a slake moth, a monstrous transdimensional being that drains the thoughts and dreams of its prey, leaving behind

only a mindless hulk after it is done feeding. In Miéville's world, the human form is utterly mutable, and bio-sculpting can be used to blend characteristics from widely different species; a particularly poignant moment comes when Isaac der Grimnebulin, the protagonist of *Perdido Street Station*, hoping to see an intact garauda (a rarely seen flying being) visits a sideshow and sees something: ''its flesh hung heavy off it like a pudgy schoolboy's. Its skin was pale and pockmarked with disease and cold . . . bizarre nodes of tissue burst from its bunched toes, claws drawn by children. Its head was swathed in feathers, but feathers of all sizes and shapes, jammed at random from its crown to its neck in a thick, uneven, insulating layer'' (89–90). This being is a burglar, horribly punished for having attempted to steal a picture of a gar-auda: ''Magister said since I was so impressed with garuda I could . . . I could be one'' (91). Other monstrous hybrids occur.

Rhode Island writer Paul Di Filippo's *A Mouthful of Tongues: Her Totipotent Tropicanalia* (2002) is science fiction, depicting what occurs when the much put-upon Kerry Hackett exposes herself to the benthic, ''the only entity composed of one hundred percent realtime totipotent cells'' (24). She is instantly transformed: ''a broad glistening coral-tinged pseudopod of the benthic pops up from beneath her shirtcollar, rearing back like a hooded snake calculatedly considering where to strike'' (36), and she undergoes a microevolution before emerging as a sexually omnivorous metamorphic creature, human only in appearance. Though her transformation requires no surgery, she is nevertheless monstrous, as androgynous as Bartleby Cadiz, as artificial as the false garuda, and her story becomes one of pansexual adventures through the Southern Hemisphere before she returns to the United States and offers it transformation, turning people into tropical animals, creating a fecund tropical world where before was only frozen wasteland. In Di Filippo's hands, then, the monster has become the creator, the savior of humanity.

The future of monsters and the monstrous is assured.

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The Mummy

by Paula Guran

INTRODUCTION

The mummy itself is not much of a horror icon. There is nothing innately monstrous to be found in well-preserved corpses from the ancient past. Mummies, unlike freshly decaying human remains or bits and pieces of bone, convey something of the essence and personality of a long-dead human being. We look upon a mummy's desiccated but often still-recognizable face and see

a once-vital and distinct individual. The mummified have attained certain immortality and they live again in our imaginations. For many, mummies fascinate more than repel.

Our horrific connotations lie not so much with the mummy itself, but in associated fears. The mummy serves, of course, as a general reminder of our own mortality and our fear of death, but this alone is not enough to make it a monster.

Lifelike as they are, mummies appear to have the potential for reanimation. With our western acculturation to the concept of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," mummies defy what we see as a natural cycle. And if the mummy defies the natural order, then it slips into the supernatural realm where the dead may walk and talk again. Reanimation of the dead can also be "weird science" and prompt a connection with the "Frankenstein syndrome": man must not scientifically tinker with the unknown.

Even though it is based in incorrect cultural indoctrination and misplaced beliefs concerning ancient Egypt, the fear of magic or curses is also attached to the mummy. By breaking some sort of burial (in other words, religious) taboo vengeance from beyond the grave is invoked.

Mummies have also acquired entirely artificial horrific associations, with possession or reincarnation linking the long-dead with the presently alive. This aspect of mummy-fear is often directly related to a storyline of love that lasts beyond the grave, and that has a subversive, unspoken sense of the erotic and necrophiliac.

Although the mummy was eventually cast in the roll of monster, it has never been an entirely effective one. We lack a solid psychological link to it as a scary creature. Its fear factor comes almost entirely from circumstances *surrounding* it or cobbled on to it. Nevertheless, the mummy deserves investigation as, at least, a catalyst if not a true icon of horror.

Any corpse with well-preserved flesh is considered a mummy. Mummification may be deliberate or accidental. Extreme cold, dryness, and lack of oxygen are all natural conditions that may result in mummification. Intentional exposure to chemicals—embalming—as practiced by the ancient Egyptians produced the "bandaged" mummy that is now iconic. There are a handful of non-Egyptian mummy tales, but the vast preponderance of horror literature and film dealing with mummies is based on the Egyptian model. This chapter will deal only with the source of the horror-mummy: Egyptian mummies.

THE FACTUAL MUMMY

To understand the fictional mummy and its misinterpretation as something to fear, one must begin with the factual mummy.

The Egyptian word for a mummified body is *sah*; "to make a mummy" is *qes*. Egyptian mummification may have begun accidentally more than 5,000

years ago in the Predynastic era. A body was buried in the sand along with some simple grave goods. The hot, dry sands of Egypt dried the corpse and preserved it. An alternative theory is that the idea of mummification was not so much observed and duplicated, but actually originated with the desire to preserve the image of the body. Whatever its inspiration, it was during the early Pharonic age (c. 2950 B.C.E.) that various embalming methods began to be used. These efforts were initially primitive, but over the centuries the techniques were perfected, and the art of embalming reaching its zenith around 1100 B.C.E.

It is likely that only the god-kings were eligible for eternal life and embalming when the Egyptians began the practice. During the Old Kingdom (2650–2150 B.C.E.) mummification was extended to members of the royal family, the nobility, and court officials. By 2150 B.C.E., mummification (and immortality) was available for any who could afford the expensive process, and the quality of mummification correlated to its cost. During the New Kingdom the mummies of some tomb workers and craftsmen from what is now Deir el-Medina were buried in small but exquisitely decorated and well-appointed tombs.

Preserving the body from decay assured the survival of an individual's non-physical aspects. The body and its three spiritual elements—the *ka*, *ba*, and *akh*—were considered a single unit. The ka was a double or spiritual copy of the person. After death it was separated from the body but remained close to it in the tomb. Unlike its human counterpart, the ka was immortal—as long as it received sustenance. The ka needed everything a person needed in life—food, drink, clothing, personal objects—so these were placed in the tomb, provided in models, and painted. Without a recognizable body, however, the ka might not be able to find these supplies.

The ba was what we might consider the unique personality of an individual, its personality or character. It could leave the body at will during life and, along with the breath of life itself, it was expelled at death. The ba, too, had the same physical needs as the living.

If the proper rituals were performed for the mummy, the ba and the ka were united and the deceased took the form of the akh. The akh then traveled through the underworld, faced the final judgment, and, it was hoped, gained entrance to the afterlife and lived with the gods forever. Once accepted into the afterlife, the akh could affect earthly life, much as the western concept of a "ghost" or "spirit."

But the tomb—its contents, inscriptions, carvings, statues, and the mummy itself—also helped preserve the essential essence of the person, an essence contained in a person's personal name. "Immortality" lasted only as long as one's name was spoken. Removing a personal or royal name from statues and monuments was equivalent to wiping out the memory and very existence of the named. For the Egyptians true horror existed in the thought that they might be forgotten. The trappings of the tomb and its mummified occupant were a means of continuing life and evoked no fear. The mummy had no

association with the morbid or the macabre. It was a thing of beauty, carefully prepared and ''packaged''—often elaborately wrapped in decorative patterns—for eternity.

Along with the practical matter of preventing decay, mummification was a religious and ritualistic process that duplicated the first mummification, that of Osiris, the god who ruled over the afterlife. Osiris was mummified by his wife Isis, who gathered the pieces of body after Seth, his brother and murderer, had torn his body into pieces and thrown them into the Nile. After finding all but one of the pieces—his genitals (which had been eaten by a fish)—Isis bandaged them together. Once restored to a semblance of life, Osiris's akh journeyed to the underworld and became King of the Dead.

Mummification continued until Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire and traditional religious practices were forbidden by Emperor Theodosius in 392 C.E. It was most widespread during the Greco-Roman period (332 B.C.E.–392 C.E.), when prosperous foreigners settled in Egypt and adopted Egyptian customs. Mummification became a profitable commercial enterprise reflecting wealth and social status rather than religious belief. Bodies, during this period, were often elaborately bandaged and given cartonnage portrait-masks (plastered layers of fiber or papyrus), but were not well preserved.

Mummification practices changed throughout its long history. During the Eighteenth through the Twentieth Dynasties (c. 1570–1075 B.C.E.) the complete process took seventy days. During this era, the body was purified, then taken to the *per nefer* (the house of beauty) where the brain was removed by carefully inserting special hooked instruments up through the nostrils in order to pull out bits of brain tissue. Internal organs, except the heart, were removed. The heart, the Egyptians believed, was the seat of thought and emotion. The viscera were soaked in a natron solution, rinsed, bandaged, and placed in four canopic jars, special containers made just for this purpose. (In some eras, the organs were treated, wrapped, and replaced within the body. Unused canopic jars were still part of the burial ritual.)

The body was stuffed and covered with natron, a type of salt that has great drying properties, and left to dehydrate for forty days. The stuffing was then removed and the natron rinsed off. Sunken areas of the body cavity were filled with linen packets of sawdust or myrrh, an aromatic gum mixture. The cranial cavity was then packed with resin-soaked linen, and false eyes were added. The skin was treated with preservatives and coated with resin. Sometimes cosmetics were applied. Finally, the body was wrapped in hundreds of yards of linen while priests recited the proper spells and inserted amulets between the wrappings in appropriate places. The wrapping process took at least fifteen days.

A cartonnage (gold for pharaohs) portraiture mask was then put in place, and unguents, perfumes, and more resin poured over the body. The mummy was then placed in its coffin, and the final funeral rituals began.

Relatives, friends, priests, and professional mourners accompanied the deceased to the tomb. Grief was expressed for the loss of the living, but it was a joyous celebration for the ka entering the afterlife. Various spells were bespoken at the tomb to assure the reunification of the ba and ka, to protect the tomb and its inhabitant, and to smooth the dangerous journey into the afterlife. An important ritual, "Opening of the Mouth," took place outside the tomb. This elaborate ritual involved purification, burning incense, anointing, and incantations, as well as touching the mummy with ritual objects to restore the ability to speak, touch, see, smell, and hear. Offerings and personal belongings were placed in the tomb itself and further rituals involved.

For those with the wealth to afford this complex process, the planning for death took place during life. The Egyptians were not preoccupied with death; they loved life and wanted it to continue forever.

MUMMIES IN EUROPE

Egyptomania—and, by extension, a fascination with mummies as well as all things Egyptian—has been part of Western culture since the time of the ancient Greeks. The pyramids and sphinx at Giza were already 2,000 years old when Herodotus, the Greek historian and tourist, visited Egypt around 450 B.C.E. He was fascinated with the Egyptians, writing in his *Histories:* "I think they have always existed ever since the human race began," and with Egypt as "there is no other country that possesses so many wonders, nor any that has such a number of works which defy description" (2.2).

Egypt, for Herodotus and those who followed, was both accessible and mysterious. Its art was in evidence everywhere—statues of kings, queens, gods, and goddesses, carved reliefs of both the historic and holy, and vivid paintings in tombs that showed daily life in ancient Egypt. But Egypt was also a place of magic. Magic (*heka*) played an important role in daily life, medicine, and all beliefs surrounding death. Priests were practitioners of magic in pharaonic Egypt and known guardians of secret knowledge from the gods. By Herodotus's day, Egypt had been ruled by foreigners for half a millennium, but it was still obvious that the ancient Egyptians had been powerful beings who, perhaps, even understood the mysteries of death itself.

They became even more mysterious as Christianity took hold in Egypt. By the fourth century, few were left who could read hieroglyphs. Public use of hieroglyphs ceased not long after 391 C.E., when the Roman Emperor Theodosius I closed all non-Christian temples. As the pagan priesthood died off so, too, did the reading of pharaonic hieroglyphs and the making of mummies.

Egypt became part of the Arab world in 639 with the first Islamic invasion. The Arabs referred to "the Egyptian matter" of mysterious, unknown magic as *al keme*. Ancient Egyptians called their land *kemet*—"the black land" of

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Making a Mummy

It took eight hours to transform Boris Karloff into a mummy. Makeup designer Jack Pierce and his crew began applying it at 11 A.M., finishing at 7 P.M.

First, Karloff's ears were glued to hold them closely to his head.

His face was then covered with cotton stripping, collodion, and spirit gum. This ''mask'' was set with a blow dryer.

A large amount of beauty clay was applied to the actor's hair. After this hardened, rubber cement was applied.

Linen, 150 yards of it, which had been ''rotted'' with acid then baked in an oven, was wound vertically, horizontally, and diagonally over the actor's bare skin. Movement and speech was almost impossible.

Makeup was then applied to his face and hands in order to blend with the wrappings.

His entire body was then heavily dusted with Fuller's earth.

The scene was shot from 7 P.M. to 2 A.M.

It then took two hours to remove the make-up. Karloff left for home at 5 A.M. after an eighteen-hour day.

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rich, farmable soil on either side of the Nile River—and the word survived into Arabic times as *keme*. *Al keme* became the word "alchemy": the belief that speaking the right words and applying the correct mixtures and potions could transmute one substance into another.

The Arabs believed that if one entered an Egyptian tomb and voiced the right magical formula that objects—funerary equipment of gold and other rich materials—made otherwise invisible by the magic of the ancients could then be revealed. Obviously, if one believes people had the power to render invisibility, one would also believe that these folks would magically protect their tombs from robbers. Paintings on tomb walls often showed a ceremony called the Opening of the Mouth that seemed, to the Arabs, to be picturing mummies restored to life. Such beings—already dead and therefore with nothing to fear—would be terrifying enemies who would surely try to protect their tombs and belongings.

Early Arabic writers, in an effort to protect future generations, often wrote of these beliefs—and thus laid a supernatural groundwork that eventually filtered into Western thought.

Mummies themselves, though, held no terrors.

The English word "mummy," according to John Ayoto in *Dictionary of Word Origins*, "comes ultimately from Arabic *mumiya* 'embalmed body,' a derivative of *mum* 'embalming wax' but when it first arrived in English (via medieval Latin *mumia* and Old French *mumie*) it was used for a 'medicinal ointment prepared from mummified bodies'... the word's original sense 'embalmed body' did not emerge in English until the early 17th century"

(357). Other etymological sources identify the "embalming wax" as bitumen. Bitumen is a natural form of asphalt found in Persia. The conquering Arabs saw mummies encased in a thick black resin and assumed what covered them was *mumya* or *mum*. Bitumen *was* used in mummification in the last centuries before the Christian era, but most mummies were made using resins and oils.

Muslim physicians used bitumen to cure pleurisy and dropsy (the patient was given "bituminous water" to drink) and applied it to the skin for various ailments and wounds. Western Europe came to know *mumiya*, or bitumen, primarily from descriptions of its healing properties by twelfth-century Muslim physicians in Egypt. From the twelfth century onward, thousands of Egyptian mummies were destroyed for the bitumen they were supposedly drenched in and sold as medicine. Mummy was also used in Europe to treat joint problems and enhance blood flow and longevity.

During the sixteenth century, Europe's elite considered mummy powder an essential medicine. Francis I (1515–1547), France's first Renaissance king, a noted a man of letters, and patron of the arts, took a dose of mummy mixed with dried rhubarb daily and kept a small packet of it with him at all times. Francis believed not only that mummy made him stronger, but that it would deter assassins.

An artist's paint, "mummy" or "Egyptian brown," was widely used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and perhaps introduced as early as the twelfth century). The paint continued to be used, according to some sources, into the early twentieth century.

THE MUMMY IN FICTION

John Richard Stephens claims in his introduction to the anthology *Into the Mummy's Tomb* that "Traité des embaumemments selon les anciens et les modernes," "[t]he earliest known fictional short story about a mummy's curse, was published in 1699" (5), but mummies were far from being feared. Nor were they registering in the European mind as the human remnants of an ancient civilization. In fact, very little was known of Egypt or its history until nineteenth century, when Napoleon Bonaparte decided to conquer Egypt for his personal glory. He saw "the East" as where all the great men of the world had "acquired their celebrity" (Brier).

Bonaparte convinced the French government to mount his campaign, and in July 1798, after an arduous six-week trip, several hundred transport ships landed some 34,000 troops near Alexandria. Along with the troops, the ships brought more than 500 civilians—biologists, mineralogists, linguists, mathematicians, chemists, botanists, zoologists, surveyors, economists, artists, poets, and other scholars. The campaign was a military disaster, but became a cultural triumph. The scholars produced the encyclopedic *Description de l'Égypte*, published from 1809 to 1827, and brought the glories of Egypt to

the European public. The French also brought back treasures from Egypt, but some of the antiquities gathered to study in Alexandria were forfeited to the British when the French occupation of Egypt was ended in 1801. Among other artifacts, the British gained a granite stone (originally thought to be basalt) plaque carved with a priestly decree in 196 B.C.E. The decree was inscribed on the stone three times, in hieroglyphs (suitable for a priestly decree), demotic (the native script used for daily purposes), and Greek (the language of the administration). Named the ''Rosetta Stone''—French soldiers found the artifact while digging foundations to expand a fort near the port town of Rosetta (now Rashid)—it became the key to decipherment of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. After 1,400 years, Egypt's written records could again be read.

During the nineteenth century some of the techniques employed by pioneers of Egyptology were tremendously destructive and verged on the felonious, but they also added greatly to the world's knowledge. Mummies were included among the many artifacts shipped back to museums. In the 1840s, steamships made travel to Egypt feasible. Wealthy tourists brought mummies back as souvenirs, and public and private ''mummy unwrapping parties'' became fashionable. One surviving invitation card reads: ''Lord Londesborough at Home: A Mummy from Thebes to be unrolled at half-past Two.''

For those of lesser means, advances in printing technology resulted in larger and cheaper editions of travelogues, memoirs, and other literature concerning Egypt, as well as newspapers and periodicals. Europeans and Americans were enthralled with the idea of Egypt and fascinated by its mummies. The tantalizing thought of a mummy brought back to life began appearing in fiction as well.

Nineteen-year-old Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Shelley) may have been the first to consider a reanimated mummy as an image of horror in English fiction. In her *Frankenstein* (1818), Victor Frankenstein, repelled by the creature he has created exclaims, ''Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch.''

Another teenage girl (also nineteen at the time of publication) wrote *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty Second Century* (1827), the first novel in English featuring a mummy. Jane Webb (1807–1858), later known as Jane Loudon, was orphaned at the age of seventeen when her father died in 1824, discovered ''on the winding up of [my father's] affairs that it would be necessary to do something for my support, I had written a strange, wild novel, called the Mummy [*sic*], in which I had laid the scene in the twenty-second century, and attempted to predict the state of improvement to which this country might possibly arrive'' (cited in Hopkins).

Webb's inspiration can be traced to several sources, including the popular culture at the time. Among other Egyptian exploits, a former sideshow strongman Giovanni Belzoni (1778–1823) became the first Westerner to

explore the pyramids at Giza (including that of "Cheops," whose fictional mummy Webb revivified in her novel). The British press gave him heavy coverage, and even more than twenty-five years after his death his name was well enough known for Charles Dickens to mention in *Little Dorrit*. An Egyptian exhibit set up by Belzoni in 1821 inspired Horace Smith (1779–1849) to write "Lines Addressed to the Mummy at Belzoni's Exhibition." Its final stanza runs:

> Why should this worthless tegument endure,
> If its undying guest be lost forever?
> O' let us keep the soul embalm'd and pure
> In living virtue, when both must sever
> Although corruption may our frame consume.
> Th' immortal spirit in the skies that bloom! (Quoted in Hopkins)

Webb and Smith shared the same publisher, Henry Colburn. Colburn, hoping for a best seller urged Webb to expand a planned short story into a novel. That Webb borrowed Smith's symbolism of a mummy recapturing "living virtue" was no coincidence.

Webb's *The Mummy!* contained horrific passages such as:

> Clara shuddered at the sight of the cold, marble-like face, and an icy thrill ran through her bosom at the fearful conviction that this was no earthly being. The garments, the glassy eyes and rigid features spoke of ages long past when the Egyptians walked as proud masters of the Earth! Could this be the revived King Cheops of whom she had heard tell, that now stood before her?
>
> Even the strongest minds dread supernatural horror, and our fair fugitive turned involuntarily away! Fearing alike to remain or to advance, her mind filled with that vague sense of danger that generally attends the want of light, when Imagination pictures terrors which do not really exist and Fancy lends her aid to magnify those which do exist, she was lost to terrifying thoughts for she knew not how long.
>
> When Clara did at last look again, the Mummy was gone; however, in its place innumerable fantastic shapes flittered before her eyes in every corner of the gloomy vault. (Quoted in Haining 1)

But, as Linda Hopkins has pointed out, "Though the mummy appears threatening and fearful, what he actually offers people is help, and he also appears to possess a near-omniscience which allows him unfailingly to diagnose what kind of help is needed in each individual case."

Webb was certainly influenced by (and perhaps reacting against the political and philosophical slant of) Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which had been published less than a decade earlier. There are significant parallels in the two novels. There are, however, vast differences as well. According to Hopkins, "The primary impulse of *The Mummy!*, despite its sensational title,

is clearly satirical, and its humor tends towards the affectionate rather than the caustic. There are very few hints at anything resembling the ambiguities and emotional depths of *Frankenstein*. . . . In fact the novel generally finds its revenant funny rather than terrifying. . . . The mummy here becomes paradoxically a reassuring rather than a threatening object." *The Mummy!* may well be, as Hopkins puts it, "the first identifiable ancestor of the mummy genre," but it did not establish the mummy as a monster.

Edgar Allan Poe, American master of the macabre and the short story, can be credited with the first real short story about a mummy, "Some Words with a Mummy" (*American Whig Review*, April 1845), but the story is satiric rather than horrific. Poe pokes fun at mummy "unwrappings," noting the "scientific" practice of galvanism—using electricity in an attempt at reanimation (used by both Shelley and Webb as well as Transcendentalists, patent medicine manufacturers)—and the idea of progress. He also dubs one of his characters "Gliddon." George Gliddon was a charlatan who used mummies, pseudo-scientific jargon, and stagecraft to "prove" that the brains of black people were smaller than those of whites.

Théophile Gautier's novel *The Romance of the Mummy* (1856; Eng. trans. 1863) offered the first historically accurate story set in ancient Egypt and was also the first to introduce the romantic element of falling in love with a mummy. A mummified queen becomes the object of an archeologist's affection after he reads her tragic life story. He takes the mummy back with him to

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George Gliddon, a one-time vice-consul in Cairo, must be credited as being a major factor in America's Egyptomania of the nineteenth century. He was a prolific writer and unceasing lecturer. Unfortunately his Egyptology was based in his racial politics and geared toward proving his racist theories which were used as arguments in favor of slavery. Gliddon became a laughingstock, however, five years after Poe's story was published. Promoting a show in Boston in 1850 Gliddon claimed he would be unwrapping the mummy of an Egyptian priest's daughter—information ascertained, he said, from deciphering the hieroglyphs on her sarcophagus. The local press played it up, even promoting the priest's daughter to the status of a princess and Gliddon chose not to correct the mistake. Before an audience of 2,000 people including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Harvard President Jared Sparks, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and famed Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz, Gliddon theatrically sliced through the bandages and chipped loose clots of resin. But as he tossed aside the last cloth from the mummy's loins, those seated in the first row gasped loudly. Whether the offspring of a priest or king, the mummified "daughter" was unmistakably a "son." The pseudo-Egyptologist's career was ruined although he attempted to continue by touring in the more sympathetic pro-slavery South. He died, perhaps a suicide, in 1857 in Panama.

England, but there is no hint of bringing her back to life, no horrific elements at all. Gautier's story "The Mummy's Foot" (1840) explored the romantic theme as well as the magical properties of mummies, albeit in a humorous manner. A young man makes a paperweight of the mummified foot of Princess Hermonthis. The foot starts leaping about like a frog, and the lovely single-footed princess shows up to reclaim it. The man wishes to marry the princess, but her father declares that the age difference and his inability to properly preserve himself are too great to overcome.

An anonymously written children's book, *The Fruits of Enterprize Exhibited in the Travels of Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia; Interspersed with the Observations of a Mother to Her Children*, appeared in England in 1821. (It was actually by Lucy Sarah Atkins Wilson, evidently fairly well known in her day but now forgotten.) Mention was made in the book of a mummy burned to provide light to explore a pyramid. This may have inspired American author Louisa May Alcott's story "Lost in a Pyramid; or, The Mummy's Curse," which was published in the *New World*, January 16, 1869. Explorers also burn a mummy for illumination in her story—the mummy of "a famous sorceress who bequeathed her curse to whoever should disturb her rest." The curse comes through a seed found in the mummy's wrappings. Even aware of the curse, a seed is planted. The white flower it bears "slowly absorbs the vitality of whoever cultivates it, and the blossom, worn for two or three hours, produces either madness or death." One of the explorers and the other explorer's new bride die as a result of their foolishness. This is the first known reference to a mummy's curse.

("Lost in a Pyramid; or, The Mummy's Curse" was "lost" until British classicist/Egyptologist Dominic Montserrat rediscovered it. Its first reprint was in the Egyptology magazine *KMT* in the summer of 1998. Alcott makes reference to mummies elsewhere in her fiction, too. In chapter 11 of Little *Men* [1871], Alcott has Mr. Laurie referring to a mummy and the splendors of Egypt.)

"My New Year's Eve among the Mummies," published in January 1880 in *Belgravia*, is probably the first mummy-related short story in a British

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Among his spoils, Niles found a bit of parchment, which he deciphered, and this inscription said that the mummy we had so ungallantly burned was that of a famous sorceress who bequeathed her curse to whoever should disturb her rest. Of course I don't believe that curse has anything to do with it, but it's a fact that Niles never prospered from that day. He says it's because he has never recovered from the fall and fright and I dare say it is so; but I sometimes wonder if I am to share the curse, for I've a vein of superstition in me, and that poor little mummy haunts my dreams still.

Louisa May Alcott, Lost in a Pyramid, or the Mummy's Curse

periodical. "J. Arbuthnot Wilson" was listed as author, a pseudonym for Grant Allen (1848–1899). Allen, a science writer born in Canada, later reclaimed his identity and wrote fantasy novels such as *The Beckoning Hand* (1887) and *The Great Taboo* (1891) and the pioneering time-travel novel *The British Barbarians* (1895). "My New Year's Eve among the Mummies" was included in Allen's 1884 collection *Strange Stories.* The hero of Allen's story wanders into a pyramid to discover "a living Egyptian king, surrounded by his coiffured court . . . banqueting in the flesh upon a real throne, before a table laden with Memphian delicacies!" Pharaoh's daughter, the lovely Hatasou explains that the court are mummies who "wake up for twenty-four hours, recover our flesh and blood, and banquet once more upon the mummied dishes." Attracted to the princess, the protagonist agrees to be a millennial mummy—until he learns he is to be mummified alive after being put under with chloroform. This may have been the first time the idea of a person being "mummified" (or at least wrapped in bandages and put in a mummy case and entombed) was employed.

The thought of becoming a mummy while still alive might be terrorizing, but mummies still held no terrors.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), the creator of Sherlock Holmes, wrote two stories involving mummies that some see as key elements in the building of the modern mythos. His first mummy-related tale employed the romantic theme of love that lasts across the centuries. "The Ring of Thoth," published in 1890 in *Cornhill Magazine*, portrays an ancient Egyptian, Sosra, who had made a "chemical discovery" in ancient times. A near-immortal who has lived many thousands of years, he is discovered in the Louvre seeking a ring with the antidote to his immortality. The ring had been wrapped up with the embalmed body of his beloved whose remains are in the museum. Alone with his dead beloved, "he threw his arms round her, and kissed her repeatedly upon the lips and brow," he is found the next day "lying dead upon the floor with his arms round one of the mummies. So close was his embrace that it was only with the utmost difficulty that they were separated."

Doyle's "Lot No. 249," published in *Harper's* (October 1892), may have been the first use of a revivified mummy as a sinister character, or at least the tool of a sinister human. A mummy, acquired at an auction along with its case (thus the "lot number" of the title), is brought back to life by an Oxford student who is an expert in Eastern languages. The mummy is reanimated only for short periods, during which he uses the creature to bring harm to three acquaintances.

In *Iras: A Mystery*, an 1896 novel by Theo. Douglas (Mrs. H. D. Everett, now remembered for her 1920 collection, *The Death Mask*), a beautiful virgin, having rejected the priest Savak as a husband, willingly submits to be sealed in a trance and entombed alive. If her true love awakens her from the trance "before the seven ages have passed over, his she will be. And if the seven ages pass without awakening, she is dust and she remains mine." But Savak doesn't play fair and also tosses a curse in. "If she is found and awakened the future

lover will have a 'wager of battle' set against him and neither he or the girl will live long thereafter.'' Centuries later, the girl is awakened and speaks perfect English to Ralph Lavenham the Egyptologist who is, of course, her true love. She wears a chain with seven lotus pendants and tells him each represents a space of time. As long as she has the talismans she will live. After arranging for proper attire, Lavenham takes Iras to Scotland and carefully arranges an ''irregular marriage.'' The pendants are lost one by one and Iras, as he has named her, turns into a mummy (complete with wrappings) thousands of years old. The rest of the story consists of Lavenham trying to convince people she existed as, despite their travels, no one can testify actually having seen the girl.

The character of Flaxman Low was created by ''E. and H. Heron,'' the pseudonym of Hesketh V. Prichard (1876–1922) and his mother, Kate O'Brien Ryall Prichard (1851–1935). Six stories featuring Low appeared in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1898, and a further six followed in 1899. All were then collected and published as a book later that year. Flaxman Low was the first of many later ''occult'' or ''psychic'' detectives preceding William Hope Hodgson's Carnacki the Ghost-Finder by fifteen years. In ''The Story of Baelbrow'' (*Pearson's*, April 1898), Low discovers a mummy that is not only intermittently reanimated but also a self-created vampire. Not that this should be surprising, as the ''house is built upon an ancient barrow, in fact, on a spot where we might naturally expect to find such an elemental psychic germ.''

In 1899, Guy Boothby (1867–1905), an Australian living in England, began what became a series of books about the sinister Dr. Nikola and his search for immortality with *Pharos the Egyptian* (first published in serial form by the *Windsor Magazine*, June–December 1898). Artist Cyril Forrester is in possession of a mummy found in a tomb in Egypt by his father. The mysterious Pharos the Egyptian shows up and Cyril and the mummy are soon back in Egypt with Pharos, who intends to return the mummy to its proper resting place. After a great many weird adventures and falling in love, Cyril is ''inoculated'' with a plague virus by Pharos the Egyptian, ''the foulest fiend this world has ever seen. In reality he is Ptahmes the Magician, and he has sworn vengeance on the human race.'' (The mummy was also Ptahmes/Pharos, but confusingly, Ptahmes has inhabited the Pharos-form since his death in the days of the Hebrew Exodus.) Pharos smuggles Forrester back to England and then takes him to many gatherings in London in order for him to spread the virus. Luckily Pharos supplies the man with a prescription that is ''effectual in checking the disease.''

Boothby was deeply interested in ancient Egypt and *Pharos the Egyptian* was just one of several novels with an Egyptian theme. Among Boothby's short stories, ''A Professor of Egyptology,'' written in 1904, has no mummy, but is a clever variation on the theme in which a modern woman is ''transported'' back in time to resolve an ancient murder. Cecelia Westmoreland is the modern hostess of Nofrit's soul. A man who thought she betrayed him

mistakenly killed Nofrit 4,000 years before. The professor of the title is the modern incarnation of her murderer who will not have peace until Nofrit/Cecilea forgives him.

In 1903 Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*, provided inspiration for much future fiction and several movies when he psychically connected revivified ancient Egyptian female royalty with a living modern-day heroine. In his novel, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, a queen's tomb is discovered and her soul inhabits the body of Margaret, the beautiful daughter of an Egyptologist. The queen, Tera, awaits a full resurrection that requires that her hand—torn off in a seventeenth-century discovery of her tomb—and a ruby containing seven seven-pointed stars be restored to her. In the first published version, the resurrection goes awry and all except Ross, Margaret's fiancé and the story's narrator, die. The publisher of a 1912 reprint asked for a happy ending. Whether Stoker actually wrote this or it is the work of his publisher is not known, as Stoker died shortly before the republication. In the new ending the queen's body disappears, and Ross and Margaret are married.

In Algernon Blackwood's "The Nemesis of Fire" (1908) John Silence, another occult detective, investigates strange incendiarism at a country home. Eventually we learn that a mummy brought to England from Egypt is causing the fires.

Amateur Egyptologist H. Rider Haggard wrote of ancient Egypt in several novels, beginning with *Cleopatra* (1889). His only story with a supernatural mummy theme was "Smith and the Pharaohs," published as a serial in *Strand* magazine (December 1912–February 1913). The "Smith" of the title becomes infatuated with sculptured head of an Egyptian woman he finds in a museum and, consequently, takes up Egyptology with a passion. On his third visit to Egypt he finds the tomb of Queen Ma-Mé, the woman whose sculptured face he admired. He finds a mummified hand bearing two gold rings. Smith takes his discoveries to the Cairo Museum, and is allowed to keep the mummified hand, and one of the rings. He later finds himself locked in the museum overnight and—either through dream or magic—is witness to the Royalties of Egypt, including his Queen Ma-Mé, coming alive and conversing. Haggard had explored earlier the subject of immortal ancient Egyptian sorceresses in his novel, *She* (first serially published in the *Graphic*, October 2, 1886–January 8, 1887). No mummies are involved in the best-selling *She*, but some of the lore attached to the mummy mythos is involved. Haggard's adventuring narrator Leo Vincey is in Africa seeking information about his ancestor, an Egyptian priest of the Ptolemaic era who was supposedly slain by an ancient sorceress She-Who-Must-Be Obeyed. The immortal sorceress rules as Queen Ayesha in the catacombs of the Lost Kingdom of Kôr: "I could clearly distinguish, however, that the swathed mummy-like form before me was that of a tall and lovely woman, instinct with beauty in every part, and also with a certain snake-like grace which I had never seen anything to equal before."

Ayesha sees Kallikrates in Leo and promises to make him live forever if they walk together into the Fire of Life at the heart of a volcano. Ayesha turns ancient and asks Leo to remember her, young and beautiful, and saying, "I die not. I shall come again, and shall once more be beautiful, I swear it—it is true!" Ayesha then crumbles into nothingness. The story was followed by two sequels, *Ayesha* (1905) and *Wisdom's Daughter* (1923).

The prolific English writer Arthur Sarsfield Ward (1883–1959), who became famous as Sax Rohmer, was an avid Egyptophile, and his work often featured Egypt, tombs, pyramids, and the like, but only occasionally mummies and seldom as a horror icon. His very first published story, "The Mysterious Mummy" (*Pearson's Weekly*, 1903) concerned, for instance, the lack of a mummy rather than the presence of one. In "The Whispering Mummy," a mummy is thought to whisper, but it is proven to be a false assumption. Occult detective Morris Klaw's "Case of the Headless Mummies" (*New Magazine*, November 1913) involves a magical book supposedly hidden in a mummy's skull. In *The Devil Doctor* (1916; a.k.a. *The Return of Dr. Fu-Manchu*), a gaunt, sinister "mummy-man" is actually a human evildoer. In the novel *Brood of the Witch-Queen* (1918), however, a mummy plays an unusual supernatural role. The ancient mummy of a child is transformed into a living infant who grows up to be a wizard with magical knowledge of the ancients and is the son of a witch-queen.

THE MUMMY IN EARLY FILMS

By the turn of the century the new medium of film took up ancient Egypt as a theme. At least three dozen films featuring a mummy were made in the silent era. The most notable include:

Cleopatre (French, 1899, Star Films; English title: *Cleopatra's Tomb*, also released as *Robbing Cleopatra's Tomb*). Pioneering filmmaker Georges Méliès (1861–1938) is best known for his 1902 production *Le Voyage dans la lune* (*A Trip to the Moon*), but it was this film that brought his work to the attention of American film producer Charles Urban. Urban released the film in America under a new title, and then went on to distribute other Méliès films. In the film, a man (played by Méliès) chops the mummy of a queen into pieces, and then produces a woman from a smoking brazier.

La Momie du Roi (French, 1909, Lux Studios; English title: *The Mummy of King Ramses*). A mummy is brought to life by a professor in this film directed by Gerard Bourgeois.

The Mummy (German, 1911, Thanhauser). An ancient Egyptian princess is brought to life with electricity. She performs an "oriental dance" to seduce a New York science professor and amateur Egyptologist.

The Vengeance of Egypt (French, 1912). Napoleon Bonaparte is personally in charge of a tomb excavation that produces a mummy case. A ring is secretly stolen by a soldier, who sends it to his ladylove. After receiving the ring, the woman dreams of the mummy opening its eyes even as a burglar breaks into her bedroom and murders her. The burglar takes the ring and also dies, as do an antique dealer and a man who buys the ring. Eventually an Egyptologist returns the cursed ring to the mummy—and mummy's eyes glow in triumph.

When Soul Meets Soul (U.S., 1912, Essanay). Directed by J. Farrell MacDonald, this is probably the first U.S. mummy film. Silent film heartthrob Francis X. Bushman plays a reincarnated lover who acquires the mummy of his Egyptian princess (Dolores Cassinelli).

The Dust of Egypt (U.S., 1915, Vitagraph). Directed by George D. Baker, this silent feature was adapted by Alan Campbell from his play of the same name. A young man (Antonio Moreno) is put in charge of an Egyptian mummy. He falls asleep and dreams that the mummified princess (Edith Story) revives and wreaks havoc in his life in a comedic manner. He is grateful to wake up and discover it was all a dream.

The Wraith of the Tomb (U.K., 1915, Cricks & Martin). A silent film directed by Charles Calvert, produced by George H. Cricks, and written by William J. Elliot in which the ghost of an Egyptian princess searches London for her murderous, severed mummified hand. Probably the first full-length horror feature produced in Britain, it was released in the United States as *The Avenging Hand*.

The silent German film, *Die Augen der Mumie Ma* (a.k.a. *The Eyes of the Mummy*), directed by Ernst Lubitsch (1918), is sometimes cited as the first mummy movie, but there is no mummy in this film. Nor is it a horror film. It is a tragic romance. A German artist, Wendland (Harry Liedtke), visiting Egypt hears of the tomb of Queen Ma, which is supposedly so frightening that all visitors go mad. An Egyptian, Radu (Emil Jannings), takes him to the tomb and leads him to a coffin. The eyes of the coffin slowly open just as Radu attacks him. The artist wards Radu off, opens the coffin, and discovers it is an entrance to a small room where a woman (Pola Negri) is held captive by the hypnotic powers of Radu, who uses the coffin-eyes scam to rob tourists. Wendland rescues the woman and they go to Germany, where they marry. Meanwhile, Radu, angry at losing the woman, walk into the hot desert and faints. A German prince finds him and nurses him back to health. Radu becomes his servant. The prince takes his servant back to Germany with him. Eventually after several hypnotic encounters, Radu murders the woman.

The public's concept of the mummy was highly influenced by the cinematic versions. So were fiction writers. The early mummy films, for example, evidently inspired a 1917 novel by Burton Stevenson, *A King in Babylon.* The novel follows a group of filmmakers who run afoul of a pharonic curse and a reincarnated long-lost love.

Recommended Nonfiction Mummy Books for Younger Readers

The Best Book of Mummies by Phillip Steele (ages 4–8) (New York: Kingfisher, 1998)

Cat Mummies by Kelly Trumble (grades 3–5) (New York: Clarion, 1996)

Egyptian Mummies: People from the Past by Delia Pemberton (grades 5–7) (San Diego: Harcourt, 2001)

Mummies Made in Egypt (Reading Rainbow Book) by Aliki (ages 4–8) (New York: Crowell, 1979)

Mummies, Tombs, and Treasure: Secrets of Ancient Egypt by Lila Perl (grades 4–6) (New York: Clarion, 1987)

The Mystery of the Egyptian Mummy by Joyce Filer (grades 4–7) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Secrets of the Mummies by Harriet Griffey (grades 2–4) (New York: DK Publishing, 1998)

Tutankhamun: The Mystery of the Boy King by Zahi Hawass (grades 4–7) (Washington, DC: National Geographic Children's Books, 2005)

Tut's Mummy: Lost and Found by Judy Donnelly (grades K–3) (New York: Random House, 1988)

Wrapped for Eternity: The Story of the Egyptian Mummy by Mildred Mastin Pace (grades 4–6) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974)

THE CURSE OF KING TUT

The discovery in 1922 and subsequent exploration of Tutankhamen's tomb—which took ten years—fueled the public's fascination with ancient Egypt and resulted in many mummy novels and stories, but it also had a sobering effect. After the widely publicized autopsy of the mummy, the reality of a mummy as desiccated flesh and bones became fixed in public's mind. The image of the mummy, which had been used in advertising and made fun of in popular songs, was used less often in a lighthearted manner.

The idea of a curse attached to mummies was also reinforced with Carnavon's discovery. Although the ancient Egyptians occasionally carved a warning of sorts to discourage contemporary tomb robbers, the idea of future defilers of tombs being destroyed by curses had no role in ancient Egyptian culture. Tomb robbing was a socio-religious problem throughout Egypt's long history. A curse written on a tomb from around 2500 B.C.E. to those who might do "evil and wickedness to the coffin and any stone parts of these tomb" asks that a local god "not accept any of the offerings [that the robbers might offer for their own souls] and may his heirs not inherit."

But those preparing for their life in the next world were often more concerned that religious and magical rituals be properly performed. An important official during the reigns of pharaohs Teti (2345–2332 B.C.E.) and Pepi I (2332–2283 B.C.E.) had the following carved on his tomb: "As for all men who will enter this my tomb of the necropolis being impure, having eaten those abominations that good spirits who have journeyed to the West abominate . . . an end for him shall be made for him concerning that evil . . . I shall seize his neck like a bird . . . I shall cast fear of myself into him" (El Mahdy 174).

The "curse" here was against priests who were not to eat fish, which was considered impure for priests, before entering the tomb's chapel. The dead actually welcomed the living to their tombs. Their immortality was assured by continued offerings from the living, who had to enter the tomb environs to make those offerings properly—preferably without fish on their breath.

The idea of being magically cursed for disturbing a tomb dates to the seventh century C.E., when Muslim Arabs conquered the land. The ancient writings could no longer be deciphered, but enough of the language and old beliefs still existed among the common people to make it all somewhat mysterious and instill a fearful esteem for the dead.

Still, the "curse" of King "Tut" became the most famous of mummy malediction. After Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon discovered the almost intact tomb of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings in 1922, the press of the day descended *en masse*. In hopes of dissuading hoards of journalists and their requests for access to the tomb, Carnarvon made the *Times* of London his exclusive agent. Everyone—including the Egyptians—had to go through London for news.

Instead of stories of treasure and jewels, the reporters had nothing to report except political squabbling between Egyptian authorities and Carter and Carnarvon, who were treating the tomb as their personal property. In March 1923 popular novelist Marie Corelli—whose occult fantasies included the novella "Ziska," which included reincarnations from ancient Egypt and a secret underground chamber of a pyramid—wrote to the *New York Times*. She claimed to have a translation of an Arabic text promising "Death comes on wings to he who enters the tomb of a pharaoh." After some play from the fact-starved press, the curse story would probably have died down almost immediately—except that Lord Carnarvon himself died shortly thereafter.

Carnarvon had been in poor health since a motoring accident in 1903. With a weak chest and a predilection to infections, Carnarvon had initially gone to Egypt's dry, warm climate to escape the damp and cold of England's winters. Early in 1923 he had been bitten on the cheek by a mosquito. He accidentally reopened the small wound while shaving, and erysipelas rapidly set in, followed by pneumonia. Carnarvon died on April 5, 1923.

On the very day word of Carnarvon's death reached England, a *Times* reporter was interviewing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Doyle, despite creating the

logical and supremely rational detective Sherlock Holmes, was a believer in all manner of phantasmagorical things including fairies and talking to the dead. When the reporter mentioned Corelli's letter, Doyle gave credence to it, saying that the death might have been the result of "elementals" created by ancient priests to guard the tomb. The story made headlines the world over. The "curse of the pharaohs" was born.

The "news" became further embellished with "details" like the lights of Cairo failing at the moment of Carnarvon's death (electrical failures were common in Cairo). Some newspapers even claimed Corelli's "curse" was inscribed in the tomb itself. In 1924 Egyptologist Arthur Weigall wrote of other events—including that Carter's canary had been devoured by a cobra (the cobra was a pharonic symbol)—that gave further weight to the absurd legend.

In fact, of the twenty-six people present at the opening of the tomb, only six died within ten years. Howard Carter himself, the first to "defile" the tomb, steadfastly maintained for the rest of his life that sane people should contemptuously dismiss any ideas of curses. He died in 1939.

Hollywood and popular literature added further impetus to the legend over the years. People sometimes associated bad luck with any Egyptian artifact. There was even a mummy curse associated with the sinking of the *Titanic*. Supposedly the British Museum, knowing of the "curse," sought to get rid of it by selling the mummy to an American museum. Transport was arranged on the doomed *Titanic*. The story is completely false. The unlucky mummy is not even a mummy at all, but a coffin lid (No. EA 22542) still on public display.

The subject of Tutankhamen's curse was again revived in the 1970s when treasures from Tutankhamen's tomb were allowed to be shown in various museums around the world. But the truth is that there have never been curses associated with any mummy or any tomb; that no dooming threats were carved in Tutankhamen's tomb; that no supernaturally dire consequences are attached to Egyptian artifacts.

When the treasures of Tutankhamen's tomb made a return tour of the United States beginning in 2005, news stories tended more toward debunking the curse myth than popularizing it. Perhaps the idea of such curses is now primarily the realm of horror writers and moviemakers.

THE MUMMY IN LATER FILMS

Originally fueled by folklore and fiction, film has become the main manufacturer of mummy mythos. If horrific visions of the vengeful walking dead, pharaonic curses, and murdering mummies invade the public's nightmares, then the images probably came from the screen—and the Universal films of the 1930s and 1940s and their take-offs (including the Hammer Films of the 1950s and 1960s) are primary sources.

Although it was far from the first mummy movie, the classic 1932 Universal Pictures movie, *The Mummy*, directed by Karl Freund and starring Boris Karloff, is certainly the most famous and influential of the three dozen or so that have been made in the last seventy-plus years.

Karloff portrays a priest, Imhotep, who was buried alive in ancient times as a punishment for the unholy act of trying to bring his love, the virginal Princess Anckesenamon, back to life after her death. Modern archeologists discover his tomb, and he is inadvertently brought back to life by the reading of an incantation from a magical scroll. The plot takes up a decade later and centers on the efforts of the revivified priest—who becomes the mysterious Cairo merchant Ardath Bey—to be reunited with his lost love. He aids in the discovery of her intact tomb and, after her mummy is placed in a museum, he attempts to resurrect her using the magical scroll. A museum guard interrupts his magic, but Anckesenamon's spirit (unbeknownst to Imhotep) takes up residence in the body of the beauteous Helen Grosvenor (Zita Johann), who also looks like the ancient princess.

Meanwhile, Egyptologist Frank Whemple (David Manners)—who excavated the princess's tomb and is the son of Sir Joseph Whemple (Arthur Byron), the man who found Imhotep's mummy—falls in love with Helen. (He also confesses he found himself a little in love with the dead princess as he handled her ancient personal belongings.) The sorcerous Imhotep calls Helen to him and shows her the past and all he has suffered for her love. Back under the care of Frank and Dr. Muller (Edward Van Sloan), her Van Helsing-type guardian, she doesn't remember the revelations but grows physically weaker as Imhotep attempts to call her to him. Imhotep finally succeeds and has Helen—decked out as Anckesenamon and fully possessed by her—at the museum with Anckesenamon's mummy. Rather than raise Anckesenamon's mummy, Imhotep now intends to kill Anckesenamon/Helen, and then make her to a living mummy like himself. Frank and Dr. Muller come to the rescue, but Imhotep's magic is unstoppable. The girl invokes the goddess Isis and pleads for her to intervene. A statue of the goddess raises its hand holding an ankh (a symbol of life) that zaps Imhotep, who dries up, turns skeletal, and is reduced to dust.

The Mummy's themes of romance and reanimation are central to our twentieth-century image of the mummy as a horror archetype. A doomed dark romance linking the present to the past can easily be seen as a metaphor for our fascination with ancient Egypt itself. We enjoy the sentimental spirit, but when the dead past invades the living present there is also a hint of the forbidden erotic and necrophilia.

The original *The Mummy* did not dwell extensively on the other recurring mummy horror theme—curses—but the film did include a death curse for anyone who opened the casket containing the magical Scroll of Thoth. Moreover, the movie was a reflection of the tremendous public interest in ancient Egypt that had been created by the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb

in 1922. An entirely fictional curse was strongly associated with that discovery and became part of the popular concept of mummies and permeated the atmosphere, if not the story, of the film.

Karloff, in Jack P. Pierce's outstanding makeup, portrays Imhotep as a mummy only briefly early in the film. The tension of this early scene is heightened with an economical use of sound and no background music. The young archeologist Ralph Norton (Bramwell Fletcher), immersed in deciphering the hieroglyphs of the scroll, quietly begins reading them aloud—oblivious to the stirrings of the mummy in the case behind him. The "bandaged" Imhotep opens one eye and moves a bit as the camera shows his body. The mummy's hand is laid on the scroll lying next to Norton. He turns and sees the mummy off-screen, and his scream breaks the silence. The camera slowly pans down as the archeologist begins to laugh hysterically and captures trailing strips of mummy wrappings as the unseen mummy methodically exits. The mummy's case, now empty, is shown again. Sir Joseph, the senior archeologist, comes to the aid of Norton and sees a dusty handprint where the scroll had lain.

Once revived, the mummy hurts no one, only takes the scroll (although Norton, who has inadvertently raised him from the dead by reading the scroll, goes mad after he sees the mummy). It is as Ardath Bey—elderly, physically fragile, and somewhat desiccated—that Imhotep kills a museum guard and (by magic) Sir Joseph. Bey is probably responsible for the death of Helen's dog as well. And, as Bey, he attempts to kill Frank and intends to kill Helen/Anckesenamon in order to revive her and make her one of the living dead like himself.

The Mummy was adapted by John L. Balderston (who had previously scripted *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*) from a story by Nina Wilcox Putnam and Richard Schayer. The only Universal monster of its era without a direct fictional antecedent, it drew heavily on fictional concepts of love lost then regained after thousands of years and a modern woman who resembles an ancient female. Parallels to the earlier *Dracula* film are also apparent: a revived near-immortal being with occult powers who wishes to possess/dominate a female character and make her an undead being. Both creatures have hypnotic powers and can enslave certain humans; both are weakened by cruciform religious symbols.

The mummy, unlike Count Dracula, is motivated by love and, no matter what his crimes, he has suffered more for the woman he loves than any other ever has. Scott A. Nollen notes: "Im-ho-tep's ability to kill from afar

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Sir Joseph Whemple: [*translating inscription on box*] "Death . . . eternal punishment . . . for . . . anyone . . . who . . . opens . . . this . . . casket. In the name . . . of Amon-Ra . . . the king of the gods." Good heavens, what a terrible curse!

   Ralph Norton: [*eagerly*] Well, let's see what's inside!

                          John L. Balderston, screenplay of The Mummy

effectively displaces the distance between ancient Egypt and the viewing audience. Physically, Im-ho-tep is a slow, graceful being who seems incapable of bringing harm. It is his *purely supernatural* power that gives him his effectiveness" (78). Unlike Dracula (and Frankenstein), Imhotep is killed by the goddess Isis, not by mere humans, and cannot ever be brought back to a semblance of life.

The movie was successful enough that Universal exploited it during the 1940s with a series of plodding, unimaginative sequels that had nothing to do with Karloff's nuanced performance or much with the original mummy and his supernatural abilities. They instead focused on Kharis, a mummy-creature resembling dirty laundry that shambled about with a stiff-legged gait trailing bandages, and that is always brought down by humans (and eventually revived). He is a creature serving human evil that "good" humans can defeat.

The first, *The Mummy's Hand* (1940), starred the handsome athletic cowboy-star Tom Tyler. Scenes from the original film awkwardly cut with close-ups on Tyler were used to establish a new backstory of a priest/lover who steals the secret of eternal life—"tana leaves"—from the gods in order to resurrect his dead beloved the Princess Ananka. Set decor is an abysmal hodge-podge (it reused the "Incan" temple sets from *Green Hell*, 1940) and the story not much better. However, the image of the slow, shambling, lurching, but super-strong humanoid in rags that carries off women was established. This mummy is, literally, dumb, slow, and rather pitiful.

With *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), ranking horror-star Lon Chaney, Jr., reluctantly donned Kharis's rags. *The Mummy's Ghost* (1944) and *The Mummy's Curse* (1944) followed.

Movie mummies re-entered the horror realm in 1959 when Hammer Films, a British studio that had obtained the rights to the "Universal monsters," took ideas from the original *The Mummy* and combined them with the Kharis mythos from its sequels to film *The Mummy*. The movie also managed to hit just about every theme/cliché attached to the mummy: don't mess with things not understood, reanimating the dead, buried alive, lost love, ancient/modern female, vengeance, and exotic magic and curses.

Starring Peter Cushing (as John Banning) and Christopher Lee (as the Mummy, Kharis), *The Mummy* was directed by Terence Fisher with a screenplay from Jimmy Sangster. Set in Egypt in 1895, it tells the story of an injured John Banning, who cannot be present when his Father, Stephen (Felix Alymer), and Uncle Joe open the tomb of Princess Ananka. A local (George Pastell) warns that "He who robs the graves of Egypt dies," but they ignore the warning. Inside the tomb, the Stephen Banning reads from the *"Scroll of Life"* and suffers a breakdown. He is sent back to England, and John and his uncle explore and reseal the tomb. Three years later the elder Banning, who has been speechless in an insane asylum, suddenly regains his power of speech and explains that his reading of the scroll brought a mummy to life and that the living mummy will

destroy them. John ignores his father's warning. Meanwhile some moving men lose a crate of Egyptian antiquities in a swampy bog. The "foreigner" who hired them to transport the crate is a disguised Mehemet, the same man who warned them back in Egypt. Mehemet comes back at night, reads from the magic scroll, and the mummy Kharis (Christopher Lee) rises from the mud and starts murdering. John has discovered that Kharis was a priest secretly in love with the princess and was caught trying to bring her back from the dead and buried alive. John's wife Isobel (Yvonne Furneaux) turns out to be the living incarnation of Princess Ananka (at least when her hair is down) and thus Kharis's weakness. The mummy eventually gets to carry Isobel/Ananka off, she is rescued, and the mummy is shot and sinks to oblivion in the bog.

The Mummy went on general release on October 23, 1959, and broke the box-office records set by *Dracula* the previous year, both in the U.K. and the United States, when it was released there in December.

Sequels to *The Mummy* were "second features" with lower production values. The sequels were *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb* (1964), *The Mummy's Shroud* (1966), and *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb* (1971). The last featured a reincarnated princess rather than a mummy and was loosely based on Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*.

Mummies were included in many screen dramas of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, include animated and live-action television episodes, including "Jonny Quest's" "The Curse of the Anubis," first aired October 2, 1984, and four 1963 "Pyramids of Mars" episodes of "Doctor Who" (although the mummies turned out not to be mummies). There were also three more big-screen adaptations of Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars: Curse of the Mummy* (1971); *The Awakening* (1980); and *Legend of the Mummy* (a.k.a. *Bram Stoker's Legend of the Mummy*) (1998).

THE MUMMY IN LATER FICTION

With the world's attention piqued by Tutankhamen's tomb, many Egyptian-themed novels were churned out during the 1920s and 1930s, and some had mummies involved—*The Palgrave Mummy* by Florence M. Pettee (1929), *The Mummy Case Mystery* by Dermot Morrah (1933), Mary Gaunt's *The Mummy Moves* (1910; reprint 1925). Exotic, mysterious ancient Egypt also

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The inscription on the rock, written in hieroglyphic, ran thus:

"Hither the Gods come not at any summons. The 'Nameless One' has insulted them and is for ever alone. Go not nigh, lest their vengeance wither you away!"

Bram Stoker, The Jewel of Seven Stars

became a staple of the pulp magazines that flourished in the United States during the 1920s and 1940s, and mummies occasionally showed up there also. Like all pulp fiction, most of the tales are best forgotten, but some are of interest. Many of the better mummy-related stories appeared in *Weird Tales*.

The publisher of *Weird Tales*, Jacob Clark Henneberger, connected the famous stage magician Harry Houdini with H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937), creator of a cycle of horror stories known as the Cthulhu Mythos. Lovecraft ghost-wrote a novella, "Under the Pyramids" (published as "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs," *Weird Tales*, May–June–July 1924), in which the magician witnesses "the devil-cursed pharaonic dead of forty centuries...the *composite mummies* led through the uttermost onyx voids by King Khephren and his ghoul-queen Nitocris" (239–40), but only—so he says—in a dream.

In a letter to Frank Belknap Long dated February 14, 1924, Lovecraft wrote disdainfully of the project:

> It will be my job to invent the incident, and give it my most macabre touches. As yet, I don't know how far I can go, since from a specimen Houdini story which Henneberger sent me I judge that the magician tries to pass off these Munchausens as real adventures. He's extremely egotistical, as one can see at a glance. But in any case, I guess I can weave in some pretty shocking things...unsuspected lower caverns, a burning light amidst the balsam'd dead, or a terrible fate for the Arab guides who sought to frighten Our Hero. (*Selected Letters* 1.312)

Lovecraft later wrote another mummy story, "Out of the Aeons," with Hazel Heald (*Weird Tales*, April 1935), about a mummy with a retinal image that killed those who saw it. Lovecraft's often ornate prose, turned positively purple as the story's narrator described the creature he glimpses in the mummy's eye: "Even now I cannot begin to suggest it with any words at my command. I might call it gigantic—tentacled—proboscidian—octopus-eyed—semi-amorphous—plastic—partly squamous and partly rugose—ugh! But nothing I could say could even adumbrate the loathsome, unholy, non-human, extra-galactic horror and hatefulness and unutterable evil of that forbidden spawn of black chaos and illimitable night" (286).

In "The Empire of the Necromancers" (*Weird Tales*, September 1932) by Clark Ashton Smith (1893–1961), two evil magicians raise the dead in Cincor, a desert land on his fictional continent of Zothique. Two ex-mummies are the heroes, destroying the necromancers and allowing their people final rest.

"The Secret of Sebek" (November 1937) and its sequel, "The Eyes of the Mummy" (April 1938), were both were published in *Weird Tales* and both were the work of Robert Bloch (1917–1994). Bloch was first drawn to picking up a copy of *Weird Tales* in 1927 by an "Egyptian motif of the cover plus the appeal of the word Weird in the magazine's title" (Interview). In the first story, the intended desecration of a mummy of a priest of the crocodile-headed

god Sebek results in several deaths. Ultimately, either the god himself or the revived priest with a crocodile head sinks his sabre-teeth into another victim. The horrified narrator, an occultist, returns in the later story, in which a mummy inhabits the body of a living person, leaving the man trapped in its decaying husk. Unlike many mummy stories, Bloch manages to mix some real horror into his scenarios.

"Beetles," a short story concerning an archaeologist who suffers a terrible fate after opening a cursed mummy's case, was published in *Weird Tales* December 1938 and credited to Tarleton Fiske, a pseudonym of Bloch's. Bloch later adapted it into a teleplay for the TV series "Tales from the Darkside," which aired in 1987. (Another 1987 episode of the series based on a Harvey Jacobs story, "The Grave Robber," that portrays treasure hunters who accidentally revive a mummy. The mummy plays strip poker with the loser taking on his curse.)

E. F. Benson (1867–1940), a British writer who also had an early interest in archaeology, spent three years as an archaeologist in Egypt and Greece. His knowledge often informed his fiction, but it did not keep him from writing about mummy curses. The desecration of a mummy in his story "Monkeys" (*Weird Tales*, December 1933) results in a giant preternatural ape committing murder to put things right.

In "The Man in Crescent Terrace" (*Weird Tales*, March 1946) by Seabury Quinn (1889–1969), a mummy is seen stabbing a man in London. Occult detective Jules de Gradin incinerates the murderous mummy with a flick of his cigarette lighter.

In Dennis Wheatley's "Life for a Life," first published in 1943 in *Gunmen, Gallants and Ghosts* (one story that was not in *Weird Tales*), a man dreams nightly of a beautiful golden-haired mummy who drains him of life.

During the 1950s stories featuring mummies became scarcer and often light-hearted rather than horrific. An archaeologist falls in love with a resurrected mummy in *The Archeologist and the Princess* (1957), a humorous novel by Walter W. Leight. Robert Silverberg and Randall Garrett, writing as

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...presently deciphering the hieroglyphic inscription, Madden read out that within lay the body of A-pen-ara, daughter of the overseer of the cattle of Senmut.

"Then follow the usual formulas," he said. "Yes, yes...ah, you'll be interested in this, Hugh, for you asked me once about it. A-pen-ra curses any who desecrates or meddles with her bones, and should anyone do so, the guardians of her sepulcher will see to him, and he shall dies childless and in panic and agony; also the guardian of her sepulcher will tear the hair from his head and scoop his eyes from their sockets, and pluck the thumbs from his right hand, as a man plucks the young blade of corn from his sheath."

E. F. Benson, "Monkeys"

Clyde Mitchell, wrote the novelette ''The Mummy Takes a Wife,'' ''A Mad Mixture of Mummies, Maids and Mayhem'' according to its blurb in *Fantastic Science Fiction* (December 1956).

Carl Dreadstone, the house name of a series of authors who novelized classic horror films, published a novelization of the movie *The Mummy* in 1977. (Some of these novelizations were written by leading British horror novelist Ramsey Campbell, but this one was not.) Another horror novel, Charles Grant's fast-paced *The Long Night of the Grave* (1986), has a mummy murderer known as ''Blackshadow.'' The excellent *Cities of the Dead* (1988) by Michael Paine is a chilling, well-researched, atmospheric novel written in the voice of Howard Carter. Supposedly excerpted from diaries written by Carter in 1903–1904, long before his famous discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb, this book does not deal with the walking dead, but with the mysteries of life and life after death. (Paine takes up the Universal Mummy character in a licensed 2006 novel, *The Mummy: Dark Resurrection.*)

By far the best selling of all the mummy books is Anne Rice's *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned* (1989). Rice returns to the theme of immortal love and lust with a heavy hand that makes this novel more of a steamy romance than a horror story—although the idea of Ramses the Great coming to life as a blue-eyed hunk is pretty scary. Rice originally wrote *The Mummy* as a screen treatment for a movie. When the producers tore apart the work and wanted to make massive changes, Rice pulled the material and turned it into a novel. For once, producers may have been right to try to change this story: An archaeologist discovers the tomb of Ramses II. It turns out that Ramses the Great's mummy isn't in the Cairo Museum. Ramses was immortal thanks to an elixir and was alive during the reign of Cleopatra VII, who ruled Egypt more than 1,200 years after the end of Ramses's own rule. Ramses was in love with Cleopatra. Ramses's mummy comes to life as a beautiful perfect man, and the archeologist's daughter falls in love with him and introduces him to modern life. Ramses is disgusted with the modern portrayal of his beloved Cleopatra. After going back to Egypt, Ramses recognizes an ''unknown'' mummified woman as Cleopatra. He uses his immortality elixir and raises her from the dead. But Cleopatra is not restored to her beautiful body or mind. She is a walking corpse of rotting flesh and a disoriented mind that kills without mercy. Although even more happens, the immensely popular book has no resolution and more or less promises a sequel that has yet to be forthcoming. Rumors of movie versions have circulated for many years.

Anthologies of short mummy fiction tend to re-collect many of the same stories. They also almost invariably end up including stories in which mummies really play no part. *The Mummy Walks among Us*, edited by Vic Ghidalia (1971), was a slender paperback of pulp reprints. *Mummy!*, edited by Bill Pronzini (1980), offered seven classic reprints and five originals, the new stories all based in non-Egyptian cultures. The stories of *The Mummy: Stories of the Living Corpse*, edited by Peter Haining (1988), were mostly reprints

and included "Colonel Stonesteel's Genuine Home-Made Truly Egyptian Mummy," Ray Bradbury's story of nostalgia and imagination wrapped in pseudo-mummy. In Bradbury's later "West of October" (1988), four disembodied young men of the odd Elliot family become part of A Thousand Times Great Grandmère's mummy and Nefertiti's mother. *Mummy Stories*, edited by Martin H. Greenberg (1990), has five original stories, none of which are outstanding, and nine reprints.

There have been comic books with mummy characters as well, including those based on the original film, an "erotic" comic, and a fancy twelve-issue limited series based on Anne Rice's *The Mummy*. Probably the only truly notable mummy-related character in comics is Stan Lee's N'Kantu, The Living Mummy (created by Steve Gerber and Rich Buckler). A member of a North African tribe was enslaved by ancient Egyptians. After attempting to lead a rebellion, he was sprayed with a paralyzing liquid. Paralyzed, his blood was drained and replaced with a special preservative fluid. He was then bound in papyrus wrappings and placed in a mummy case. Three thousand years later, the paralysis wears off and N'Kantu—insane from three millennia of darkness and immobility—digs himself free. He made his first appearance in *Supernatural Thrillers #5* (Marvel, 1973). He made a few appearances in the 1980s and 1990s and has now reappeared in Marvel's *Nick Fury's Howling Commandos* #1–6 (December 2005–May 2006).

THE MUMMY IN RECENT LITERATURE AND FILM

Interest in the mummy genre was revived with Universal's 1999 "reimagining" of its mummy with *The Mummy*, a big-screen blockbuster starring Brendan Fraser and directed by Stephen Sommers. The story includes the discovery of the mummified body of Imhotep (Arnold Vosloo), an Egyptian priest who fell in love with a pharaoh's mistress, tried to bring her back from the dead, was caught and mummified alive. Resurrected, he wields great magical powers, raises an army of the undead, and unleashes the biblical plagues of Egypt. Full of wondrous special effects, the very popular movie does get away from the bandaged monster and back to a regenerated supernatural near-immortal seeking his long-lost (but not virginal) love. At the end, Evelyn (Rachel Weisz, the modern version of "Anksunamun") reads an inscription as "spirits of the Egyptian gods" waft out of a bog, turns the bad-guy priest-mummies to dust, and turns Imhotep into a mortal. Then, just before his head goes under, Imhotep looks up at them and says something in "ancient Egyptian." Evelyn translates it as: "Death is only the beginning." *The Mummy*, despite some scenes intended to scare, comes off as an adventure film with enough comedy to show that it is all just for fun and not to be taken seriously.

The film grossed more than $400 million worldwide; a sequel was inevitable. *The Mummy Returns*, also directed by Stephen Sommers, was released

in 2001. There is not much story to the film. Once Imhotep rises from the dead the film bombards the viewer with super-spectacle. Battles, fights, chases, onslaughts of mummies, golems, and shrunken heads...Everyone is predestined for something and there is a general mystical overload. The world is saved, but by the end few viewers care. A highly lucrative 2002 spin-off, *The Scorpion King*, had nothing to do with mummies.

The franchise, which has been estimated to have grossed $1 billion, also spawned DVDs, computer games, "Revenge of the Mummy" (a state-of-the-art hybrid theme park attraction at Universal Studios Hollywood and Orlando), novelizations, and "The Mummy: The Animated Series," which aired in 2001–2002 on the WB network. The series follows the adventures of Alex O'Connell, along with his parents, Rick and Evy, battling the mummy Imhotep.

The Mummy also revived Universal's interest overall in its "monsters." Stephen Sommers took up Bram Stoker's fabled monster-hunter and made *Van Helsing* (2004). But after a disappointing critical and commercial reception for *Van Helsing*, Universal is reportedly keen to return to the successful Mummy franchise.

Perhaps an indirect result of *The Mummy*'s success, Joe R. Lansdale's novella *Bubba Ho-Tep* (1994) was turned into a low-budget independent film directed by Don Coscarelli. *Bubba Ho-Tep*, starring Bruce Campbell and Ossie Davis, was released in 2002. The mummy involved is a cowboy-hat wearing monstrosity that sucks out the souls of the elderly residents of a Texas old folks home. Having switched identities with an impersonator years before his "death," Elvis is now a resident of the home. He teams up with fellow resident, an elderly African American John F. Kennedy to fight the monster. The film is better than one might expect, probably because it stuck close to the original story, and is both entertaining and poignant, but its use of the mummy is not significant. Bubba Ho-Tep—a walking, soul-sucking metaphor—could have been any monster that needs to be defeated and returned to the dead where he belongs.

The anthologies *Into the Mummy's Tomb*, edited by John Richard Stephens (2001), and *Pharaoh Fantastic*, edited by Martin H. Greenberg and Brittiany A. Koren (2002), tried to play off the newfound mummy-mania. The former was yet another rehash of reprints, the latter contained thirteen original stories, only two of which were mummy-related. In 2004, *Return from the Dead: Classic Mummy Stories*, edited by David Stuart Davies, again reprinted old stories.

A revived-mummy novel by Richard Laymon, originally titled *Dead Corse*, was rejected for publication by Warner Books in 1979. Laymon later used the idea of a mummified female with a stake in her heart in *The Stake* (1991). After Laymon's death in 2001, the mummy novel was published as *Amara* (2003) in the U.K. and *To Wake the Dead* in the United States. The mummy, a red-haired wife of Mentuhotep I, goes on a bloody rampage across Southern

California. As a review in *Publishers Weekly* put it, of the three plot-threads in the novel, "The plot thread involving the mummy is the least interesting, because the staggering ferocious monster at its core shows as little character as the mummies of old Universal horror flicks; she's simply a force to be fought" (August 25, 2003).

"Mummy: The Resurrection," a role-playing game released by White Wolf Game Studios in 2001, has players assume the role of resurrected mummies living in the modern world. It was first released as a supplement for "Vampire: The Masquerade," which allowed you to play as an immortal mummy (that usually from ancient Egypt, though China or Mesoamerica were also possibilities). White Wolf also published three associated fiction titles.

There are many mummy-related fiction titles available for readers under the age of twelve. R. L. Stine has taken the theme on several times in his Goosebumps series. ("Return of the Mummy" became a Goosebumps Presents television episode in 1998.) The series "Eek! Stories to Make You Shriek" and "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" both have mummy books; TV twins Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen confronted a mummy in their series as did the children of the Black Cat Club, the Sweet Valley Kids, the Bailey School Kids, Mercer Meyer's Critter Kids, Graveyard School, the Young Indiana Jones, and the Three Investigators series. Even Scooby-Doo and Garfield deal with mummy curses in tie-in books. Outside of series titles, books for young adults by writers like John Bellairs, Kathleen Karr, Cynthia Voigt, and Barbara Steiner are also in print.

Worth noting, too, is *Tutenstein*, created by Jay Stephens in 1996, an animated series for "Discovery Kids" that has been airing on the Discovery channel since 2003. An Egyptologist works with the series producers to ensure that the written and visual aspects of the series are appropriately informed by Egyptological content. Once again, the premise is a mummy is accidentally brought back to life. This time it is the "child Pharaoh Tut-ankh-en-set-amun." Twelve-year-old Egyptophile Cleo and her pet cat Luxor attempt to help the ex-mummy—who is short in stature but long on attitude, and believes he is the supreme ruler of the world—adjust to life in the twenty-first century.

Egyptophilic adults fare better in the murder/suspense genre than in horror these days. Mummies are not the theme, but they do turn up in some plots. *Blood Lines* (1993), one of Tanya Huff's series featuring ex-cop Vicki Nelson and her vampire partner, features romance and a mummy stalking the streets of modern Toronto. Elizabeth Peters's wonderful turn-of-the-century heroine Amelia Peabody uncovers ancient Egyptian tombs and murder mysteries along with her husband, Radcliffe Emerson, and their extraordinary son, Ramses. The books have become best sellers. The first of the series, *Crocodile on the Sandbank* (1975), was set in 1884. The 2006 entry, *Tomb of the Golden Bird* (2006), is the eighteenth and has the characters involved in the 1922 discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb. Historically and archeologically accurate (Peters is a pseudonym for Barbara Mertz who holds a Ph.D. in Egyptology) these books

only tangentially deal with mummies, but are witty, tightly plotted mysteries that offer the occasional thrill and chill. Among her many titles, Mertz also wrote (as Peters) *The Jackal's Head* (1968) and (as Barbara Michaels) *Search the Shadows* (1987)—both suspenseful romantic thrillers with Egyptian themes.

Lynda S. Robinson (another writer with a scholarly Egyptological background) has set a series of mysteries in eighteenth-dynasty Egypt during the time of Tutankhamen. She completely avoids Hollywood clichés and worn melodrama about ancient Egypt, recreating instead her interpretation of a culture obsessed with death and corpses. In the first of the series, *Murder in the Place of Anubis* (1994), her "detective," Lord Meren, investigates a murder committed in mummification workshop.

From the literary mainstream, an unusual novel, *The Egyptologist* (2004) by Arthur Phillips, involves a murder-suicide related to mummies, but no revived mummies.

Will horror literature ever see a resurrection of the mummy mythos? Certainly the vampire legend is endlessly reworked effectively (as well as ineffectively) by modern writers; the werewolf, too, has found new interpretations. It is possible, but a fundamental problem with the mummy is that once "alive" it can keep its wrappings, be a raggedy member of the walking dead (that most any potential victim can escape once the "boo"-factor has worn off) or it can lose the linen and become an undead human with supernatural powers and/or preternatural desires. Either way, it really isn't a mummy anymore. The "immortal being" concept is difficult to maintain, too, as there few reasons for immortals to become mummies in the first place. How many priests can be buried alive? A curse from beyond the grave? A curse really needs no mummy to carry it out. Neither does reincarnation.

Interest in ancient Egypt is still strong and modern scientific analysis has added a wealth of information that writers of suspense, mystery, romance, and historical novels have fruitfully drawn upon. These genres draw on ancient Egypt as a whole and for those looking for horror icons may well find new ones among the riches of Egyptian mythology.

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The Psychic

by Tony Fonseca

DEFINITION AND ORIGINS

According to *The Skeptic's Dictionary* (http://www.skepdic.com/psychic
.html), the term psychic was first used by renowned chemist William Crookes.
In 1871, Crookes attended a séance and came away convinced of the presence
of spirits. Although parapsychologists have subsequently determined that
virtually every medium who has ever been tested under controlled conditions

has been proven not to possess any supernatural ability, they have also determined that more often than not people who believe they have psychic powers are not frauds; they genuinely believe in their untested powers. *The Skeptic's Dictionary* posits that the main reasons for belief in paranormal powers are the perceived accuracy of psychic predictions and readings; the seemingly uncanny premonitions that many people have, especially in dreams; and the seemingly fantastic odds against such premonitions or predictions being correct by coincidence or chance.

This may seem to fly in the face of reason, for the belief in psychic powers is universal, harkening back to the practice of early magic and witchcraft (in fact, certain types of psychics, namely diviners or clairvoyants, are in many ways related to witches and their predecessors, oracles). The other major division of psychic phenomena, those powers possessed by physical mediums, or those psychics who produce objects and noises, or those who master levitation, is usually incorrectly categorized as magic. Perhaps this miscategorization accounts for the fact that, typically, the profession that has most often taken on the job of exposing fraudulent physical mediums is that of prestidigitation. Both Harry Houdini (born Ehrich Weiss, 1874–1926) and The Amazing Randi (born James Randi, b. 1928) are numbered among those professional magicians who see the policing of psychics as a calling, a responsibility. Houdini wrote several books on the subject (his investigations, teamed with friend and fellow skeptic Sir Arthur Conan Doyle [1859–1930], have been fictionalized by H. R. Knight in the recent novel, *What Rough Beast* [2005; originally published under the byline Harry R. Squires in 2001]); The Amazing Randi routinely offers $1,000,000 to anyone who can demonstrate proven psychic powers.

In *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans* (1980), Jeffrey B. Russell points to various primitive cultures that recognize the existence of humans who can, as Brian P. Copenhaver describes it in the introduction to *Hermetica*, "manipulate the divine and natural worlds for more or less concrete and immediate purposes" (xxxvi). Russell gives as example the Zande of the southern Sudan, who distinguished between good, benevolent, oracular magic, familial revenge-oriented magic, and evil magic, performed for personal gain or at the request of an individual who may gain personally. Likewise, the Bechuana of Botswana distinguish between beneficial "day-sorcerers" and terrifying "night-witches." In recent history, sorcery and witchcraft have been placed into the latter categories, seen as evil magic performed by night-witches. Historians agree that diviners and oracles were part of both Egyptian and Graeco-Roman cultures, and they were revered for their talents. Similar supernaturally inclined practitioners, such as astrologers, alchemists, and divinely inspired prophets, all promised the ability to bridge the gaps between the natural and divine worlds, and they were often welcomed in royal courts. Much medieval science was occupied with alchemy, and kings hired alchemists to develop some drugs and chemicals, that is until the Church condemned alchemy.

Russell theorizes that Eastern European cultures, because of the influence of Christianity, ultimately began to represent the precursors to physical psychics, in other words witches and sorcerers, as evil. At one time they were believed to be in league with Lucifer, to the point where various representations show them as having sexual intercourse with the devil (20). Although Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486–1535) called his major work on natural magic *De Occulta Philosophia* (*On the Occult Philosophy*), what we know as modern occultism (from the French word *occultisme*) did not become fashionable until the nineteenth century. When Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) began practicing ''mental healing,'' little did he know that his theory of a ''laying on of hands'' in order to produce a positive energy that would help cure would ultimately lead to the Spiritualist Movement. Mesmer, who was born in Switzerland and later studied medicine at the University of Vienna, was looking into the possibilities that a doctor's physical presence, that is, his ability to produce positive feelings in a patient, is fundamental in medical treatment. Ultimately, he posited the theory of the healing force or fluid called ''animal magnetism.'' As James E. Beichler explains, Mesmer

> tried to unify the early physics of magnetism with life. . . . [He] made use of a common scientific method of explaining phenomena outside the realm of Newtonian mechanism in terms of a non-mechanical, unspecified and mass less fluid. He then considered the possibility that an imbalance of this hypothetical fluid in the human body caused illnesses. . . . Other psychic phenomena, such as telepathy, were also observed within the practice of Mesmerism. (30)

Dismissed in Vienna, Mesmer moved to Paris in 1778 and was favorably received by the public. However, medical authorities refused to countenance him, and in 1784 the government appointed a commission of members of the Faculty of Medicine, the Société Royale de Médecin, and the Academy of Sciences; the commission dismissed animal magnetism, claiming that Mesmer's patients simply had overactive imaginations. Mesmer's ideas were kept alive by a few of his students and reemerged during the next century. Later studies of Mesmer's work by James Braid and others in England introduced the term ''hypnotism.'' Well-known writers who use occult motifs, for example Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) and E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), are in some way or other influenced by Mesmer's theories.

SPIRITUALISM

In a 2003 issue of *Aries*, Cathy Gutierrez points out the relationship between Mesmerism and Spiritualism: ''Mediumship shared phenomenological characteristics with several similar movements of its day, foremost

Mesmerism. . . . Spiritualism was both dependent on and an elaboration of early experiments with hypnotism. . . . Mesmerism clearly included a mystical as well as medical component, and in certain cases mesmerized patients reported a facility for the paranormal and the ability to talk to the dead" (57–58). Although most scholars argue for 1848 as the official birth of the Spiritualist movement, there is some argument that it can be traced back to the lectures of J. S. Grimes (1807–1903) on the physiology of the nervous system and phrenology in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1843. Some point out that there were indeed even earlier movements in Spiritualism and philosophy in Europe prior to the 1840s. British skeptic, well-known psychical investigator, and author Frank Podmore (1856–1910) theorizes that Spiritualism was the child of both Mesmerism and a belief in witchcraft and phenomena associated with it (Beichler 31). S. G. Soal writes of early spiritual mediums in his "Spiritualism" entry in Julian Franklyn's *A Survey of the Occult*, noting what could be the first instance of spiritualism, in the form of automatic writing, in the mid- to late 1840s, when shoemaker Andrew Jackson Davis published a bulky tome called *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations and a Voice to Mankind* (1847). Davis claimed that the entire book, which attempts to trace the genesis of cosmic evolution, was dictated while he was in a hypnotic trance over a period of fifteen months (Soal 215).

Most agree, however, that the Spiritualist movement proper got its start circa 1848 in upstate New York, at the home of a blacksmith named John Fox. Fox lived with his wife and two daughters, ages twelve and fourteen, in Hydesville (near Rochester). The girls began to communicate with the spirit of a murdered traveling sales representative, manifested by an outbreak of percussive activity; this lead to their local reputation as mediums. Eventually neighbors were called in to witness the Fox sisters, Kate (born Catherine Fox, 1839–1892) and Margaret (1833–1893), as they communicated with the ghost. Eventually, Quaker abolitionists Amy and Isaac Post of Rochester heard about the two girls, and soon the two had a captive audience. Eventually, the Fox Sisters lost control of their lives when their older sister became their manager and they became professional mediums. The sister, [Ann] Leah Fox (1814–1890), published a book in 1885, claiming that psychic power ran in the family. The girls' veracity was often attacked and questioned; they were proven a fraud during a few experiments; and they confessed (and later recanted) that they tricked people by creating the sounds physically, by cracking an ankle joint. At the time of their deaths, their lives were riddled with alcoholism, poverty, instability, and loneliness (Braude 18).

Mesmerism clearly included a mystical as well as medical component, and in certain cases mesmerized patients reported a facility for the paranormal and the ability to talk to the dead.

—*Cathy Gutierrez,* Aries, 2003

It would be a mistake to think that only the uneducated rural population was taken in by the Spiritualist movement in the United States. By the 1850s, New York State Supreme Court Judge John Edmonds became interested in séances and mediumship, and on at least one occasion an array of literati gathered at a New York clergyman's house to hear the Fox Sisters' rapping communications in 1850. These notables included James Fenimore Cooper, George Bancroft, William Cullen Bryant, Nathaniel Parker Willis, and *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley. Greeley was convinced of the value of mediumship, and in 1851 he published a transcript of a December 15 séance (Braude 16, 21, 27). A veritable who's who populated the audiences and believers of the movement. Other notables known for their belief were Charles Beecher, Isabella Beecher Hooker (Harriet Beecher Stowe investigated the phenomenon but never became entranced by it), William Lloyd Garrison, Sarah Grimke, Angelina Grimke, U.S. Senator N. P. Talmadge, Ohio Congressman Joshua Giddings, and First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln. Given the official and overwhelming acceptance of Spiritualism, mediums ultimately sprung up throughout the state of New York. Following in the vein of the Fox Sisters, most American mediums were female, perhaps because, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage wrote in the four-volume *History of Women's Suffrage* (1887), "the only religious sect in the world...that has recognized the equality of woman is the Spiritualists" (quoted in Braude 2).

In fact, as Ann Braude points out in *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (1989), mediums, at least in America, were seen as necessary passive conduits, as negative and passive, in other words, as feminine (23). Eventually word of Spiritualism reached Europe. By 1852 or so, mediums started becoming conduits for vocal communications from spirits, and by then England witnessed the emergence of what Soal calls "the first [professional] rapping medium," a Mrs. Hayden, who according to Soal, gave sittings for a small fee (220). By 1855, one of the most famous psychics of all time, a Scottish physical medium raised in America named Daniel Douglas Home (1833–1886), also visited England. In one of his better-known feats, Home is rumored to have floated out of the window of an adjoining room and in through the window of a séance room. Home had begun hearing "raps" at the age of seventeen, after his mother's death, and his signature feat was the appearance of "spirit hands" at his séances. His audiences included Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning, the latter sternly believing Home was a charlatan. Browning's poem, "Mr. Sludge the Medium," is a thinly veiled attack on Home. Other famous European psychics included Helene Smith (1861–1929) and Charles Bailey (1870–1947). Smith, born Catherine Elise Muller, operated in Geneva in the early 1890s, claiming that Victor Hugo was her spirit protector (he was later replaced by a mysterious spirit named Leopold, and then the deceased spirit of an Italian-born mystic, Cagliostro). Smith was also a physical medium, moving objects at a distance and producing items, and she ultimately claimed that she was the reincarnation of Marie Antoinette and that her astral

Séance attendees during the heyday of Spiritualism included New York State Supreme Court Judge John Edmonds, James Fenimore Cooper, George Bancroft, William Cullen Bryant, Nathaniel Parker Willis, *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, Charles Beecher, Isabella Beecher Hooker, William Lloyd Garrison, Sarah Grimke, Angelina Grimke, U. S. Senator N. P. Talmadge, Ohio Congressman Joshua Giddings, First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln, Elizabeth Barrett, and Robert Browning.

projection visited Mars in 1894. Australian born Bailey began his professional mediumship in 1889 and eventually gained the patronage of American-born Melbourne millionaire T. W. Stanford, the brother of the founder of Stanford University. His signature was the production of a large range of objects, which he claimed were from past civilizations.

While Mesmerism sprang from Vienna and Spiritualism in the United States, both were imported to Victorian England, adopted into the culture in such a way that they were viewed as new sciences. Perhaps this is because The Industrial Revolution and Darwinism created a sense of doubt, resulting in the need for a search for meaning. This search was not limited to the working classes. Nandor Fodor in *Between Two Worlds* (1964) argues that there is evidence of Queen Victoria's attending séances and using a medium. Charles Dickens practiced Mesmerism on his own wife (Kaplan 70). Dr. John Elliotson (1791–1868), president of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London and the first great exponent of animal magnetism in England and founding member of the Phrenological Society (1838), represented these occult phenomena in such a way that they were viewed as acceptable by educated society. In 1838 approximately 170 of the 1,000 members of the Phrenological Society were physicians and surgeons, giving even more credence to Spiritualism (Cooter 29). This is rather difficult to understand by today's standards of scientific, and even pseudo-scientific theories. But as Beichler points out, "the evolution of modern spiritualism, especially in its scientific aspects, was not due to any failure of science to cope with the occult and religion, but it was instead due to the success of science in its expansion into previously questionable territories of human perception and thought.... The modern spiritualism movement coincided with the first attempts of science to define itself relative to the human mind" (33). In 2005, Clare Wilson, in *New Scientist*, attempted to account for the early (and sometimes current, depending on the demographic) popularity of psychics. She reports that one of the most remarkable features of an encounter with a professional medium, astrologer, or fortune-teller is the uncanny insight that many psychics seem to have about their customers. For believers, the clairvoyants' apparent omniscience is no mystery: their source of information is their spirit guide, tarot cards, or crystal ball. They assuage grieving and ostensibly provide heavenly knowledge. And for women, as Gutierrez insightfully notes, "spiritualism

provided the possibility that anyone, and particularly women, might have the necessary talent to be invested with quasi-religious authority" (56).

Charles Dickens practiced Mesmerism on his wife.

HOUDINI AND THE SKEPTICS

Skeptics, on the other hand, continue to believe the psychic is deceiving the sitter in an elaborate con; they argue that charlatans are not above cheating by hot reading, or by planting a co-conspirator in the audience, a practice as old as Spiritualism itself. Yet repeated charges of fraud did little to stop the proliferation of fakes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was not until the 1920s that magicians such as Houdini (renamed after magician Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin) exposed the techniques and methods of deceit used. As a teen, he had read *Revelations of a Spirit Medium; or, Spiritualistic Mysteries Exposed* (1891), written and published anonymously by A. Medium. This book exposed the tricks of phony psychics, who after being tied up would secretly release themselves to make ghostly things happen in darkened rooms. Houdini, in *Miracle Mongers and Their Methods* (1920), attempts, as he writes in his introduction, to expose marvels "held to be supernatural . . . for the tricks they were" (x). The exposé informs readers of the tricks used in fire eating, razor and umbrella swallowing, snake eating, snake handling, feats of strength, and heat resistance. Houdini continued in the same vein in the better-known *A Magician among the Spirits* (1924). Here, he begins with the discrediting of the Fox Sisters (they had recanted their confession of fraud), then traces the history of particular psychics like Home, Eusapia Palladino (1854–1918), Ann O'Delia Diss Debar (a.k.a. Swami Laura Horos [b. 1849]), and the slate writer Dr. Henry Slade (1835–1905), as well as various other phenomena such as spirit photography and ectoplasm; Houdini then debunks each of the psychics and psychic phenomena. He also devotes one chapter of this important historical "skeptical" publication to his friend and fellow debunker Conan Doyle. Ironically, Houdini's "spirit" was the star of his final narrative, *The Houdini Messages: The Facts Concerning the Messages Received Through the Mediumship of Arthur Ford* (1929), a tract that chronicles a séance in which his wife Bess attempted to contact his spirit. Today this publication ranks as a rare piece of Houdini memorabilia.

PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Of course, every phenomenon produces an equal need for serious study, so by the late nineteenth century the science of parapsychology began to emerge. Sources agree that the term "parapsychology" was coined in 1889 by German psychologist and founder of the Gesellschaft für Experimental Psychologie

(The Society for Experimental Psychology) Max Dessoir (1867–1947), who was known for his experiments in muscle reading, thought-transference, and hypnotism. According to Marco Frenschkowski in *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia* (2005), Dessoir's goal was the scientific study of various aspects of occultism, including extrasensory perception, spiritualism, and other psychic phenomena (866). Similar institutions, The Society for Psychical Research and The Theosophical Society, were founded in 1882 London and 1884 New York City, respectively. These organizations brought about a focus on the religious as well as the scientific aspects of the occult. The Society for Psychical Research was founded principally on the initiative of various academics at Cambridge University, in response to the avid followings that Mesmerism and Spiritualism had engendered. Henry Sidgwick, Sir William Barrett, and Frederick W. H. Myers, as well as Balfour Stewart, R. H. Hutton, Hensleigh Wedgwood, and Edmund Gurney, were instrumental in its inception.

William James (1842–1910) became involved with The Society for Psychical Research and became one of the guiding forces behind the American chapter of the society, as he was (in the words of Gardner Murphy) "eagerly and actively concerned with the investigations by these societies into alleged hauntings, apparitions, and communications with the deceased" (James 14). James examined parapsychology with an empiricist's eye, pursuing throughout his life many types of psychological phenomena rejected by science. In 1884 he discovered Mrs. L. E. Piper, who, in the sittings given to his wife, himself, and his mother-in-law, had referred to information she could not have acquired other than through mediumship. In a much-quoted essay, "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished" (1897), he asserted that telepathy, as represented by Piper's experiences, constituted a true scientific breakthrough. James was not the only psychologist of note to spend considerable time researching psychic phenomena. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) had, by 1921, reached what *The Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* terms a "reluctant private conclusion that there might be something to telepathy" (after a few secretive experiments with the Hungarian psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi). Freud once wrote, "[I]f I had my life to live over again, I should devote myself to psychical research rather than to psychoanalysis," and his interest in the paranormal is evident in "The Uncanny" (1919). And although he always had a skeptic's predisposition, C. G. Jung did valuable work in psychoanalysis of occult phenomena by investigating a fifteen-year-old spirit medium, Miss S. W., who claimed to have had experience with astral projection through space (Soal 202).

Psychology and parapsychology have quite a bit in common, and often intersect in studies on phenomenon like near-death experiences and after-death communication. Even a hard science like statistics can get thrown into the mix, as studies (e.g., Houck 2005) that attempt to measure the frequency and uniqueness of after-death communication statistically, using frequency

analysis, to determine the randomness of the phenomenon. Briefly defined, parapsychology is "the scientific study of experiences which, if they are as they seem to be, are in the principle outside the realm of human capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists" (Irwin 1). Implied in this definition is the possibility that this decade's parapsychological theories may be next decade's accepted psychology, for as H. J. Irwin writes in *An Introduction to Parapsychology* (1989), parapsychological events are those that are equated with the extrasensory; these experiences are differentiated from the paranormal (2). As any good scientist, parapsychologists began by categorizing various phenomena, based on commonalities. Many of these parapsychological events have been grouped together under the umbrella term "psi phenomena" by R. H. Thouless and B. P. Weisner for *The Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (1948). Their categories include mediumship, both physical and spiritual; precognition; retrocognition; automatic writing; spirit photography; telepathy; clairvoyance; clairaudience; telekinesis; and psychokinesis.

Mental mediums are, strictly speaking, intermediaries between two worlds, or two dimensions, acting as an intervening body through which an entity from a spirit dimension can be transmitted. In this respect, they act as a means of communication. Mediumship is the category of psychic phenomena that is most commonly thought of as synonymous with the term psychic. A physical medium is also a conduit, and he or she is able to tap into an abundance of etheric energy, ectoplasm, and matter, physically transporting it, in various manifestations, from one realm into another. Usually, but not always, the physical medium must be in a deep trance, which helps clear the mind so that it can be used as a transporter. The implication is that the mind can literally affect or control matter. In physical mediumship, the spiritual realm can manifest itself in diverse ways. In what is called direct voice, the spirit guide creates an ectoplasm voice box, an instrument called a trumpet, which can be used to speak to a séance audience, often while being levitated around the room. Apportation occurs when the spirit realm causes objects to materialize in the sitting room, apparently from nowhere; the apported object can be permanent or temporary. These objects can include stones, gems, animals, ancient relics, and even people. What are called raps and taps are a common form of activity where sharp bangs are heard, often from within the area of the table the audience is gathered around. These sounds take the form of a code that can convey specific messages to the sitters. Spirit Lights take the form of flashes or balls appearing on or near the medium. In materialization,

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Briefly defined, parapsychology is "the scientific study of experiences which, if they are as they seem to be, are in the principle outside the realm of human capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists."

—*H. J. Irwin,* An Introduction to Parapsychology

the spirit realm uses what is called ectoplasm to create an image or molding of the contacted human before death, with the degree and strength of the materialized form varying per medium. This ectoplasm is pure energy, similar to Mesmer's animal magnetism, and it can be used by mediums to move objects, as it can be manipulated into hardened rods. When it is used to raise objects, it is called levitation ectoplasm. Precognition—extrasensory knowledge or perception of the future—is the most frequently reported of all psychic experiences, occurring most often in dreams. It may also occur spontaneously in waking visions, as flashing thoughts entering the mind, accompanied by a sense of knowing. Precognitive knowledge may be induced through trance, mediumship, and oracular divination. It differs from premonition in that the former involves a sense or feeling that something is going to happen, while precognition involves specific knowledge. Retrocognition is a type of clairvoyance involving extrasensory knowledge of an event after its occurrence.

Automatic writing is sometimes regarded entirely as a function of channeling via mediumship. However, like many forms of divination, such as casting runes or turning Tarot cards, it relies ostensibly on unconscious muscular movements of the hand to convey, through writing, information that is not accessible to the conscious mind. Although the medium often claims that the words are being delivered by a spiritual presence, psychical researchers believe that most of the information conveyed through automatic writing comes from the writer's subconscious mind, perhaps based on something read as a child. Automatic writing does not have to occur solely during a séance; it can manifest spontaneously in the course of everyday correspondence, and it is characterized by the writing being in an unknown hand, and it tends to flow faster than conscious writing. In addition, words may be joined together and perhaps be spelled unusually. Automatic writing can also be in mirror script (written left to right, even starting at the bottom right of a page), can take the form of verse, or even Latin. Spirit photography, or the ability to capture the physical essence of deceased persons, is synonymous with the name William H. Mumler (1832–1884), who took the first spirit photograph. According to Crista Cloutier, once Mumler discovered the marketability of capturing spirits and ectoplasm on film, he "presented himself as a medium who was in the service of spirits. . . . [His] manner was often theatrical" (21).

The word telepathy, which describes types of mind-to-mind communication, comes from the Greek *tele*, meaning distant, and *patheia*, which translates as feeling. It is the innate talent to communicate information without the use of speech or body language, and it can be shared not only between humans, but between a human and an animal as well. Sometimes it is found in an individual who also possesses other paranormal abilities, such as precognition and clairvoyance. Like with mediumship, it would be a mistake to assume that only uneducated individuals buy into psi phenomena like telepathy. In 1930 Pulitzer winner Upton Sinclair (1878–1968) published *Mental Radio*, which describes the ability of his wife to reproduce sketches made by himself and

others, even when separated by several miles. Telepathic phenomena have been tested fairly thoroughly by various institutes and researchers (including recently at universities such as Duke). Western scientific investigation of telepathy is generally recognized as having begun with the Society for Psychical Research, which produced an influential report entitled *Phantasms of the Living* (coauthored by Edmund Gurney, Frederic William Henry Myers, and Frank Podmore, 1886, reprinted 1970), a text that introduced the term telepathy (which had earlier been referred to as thought transference). In 1917, psychologist John E. Coover conducted a series of telepathic card tests (the precursors to Zener cards) at Stanford University, but he found no overwhelming evidence to support the phenomenon. The term clairvoyance originates from the French words *clair*, which means clear, and *voyance*, meaning seeing. It is defined as a form of extrasensory perception whereby a person perceives distant objects, persons, or events. This can include the ability to see through opaque objects and the talent of detecting types of energy not normally perceptible. Typically, such perception is reported in visual terms, but may also include auditory impressions (resulting in what is called clairaudience). Unfortunately, the term clairvoyance is often misused to refer to all forms of information reception that is wholly dependent on extrasensory, inexplicable means. Historically, clairvoyance occurs more often with young adults, and it is one of the phenomena observed in the behavior of mesmerized and entranced patients. The earliest recorded report of somnambulistic clairvoyance is credited to the Marquis de Puysegur, a follower of Mesmer, who in 1784 was treating a local peasant, who became fluent and articulate, forgetting everything when he came out of the trance state.

Telekinesis or psychokinesis refers to the ability to move objects without using physical contact, as well as reshaping them (as in key or spoon bending) using the mind's energies. The term psychokinesis (sometimes called PK) comes from the Greek words *psyche*, meaning life or soul, and *kineisis*, which translates as to move. This phenomenon harks back to Mesmer's theories of animal magnetism, in that an invisible physical energy is created by the electromagnetic impulses (what is sometimes referred to as psychic energy). An interesting psychological sidelight of telekinesis is that teenagers, at puberty, often express an interest in developing these powers, as well as other psychic talents, particularly telepathy, which accounts for the popularity of Ouija Boards, automatic writing, and Tarot among the age group. Parapsychologists in recent times have devised various tests for PK, such as determining if a subject can affect the outputs of random number generators. Notable researchers include Helmut Schmidt (b. 1928), Robert [George] Jahn (b. 1930), along with his associates at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Lab center (PEAR). Schmidt designed experiments in which a subject was asked to influence the output of a random number generator after the output had already been recorded. Theoretical physicist Henry Stapp wrote an article for the *Physical Review* in 1994 in which he attempted to

show how PK might be consistent with a generalization of quantum theory, and that such phenomena merited further study. Some religious scholars believe that PK is a spiritual gift, related to astral projection, yogic flying, and psychic healing.

To get an idea of how prevalent parapsychology as a serious pseudo-science has come, all one need do is investigate the number of journals devoted to the subject. At present, there are some 250 periodicals that cover various areas of extrasensory perception. A list of just those still being published and housed by fifty or more libraries (a mark that attests to their authority) would include, in order of popularity: *The Skeptical Inquirer* (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), *The Journal of Parapsychology* (Duke University Press), *The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (American Society for Psychical Research), *Bibliographic Guide to Psychology* (G. K. Hall), *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* ([London] Society for Psychical Research), *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research* (American Society for Psychical Research), *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* ([London] Society for Psychical Research), *Biographical Dictionary of Parapsychology* (Garret Publications), *Eranos-Jahrbuch* (Rhein-Verlag), *International Journal of Parapsychology: Revue Internationale de Parapsychologie* (Parapsychology Foundation), *Journal of Near-Death Studies* (Human Sciences Press), and *The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research* (Academy of Religion and Psychical Research). This does not even take into account two of the more popular periodicals that are now defunct, *The Zetetic* (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, 1976–1977) and *Parapsychology Review* (Parapsychology Foundation, 1970–1990). Web-based organizations that study parapsychology have also sprung up, such as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (http://www.csicop.org/).

PSI PHENOMENA IN POPULAR CULTURE

Modern-day Americans are more than familiar with psychics and psychic phenomena, as it has once again become a big business, and psychics have adapted themselves to new demands and new technologies. Spurred on by the fact that contemporary U.S. presidents such as Ronald Reagan routinely consult soothsayers, various psychic hotlines have cropped up, briefly thriving before meeting their demise, the best known of these being Dionne Warwick's Psychic Friends Network, which went bankrupt in 1998. Miss Cleo's (born Youree Dell Harris, b. 1962) psychic hotline was closed down by the Federal Trade Commission on the grounds that she was guilty of deception and misrepresentation, as it turned out that the alleged Jamaican mystic was actually an out-of-work actress from Los Angeles. And then there are the

Internet astrologers, such as Ferdie Pacheco, son of the famous boxing doctor to legend Muhammad Ali, who claims to help people discover the perfect relationship. Psychics being accepted at the highest levels of government are not inimical to the United States. In his book *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (1988), former Reagan chief of staff Donald Regan noted that First Lady Nancy Reagan relied on her astrologer when creating the former president's schedule. Recently, British Prime Minister Tony Blair's wife Cherie was the subject of a national scandal, after she admitted seeking regular help from a spiritual adviser, and Princess Diana had admitted to taking counsel from clairvoyants (Brottman B16).

A quick study of popular culture reveals that the average person, generally speaking, is still quite curious about psi phenomena. This is true in comics, for example, especially in Ki and Ki-based ESP anime and manga. According to Eri Izawa's *Use of the Psychic in Manga and Anime* (http://www.mit.edu/~rei/manga-psychic.html), boys' comics that center around intrigue, fighting, or martial arts heavily exploit the notion of Ki, which informs the "The Force" of Star Wars fame. Ki comes from Eastern martial arts training, and has extended into popular Japanese and now American culture. Much like with ESP connections, characters sense each other's presences from far away, feel impending danger when asleep, and sometimes create a protective force around themselves, making them impenetrable. In addition, characters often possess auras "that glow like fire." A different form of psychic energy, psionics, is also present in some anime and manga. This allows not only for fantastical powers such as teleportation, but a more controlled, purer form of telepathy, as well as controlled telekinesis. Psionic characters can heal others as well. Television, arguably the best gauge of popular culture, has no shortage of psychic syndicated shows, episodes, and characters. One well-known medium who has recently been given his own shows is James Van Praagh ("Beyond with James Van Praagh"; "Possessed Possessions"), author of the best-selling spiritual advice books *Talking to Heaven* (1997), *Reaching to Heaven* (1999), and *Healing Grief: Reclaiming Life after Any Loss* (2000). In addition, he is the subject of a 2002 biographical CBS mini-series starring Ted Danson (*Living with the Dead*, directed by Stephen Gyllenhaal). The most popular of the television mediums is undoubtedly the John Edward, whose show "Crossing Over with John Edward" had been a major success with the SciFi network. Edward specializes in cold readings. Taking mediumship about as far as possible seems to be the idea behind pet psychics like Sonya Fitzpatrick, who has become so popular that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has run a story on her (pet psychics have raised the ire of some veterinarians, as Michael A. Obenski's article in *DVM: The Newsmagazine of Veterinary Medicine* attests). Psychics who act as detectives or who help the police are also still in demand by the viewing public. "Medium" (NBC) stars Patricia Arquette as a Phoenix, Arizona, psychic who lends her services to crime investigations, especially when the people who come to her are

trying to reach the souls of the dead (the real-life Dubois had earlier lent her services to Paramount on an unsuccessful reality pilot, ''Oracles,'' starring a panel of five seers). Even in person psychics still draw large crowds. A December 2005 issue of *American Libraries* reports that a psychic whose lecture at a northern California library had been canceled then rescheduled drew a record-breaking crowd of 145 people to a November 2005 presentation. Irma Slage discussed her work in police investigations and her book *Phases of Life After Death* (2000) at a branch of the Stockton-San Joaquin County Public Library.

Horror films in which psychic phenomena play a large role include Wolf Rilla's *Village of the Damned* (1960; based on John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos*) and Anton Leader's sequel *Children of the Damned* (1963), which take place in the English village of Midwich and the big city environment of London, respectively. In Rilla's small town horror classic, the entire citizenry of Midwich falls into a deep, mysterious sleep for several hours in the middle of the day, and months later every woman capable of child-bearing is pregnant. The eerily similar Aryan children grow much too quickly and have the power to compel even adults to do their bidding simply by concentrating on them. The 1970s saw more than its share of alternate states films, including *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (1978), directed by Irvin Kershner. This haunting pseudo-psychic detective story tells of a woman who finds herself with the power to see through the eyes of a serial killer as he commits his crimes. She contacts the police and tries to stop the murderer; of course, the twist is that since she sees what he sees while killing, she cannot see his face. Two Stephen King telepathy and telekinesis texts made into movies in the 1980s: David Cronenberg's *The Dead Zone* (1983) and Mark L. Lester's *Firestarter* (1984), based on King's novels of 1977 and 1981, respectively. The first tells the story of a young schoolteacher who survives an accident, but spends five years in a coma. Coming out of it, he discovers he has an ability to see the future of any individual with whom he comes into physical contact with (this same talent is used briefly by M. Night Shyamalan in the film *Unbreakable*, 2000). *Firestarter* chronicles how a couple who met while serving as subjects for a psychic experiment in college is somehow affected reproductively. The couple's daughter possesses the ability to start fires by merely concentrating. Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999) turns the parapsychological ability to commune with the dead on its head, as the main character, a child psychologist who does not realize that he is himself dead, attempts to help a child who acts as a medium for spirits of recently deceased individuals. Robert Zemeckis, in *What Lies Beneath* (2000), a more traditional psychic tale, has the spirit of a murdered woman attempt to contact a professor's wife, in an attempt to both solve her own murder and warn the wife of impending danger. The only film that gives psychic ability an ethnic face is the black magic piece *Eve's Bayou* (1997), directed by Kasi Lemmons, set in Louisiana. One character has what she calls psychic premonitions, and

another character uses voodoo magic to control reality. Some well-received mainstream films treat psi phenomena (there are some 400 films that deal solely with psychics), including the brilliantly acted (starring Tyrone Power) *Nightmare Alley* (1947, directed by Edmund Goulding), which introduces an over the hill charlatan mentalist who is part of a traveling carnival, and Akira Kurosawa's *Rashômon* (1950), the twelfth-century Japan classic on subjectivity in which a samurai and his wife are attacked by a notorious bandit. The samurai ends up dead, but the trial of the bandit leads to so much confusion that a psychic is brought in to allow the murdered man to give his own testimony. In the realm of science fiction, characters with supernatural powers are featured in Josh Whedon's *Serenity* (2005), a science fiction adventure futuristic comedy about a merchant crew that specializes in smuggling and robbery and has unfortunately taken on an unstable, fugitive telepath, and in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), which tells a dystopian tale about an unnamed fascist city that contains The Room, a place where one's secret hopes come true, but only if one is, or is accompanied by, a stalker, a human who possesses special extrasensory powers that allow a psychic connection. Psychic phenomena also plays roles in some blockbusters, such as Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* (2002) and the Hughes brothers' *From Hell* (2001), two films based on graphic novels, although the graphic novel for the former is itself based on the first two books in Koji Suzuki's Ring novels (*Ring* [1991], *Spiral* [1996], *Birthday* [2004], and *Loop* [2005]).

PSYCHICS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND HORROR

The idea of having supernatural mental abilities is an appealing one for fantastical literature. Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" opened the door for writers who wanted to delve into the darker and more supernatural recesses of human psychology. First published in the *American Whig Review* in December 1845, the story brought to the fore some of the more controversial practices of Mesmerism, especially the belief in hypnotism, practiced by some physicians in both the United States and Europe. This shocking tale places the hypnotic state on trial, with its questioning of whether human death could be postponed if a subject were placed under a mesmerist's spell at the moment of demise. In London the piece was published as a pamphlet and included a preface that indicated it was not fictional, but "a plain recital of facts." J. Sheridan Le Fanu's "Green Tea" (*All the Year Round*, October 23–November 13, 1869) is more explicit in its satire of Mesmer and his theories. It owes as much to the theories of mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) as it does to those of Mesmer. This story of a Reverend Mr. Jennings, which is part of the Dr. Hesselius series, is one in which the psychic realm is breeched by means of an unnatural concentration of the mental facilities of the main character, brought on by his decision to

combine a study of religious metaphysics with the imbibing of green tea, an agent rumored to help focus the mind. Jennings then becomes haunted by an apparition of a somewhat deformed and deranged monkey (in addiction terminology, one might say he literally has a monkey on his back), which follows him around and encourages him to act out his impulses. Like Poe, Le Fanu toys with Mesmerism, more specifically the existence of the invisible fluids related to animal magnetism. In the conclusion to the frame tale, Hesselius takes over as narrator after Jennings's suicide; he explains the case as thus, speaking of the function of the human brain (which he examines in his text *The Cardinal Functions of the Brain*): "and the nature of that fluid [in the brain] is spiritual, though not immaterial, anymore than, as I have remarked, light or electricity are so. By various abuses, among which the habitual use of such agents as green tea is one, this fluid may be affected as to its quality. . . . This fluid being that which we have in common with spirits . . . communication is thus more or less effectually established" (206–7).

Other nineteenth-century fiction that deals with psychic phenomena includes Guy de Maupassant's "The Horla" (short version in *Gil Blas*, October 26, 1886; long version in *Le Horla*, 1887). Here, an unnamed narrator with either an overactive imagination or an acute sense of the paranormal brought on by research on mysticism (Maupassant leaves this up to the reader) senses an invisible presence that at first threatens only him. However, as the story progresses, he realizes that what he is seeing is just the tip of the psychic iceberg, for the Horla, as he learns the presence is called, will destroy all humanity. The narrator understands that the presence he has somehow invoked is "he whom disquieted priests exorcised, whom sorcerers evoked on dark nights. . . . Mesmer divined him, and ten years ago physicians accurately discovered the nature of his power, even before he discovered it himself" (39). Maupassant's reference here to animal magnetism as a type of electric power would not be lost on his contemporaries.

Mesmer's theories are still being examined in fictional universes today, by well-respected authors such as Richard Matheson. For example, *A Stir of Echoes* (1958) introduces problems unanticipated in the hypnotic trance, creating a situation where a doorway to other psychic dimensions is opened. An average blue collar worker goes under an experimental trance and is then turned into a medium of sorts, now an open (albeit unwillingly so) conduit to the spirit of an allegedly murdered neighbor. Perhaps the best-known modern psi text is the horror and mainstream classic, *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), by Shirley Jackson. Ostensibly a haunted house story, this novel revolves around an isolated house that is the architectural equivalent of a carnival funhouse. With its Byzantine architecture, seemingly impossible angles, and general coldness, Hill House has either driven out all of its occupants, or has made them suicidal. Throw into this equation an academic interested in paranormal research and two women who possess psychic abilities and can therefore communicate with the house's spirits, and you have the makings

A Chronology of Important Films about Psychics

1933   *Supernatural* (Victor Halperin)

1947   *Nightmare Alley* (Edmund Goulding)

1950   *Rashômon* (Akira Kurosawa)

1951   *The Medium* (Gian Carlo Menotti)

1960   *Village of the Damned* (Wolf Rilla)

1963   *Children of the Damned* (Anton Leader)

1963   *The Haunting* (Robert Wise)

1973   *Hell House* (John Hough)

1975   *Carrie* (Brian de Palma)

1978   *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (Irvin Kershner)

1979   *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky)

1980   *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick)

1983   *The Dead Zone* (David Cronenberg)

1984   *Firestarter* (Mark L. Lester)

1988   *Paperhouse* (Bernard Rose)

1990   *Ghost* (Jerry Zucker)

1997   *Eve's Bayou* (Kasi Lemmons)

1999   *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan)

2000   *Unbreakable* (M. Night Shyamalan)

2000   *What Lies Beneath* (Robert Zemeckis)

2001   *From Hell* (The Hughes Brothers)

2002   *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski)

2005   *Serenity* (Josh Whedon)

of an unforgettable tale. *The Haunting* (1963), directed by Richard Wise, is a fairly faithful version of Jackson's novel. Similarly, Matheson's novel of some thirty years later, *Hell House* (1971), places a group of people with psychic abilities in a haunted abode to determine if their talents make it possible to engage the supernatural forces within; *Hell House* was made into a movie in 1973 by John Hough. This trope has been updated recently by Douglas Clegg in *The Infinite* (2001), part of the Harrow Trilogy. Three strangers with unusual psychic abilities, including a "ghost hunter," are hired to investigate a series of supernatural events at a haunted boarding school. Mediums hosting séances and average people dabbling with extrasensory perception have also been fictionalized by various novelists, most notably in the horror field.

Popular cross-genre writers such as Barbara Michaels and Thomas Tryon have tried their hands at producing psychic literature. In Michaels's *Ammie, Come Home* (1968), a playful séance leads to the possession of a young girl. Tryon's *The Other* (1971) is a modern classic in which twin preteen boys who experiment with ESP and astral projection destroy not only themselves, but family members who are unfortunate enough to interact with them (Tryon balances the story between a supernatural and a psychological explanation for the turn of events, hinting that nonetheless the twins have a psychic connection to each other). Similar connections between minds can be seen in Mary Stewart's crossover mystery romance *Touch Not the Cat* (1976) and Bernard Rose's first film, *Paperhouse* (1988), but in both cases the ESP abilities of the protagonist are positive forces. In Stewart's novel, the protagonist has the ability to communicate via ESP with an unknown cousin, even at great distances. In Rose's *Paperhouse*, a young teenaged girl discovers mental communication with a young boy she believes she created by drawing a world on paper. Meanwhile, across the city, a young, terminally ill boy finds he has a psychic connection with a fictional girl. Other mediumship turned possession narratives include Gary Holleman's *Ungrateful Dead* (1999). Here, a young woman is possessed by a very familiar spirit (perhaps giving a new meaning to Freud's uncanny) when she is controlled by the ghost of her mother, who happened to be a sociopath. Even the most respected of all contemporary British Gothic and horror authors, Ramsey Campbell fictionalizes the negative repercussions of mediumship in *The Parasite* (1980), where the skill leads to a horrifying experience: A young woman leaves herself open at a séance and becomes possessed by the spirit of an occultist. Campbell adds the twist of making his protagonist pregnant and raising the possibility that a human being can pass a possessing spirit on to an unborn child. Likewise in film, psychic activity can often lead to possession by a spirit, as in Victor Halperin's *Supernatural* (1933), wherein an evil spirit possesses and controls a virginal heiress, causing her to adopt behaviors not accepted for women at that time.

Clairvoyance, clairaudience, precognition, telepathy, telekinesis, hypnosis, and astral projection are all prominent in horror fiction. Some of the more notable examples of psychic fiction include the biggest names in the horror genre, such as Dean R. Koontz. *The Face of Fear* (1977; published under the pseudonym Brian Coffey), a well-received novel, is about a clairvoyant who foresees mutilations by a New York serial killer known as "the butcher." He eventually sees his own death at the hands of the killer, and must escape based on his extrasensory knowledge. Stephen King and Peter Straub have teamed up to produce recurring characters who dabble in the occult and black arts in their Talisman series, *The Talisman* (1984) and *Black House* (2001). In the first of these novels, a young man named Jack Sawyer discovers that he can project himself into a parallel universe which holds the key to saving his mother's life; later, as an adult in the sequel, Homicide Detective

Sawyer finds himself being once more drawn to the alternate occult universe of the talisman in order to stop a vicious serial murderer. Both King and Straub have solo works with psi themes. *If You Could See Me Now* (1977) and *Shadowland* (1980), both by Straub, explore the dark side of magic. Straub's story "Blue Rose," which was first published by Underwood-Miller in 1985 and later collected in *Cutting Edge*, a 1986 anthology edited by Dennis Etchison, portrays a tense domestic atmosphere in which the mesmerizing powers of hypnotism can take an evil turn. King has more than his share of humans who commune with spirits, as in his early story "The Reach" (*Yankee*, November 1981). King revisits this theme later in his career in *Bag of Bones* (1998). Here, the novelist as protagonist is an unwilling conduit for the spirit of his deceased wife, which visits him in the form of cryptic refrigerator magnet messages that indicate he is caught in a battle of good and evil spirits that will usher in the extermination of an entire town because of a past race crime. Early in his writing career, King portrayed the dark side of psychic powers in novels like *Carrie* (1974) and *The Shining* (1977). In the latter, telepathy plays a larger role, as Danny Torrance, a young boy, possesses "the shining," or the ability to communicate telepathically with other humans who likewise possess this power. Teen Carrie White, on the other hand, is cursed with the power of telekinesis, an ability that comes across as being much more difficult to harness in this and other texts. Both King novels were made into films by Brian de Palma in 1976 (*Carrie*) and Stanley Kubrick in 1980 (*The Shining*), and both are considered modern masterpieces of horror, thus guaranteeing that more horror fictions dealing with the two psi phenomena would continue to draw audiences.

Other notable authors in the horror genre who have produced tales of various types of psychics include Kurt Siodmak, Graham Masterton, Nancy A. Collins, Brian Lumley, Kim Newman, and, most recently, Poppy Z. Brite and Thomas Tessier. In *Donovan's Brain* (1942), the first of his Patrick Cory novels, Siodmak creates a dark science fiction universe where not only a human can develop telepathic powers, but a brain kept alive in a jar can as well. Masterton's classic *The Manitou* (1975) actually has as its protagonist a psychic charlatan, but one whose true psychic skills must be tapped in order to save the world from an evil Native American mythological figure, the spirit of a powerful medicine man. This novel was made into a film in 1978 by William Girdler, and the theme of the fake psychic accidentally discovering real powers has been the basis for at least two movies, the all-but-forgotten *The Medium* (1951), directed by Gian Carlo Menotti, and the romantic dark comedy classic *Ghost* (1990), directed by Jerry Zucker. Collins's first novel, and the beginning of her Sonja Blue series, *Sunglasses after Dark* (1989), stars a telepathic vampire huntress who is part human, part creature of the night. Collins further examines occult magic in *Tempter* (1990). Lumley's Necroscope series originates with *Necroscope* (1986), which pits various types of psychics against one another. The novel begins with the anthropomancer

Boris, who is juxtaposed against the "necroscope," Harry Keogh. Harry directly communicates with the dead by visiting cemeteries to hear their thoughts. Telepathy also plays a role in Lumley's Vampire World series: *Blood Brothers* (1992), *The Last Aerie* (1993), and *Bloodwars* (1994). Newman's early novel *Jago* (1991) tells of a small English village that falls under the spell of Reverend Anthony Jago, the telepathic leader of the Agapemone cult, who seems to have a knack for mass mesmerism. Tessier's *Fog Heart* (1998), which received many laudatory reviews, looks at the psychological aspects of paranormal activity, as it follows the effects that a psychic's readings have on members of two couples who seem receptive to ghosts. Brite's first two novels, *Lost Souls* (1992) and *Drawing Blood* (1994), may be informed by vampires, ghosts, and haunted houses, but psychics play a large role in furthering her story line. *Lost Souls* takes a new look at the vampire legend, introducing a gang of nihilistic vampire Gothic punks who roam the streets in search of drugs, sex, and blood, as well as a Southern rocker with psychic gifts. *Drawing Blood* features not a human being, but a haunted childhood home, itself the most fascinating character, for it breathes and pulses and retains images of horror reminiscent of King's *The Shining*. It also reintroduces Brite's psychic musician, nicknamed Ghost. Psychics have even made their way into the alternative fiction Dracula series, a fan favorite penned by Fred Saberhagen. In *Séance for a Vampire* (1994), Holmes and Watson find themselves confronted with the paranormal. Psychics have also proven fodder for espionage slapstick. Michael Shea's mainstream satire, *Lord Vishnu's Love Handles: A Spy Novel (Sort Of)* (2005) introduces successful entrepreneur Travis Anderson, who has psychic abilities (which account for his dot.com success) and owes a debt of millions to the government, which is determined to have him pay by using his abilities.

According to Brian Stableford in *The Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature* (2004), the idea of psi powers was adopted into science fiction by John W. Campbell, "whose enthusiasm prompted a 'psi boom' in the early 1950s" in magazines such as *Astounding* (first named *Astounding Stories*, then *Astounding Science-Fiction*, then *Analog*) and *Galaxy* (277). Campbell, who became the editor of *Astounding*, was a firm believer in the experiments of Duke University's Dr. J. B. Rhine (1895–1980), one of the first scientists in America to conduct in-depth investigations into such phenomena as clairvoyance and mental telepathy, performing some 90,000 experiments over a four-year period at his Duke University laboratory and coining the term extrasensory perception, or ESP (see www.rhine.org). Rhine wrote or coauthored eight benchmark texts on the subject, *Extra-sensory Perception* (1934), *New Frontiers of the Mind: The Story of the Duke Experiments* (1937), *Extra-sensory Perception after Sixty Years* (1940), *The Reach of the Mind* (1947; rev. ed. 1961), *New World of the Mind* (1955; rev. ed. 1962), *Parapsychology: Frontier Science of the Mind* (1957), *Parapsychology from*

Duke to FRNM (1965), and *Parapsychology Today* (1968), and edited one collection, *Progress in Parapsychology* (1971).

One such science fiction author who delved in the soft science of parapsychology was A. E. van Vogt. He produced, in the words of Hazel Pierce, "a melange of intriguing situations spiced with telepathy, teleportation, shape control, inner and outer space, mass consciousness, time shifts, [and] technological wonders beyond count" (956). In characters such as Johnny Cross of *Slan* (1946), van Vogt's first and perhaps best novel, he introduces readers to a superhuman telepath who not only possesses psychic skills but also hones them through training. Extrasensory perception also plays a role in his "space opera" Null-A novels. Theodore Sturgeon, known for his eschewal of hard science in favor of human stories, published many of his stories in *Astounding*. One such tale is "Blabbermouth" (1947), in which a woman's study and use of psi powers are trivialized for profit. In the International Fantasy Award winner *More Than Human* (1953), derived from his short story "Baby Is Three," Sturgeon creates the quasi-science psi concept of "homo gestalt," his term for the development of group consciousness. Here, psionics may be the missing link in completing a Unified Field Theory. The prolific science fiction author Mack Reynolds brought ESP to the foreground in one of his utopian texts, *After Some Tomorrow*, about an elitist group called the Monad Foundation, which awards scholarships to people with special powers in order to study extrasensory perception's socioeconomic value.

PSYCHICS IN OTHER LITERARY GENRES

Action adventure paranormal texts that feature ESP include the sci-fi spy thriller *Brainfire* (1979), by Campbell Black, who produced two fine psi novels in *Letters from the Dead* (1985) and *The Wanting* (1986). *Letters from the Dead* is concerned with two single mothers who take their children to a long-abandoned country house for a quiet vacation and discover haunted presences who communicate via an Ouija Board; *The Wanting* presents us with a young boy who is under the power of two elderly neighbors. In the Cold War–influenced *Brainfire*, the sibling of a political advisor who had seemingly committed suicide figures out that there is a Soviet plot to defeat the United States by using mind control. CIA espionage novels are also not immune to parapsychology. *The Sensitives* (1987), *Strange Bedfellows* (1988), and *Brain Damage* (1992), by Herbert Burkholz—best known for his Bondesque UKDs (Unusual Killing Devices) in *The Death Freak* (1979)—envision a spy agency that uses teams of mind readers, or "sensitives" (so called because they can sense the thoughts of others), assembled to collect information on other individuals and foreign governments, in a blend of thriller, science fiction, espionage, and sometimes romance. Romance novels (often suspense crossovers)

that feature characters with ESP include *Change* (1975), by Ann Maxwell (1944–); *Eyes of the Night* (1992), by Diana Bane; and *The Geneva Rendezvous* (1997), by Julie Ellis. Of these, Maxwell's is by far the most intriguing, containing elements of almost every genre. Although, since her first novel, she has sold over twenty million books and has been nominated for seven Nebula Awards, Maxwell began her career as a writer under A. E. Maxwell, a pseudonym for the writing team of her and her husband Evan. The science fiction romance *Change* features the psychic Selena Christian, who must be rescued from a futuristic earth where her talents are condemned, and taken to the planet Change, a psychic realm.

Clairvoyants and mediums seem to be a particularly big draw in young adult literature. Texts include an early novel by benchmark author Lois Duncan, best known for the award-winning *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1973; made into a blockbuster film by Jim Gillespie in 1997), began the trend of juvenile ESP texts with *A Gift of Magic* (1971). As is the case with most psychic fiction, by notables such as Allan W. Eckert and Margaret Mahy, protagonists must learn to control their erstwhile destructive abilities. Eckert's uplifting *Song of the Wild* (1980) is a unique story where a young boy discovers the ability to project his being into animals. Mahy's *The Haunting* (1982) involves clairvoyant powers that are seen as a family curse. Mary Towne, in *Paul's Game* (1983), highlights the androgyny of YA psi fiction (historically and in film, psychics are more often depicted as female, emphasizing their receptivity). In it, an experiment in ESP mentally links a teenaged girl to a mysterious boy. In many cases, psychic abilities become a repressed youth's best defense, as in *Shadow* (1994), by Joyce Sweeney. In this sibling rivalry tale, the fighting between an older brother and his sister escalates to the point where she is in imminent danger; the sister then discovers that she has the power of mediumship. Sweeney adds a wrinkle to the typical psychic tale; however, for the spirit that helps to guide the protagonist is not a human one, but the ghost of her beloved pet cat. Tim Bowler gives readers another misfit with whom to identify in *Midget* (1994). Here, a smallish fifteen-year-old boy who is constantly abused by his brother discovers that he can influence events by using his mind, a skill that grants him control of his life and leads to an extremely violent confrontation. Children also use paranormal skills to escape oppressive adults, as in *Skullcrack* (2000), by Ben Bo (pseudonym for V[iv] A. Richardson), which tackles topics such as the psychic bond between twins, mysticism, Celtic lore, and magic, juxtaposed against the violence of alcoholism and domestic abuse. Award-winning and popular YA author Stephanie S. Tolan, who specializes in tales of misfits, adds ethnicity and currency to the paranormal tale in *Flight of the Raven* (2001). She writes of a nine-year-old African American boy with unusual mental powers and a special ability with animals. Taken as a hostage by a terrorist militia group, he must learn to control his powers to survive.

PSYCHIC DETECTIVES

Young adult authors have also produced their share of psychic detectives and detectives who deal with occult cases. In fact, parapsychological concerns have even made their way into the most seminal of juvenile detective series, the Hardy Boys Mysteries, with *The Case of the Psychic's Vision* (2003), by Franklin W. Dixon (the pseudonym used by a variety of authors who write the Hardy Boys novels for the Stratemeyer Syndicate). Lois Duncan, in *The Third Eye* (1984; published in the U.K. in 1985 as *The Eyes of Karen Connors*), introduces readers to a high school senior who sees her psychic powers as realistically as possible; they are a possible way for her to be ostracized. She, however, eventually agrees to become somewhat of a psychic detective, helping a young police officer locate missing children. ESP has seeped its way into the more modern (currently up to nine books) Invisible Detective series, by Justin Richards, with the recent publication of *Double Life* (2005). The series itself explores the possibilities of retrocognition, as it is based on the ability of a fourteen-year-old boy to envision the 1936 adventures of "the Invisible Detective," even though he is unsure of how he came to this knowledge. Female psychic detectives are also prevalent in YA literature, such as Jennifer Allison's creation, Gilda Joyce. In *Gilda Joyce, Psychic Investigator* (2005), the thirteen-year-old protagonist becomes involved in mediumship when her father dies (one of her methods of communication is through letters to the deceased, as she attempts to channel his spirit through his typewriter). She decides to visit distant relatives in San Francisco to solve her first paranormal mystery, involving one of the most common Gothic tropes, a mysterious presence being held in a boarded-up tower. Terrance Dicks, the extremely prolific writer of *Doctor Who* fame, is also known for his Cassie books: *Cassie and the Devil's Charm* (2000), *Cassie and the Conway Curse* (2001), *Cassie and the Cornish Ghost* (2001), and *Cassie and the Riviera Crime* (2002) feature a British female teenage psychic detective who goes after kidnappers, murderers, and ghosts.

Perhaps the first historical psychic detective was French dowser Jacques Aymar. In 1692 he reportedly used a divining rod (a practice that was not all that unusual) to track and then positively identify a trio of murderers who had killed a wine merchant and his wife. With time, new versions of divining criminals emerged, so that, as Joe Nickell points out in *Psychic Sleuths: ESP and Sensational Cases* (1994), by the "heyday of Spiritualism, some

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séance mediums claimed to solve crimes through contact with the spirit world" (11–12). Such high profile cases continued into this century, as with the case of an English schoolgirl who disappeared in 1937. Medium Estelle Roberts claimed that she communicated with the allegedly murdered girl, and reportedly led police to her murderer (Nickell 12). Psychic defenders Arthur Lyons and Marcello Truzzi have written a book called *The Blue Sense: Psychic Detectives and Crimes* (1991), in which they challenge various studies that found psychic detectives to be nothing more than charlatans, or sometime fortunate guessers who were more often than not wrong (Truzzi 99–129). Various psychic detectives have made claims that they help police, including Peter Hurkos (born Pieter van der Hurk, 1911–1988), Gerard Croiset (1909–1980), Dorothy Allison (1925–1999), Noreen Renier (b. 1937), Bill Ward (b. 1942), Rosemarie Kerr, Phil Jordan, and Greta Alexander (b. 1932). However, according to Nickell's *Psychic Sleuths*, none of these claims hold up under scrutiny, as these psychics often fudged their "résumés." Nickell argues that despite the uncritical news reports and pseudo documentaries that continue to tout the alleged successes of "psychics," most police departments (72 percent according to researchers) have not used psychics and those who have often recognize the basic trick of psychics, called retrofitting, where several vague "clues" are interpreted to fit the true facts after they become known. Nickell argues that psychic detective claims and actually hurt investigations as they misdirect police efforts and waste funds.

Psychic Detectives in Fiction

Although Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Doyle's Sherlock Holmes often solved cases that verged on the supernatural, Tony Fonseca in *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia* pinpoints the creation of the literary equivalent of the occult or psychic detective as occurring in 1898, in *Pearson's* magazine (864). E. and H. Heron (the pseudonym of Kate O'Brien Ryall Prichard Hesketh and Hesketh V. Prichard, a mother-son writing team) found a fan base for their psychic sleuth, Flaxman Low. His tales were eventually collected in *Ghosts: Being the Experiences of Flaxman Low* (1899). Soon, other fictional supernatural investigators were gracing the pages of literary magazines: Alice and Claude Askew's Aylmer Vance, Algernon Blackwood's John Silence, William Hope Hodgson's Carnacki the Ghost Finder, and the lesser-known Rose Champion de Crespigny's Norton Vyse (created c. 1919 for David Whitelaw's *Premier Magazine*). These supernatural sleuths would hire themselves out to solve crimes of a seemingly paranormal nature. Recently, many of the exploits of these characters have been published by Ash-Tree and Dover. Ash-Tree Press's Occult Detectives series, edited by Jack Adrian, at present includes a collection of Alice and Claude Askew's Aylmer Vance stories, in *Aylmer Vance: Ghost Seer* (1998; eight stories featuring Vance's companion, Dexter); collected tales of Crespigny's Norton Vyse, in *Norton*

Vyse, Psychic (1999); and various stories featuring Harold Begbie's Andrew Latter, in *The Amazing Dreams of Andrew Latter* (2002). Dover Publications has thus far released Blackwood's John Silence stories, collected by S. T. Joshi, in *The Complete John Silence Stories* (1997). Silence, a favorite among genre fans, was created around the turn of the century, partly inspired by Doyle's Holmes tales. In 1999, Stephen Jones collected tales of diverse supernatural sleuths in *Dark Detectives: Adventures of the Supernatural Sleuths* (1999). These eighteen stories are written by masters such as William Hope Hodgson, Manly Wade Wellman, and Basil Copper, as well as contemporary notables like Brian Mooney, J. S. Russell, Brian Lumley, Clive Barker, Neil Gaiman, and Kim Newman.

Oddly enough, the first contemporary psychic detective novel, by Paul Victor, was one written not to examine the soft science of parapsychology, but to serve as a reader for students of English as a second language. The brief and lexically controlled *The Psychic* (1982) told of the exploits of a gifted psychic who aided the police in criminal investigations. Some of the bigger names in science fiction and horror have dabbled with supernatural sleuths, including the aforementioned Harris and Hooper, are Marion Zimmer Bradley and the lesser-known David Bowker. Bradley's *Gravelight* (Tor, 1997) introduces a small town where researchers in parapsychological phenomenon open a gate to the underworld. Bowker's *The Death Prayer* (White Wolf, 1995) and *The Butcher of Glastonbury* (Gollancz, 1997) introduce Chief Superintendent Vernon Laverne, a police detective who must learn to use his abilities of astral projection in order to stop an evil magician who uses a mysterious incantation as a murder weapon and a mysterious serial murderer who mutilates its victims. Romance mystery readers also seem fond of supernatural sleuths, as evidenced by novels such as *Now You See Her* (2005), by Cecelia Tishy. The novel tells the story of a clairvoyant Boston divorcée who is pressed into service as both an exorcist and a psychic detective. Her talents are used on a cold case of some thirteen years.

Of the contemporary detective novels with extrasensory themes and characters, most were published in the horror genre. A handful of mainstream mysteries contain supernaturally empowered characters, on both ends of the

> *Dr. Silence was a free-lance . . . among doctors, having neither consulting-room, bookkeeper, nor professional manner. He took no fees, being at heart a genuine philanthropist, yet at the same time did no harm to his fellow-practitioners, because he only accepted unremunerative cases, and cases that interested him for some very special reason. . . . The cases that especially appealed to him were of no ordinary kind, but rather of that intangible, elusive, and difficult nature best described as psychical afflictions; and, though he would have been the last person himself to approve of the title, it was beyond question that he was known more or less generally as the "Psychic Doctor."*
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> —Algernon Blackwood, "A Psychical Invasion," *John Silence—Physician Extraordinary*

> Oddly enough, the first contemporary psychic detective novel, by Paul Victor was one written not to examine the soft science of parapsychology, but to serve as a reader for students of English as a second language. The brief and lexically controlled *The Psychic* (Longman, 1982) told of the exploits of a gifted psychic who aided the police in criminal investigations.

criminal investigation. Fiction by Ellen Hart, Lori Foster, and Jody Jaffe pit detectives against clairvoyants. In Hart's *Wicked Games* (1988), a Minneapolis restaurant owner and sleuth investigates her new tenant, a writer with psychic powers who claims to have witnessed murders (or may have actually been the culprit, another recurring motif in psychic fiction). Foster's recent *Jamie* (2005) is the fifth novel in the Visitation series. Here, a former parapsychological research institute employee, who also happens to be a mother with a psychic child, hunts a reclusive psychic who was once housed at the institute. Jaffe's clever *In Colt Blood* (1998) takes on the recent fad of the animal psychic, in this case a horse whisperer. Here, a North Carolina reporter investigates the murder of a horse breeder, with suspicion centering on a psychic who specializes in horses. Rochelle Jewel Shapiro and Dayna Dunbar present readers with an interesting side effect of having psychic powers, that is, being able to better one's life, as well as the lives of family members and friends. In *Miriam the Medium* (2004), Shapiro introduces a part-time third generation psychic who is considered somewhat of a charlatan, but who actually possesses extrasensory skills. Here, the psychic uses her abilities first to bring in money, as a phone psychic, to try to keep her husband's business from going under, and later to save her daughter from a ending up in a bad marriage. In *The Saints and Sinners of Okay County* (2003), Dunbar creates the oddball Aletta Honor, a thirty-something woman who is carrying her fourth child and is blessed—or cursed, depending on one's point of view—with clairvoyant abilities. Dunbar deals with the idea of being a psychic more realistically than most, delving into not only the effect on the psychic and his or her immediate family, but on an entire community, as it attempts to come to terms with Honor's being an empty vessel and passing on "truths" which may be painful and unsettling. Even best-selling novelist Andrew M. Greeley has a psychic detective series, featuring Nuala Anne McGrail: *Irish Whiskey* (1998), *Irish Eyes* (2000), *Irish Love* (2001), *Irish Stew!* (2002), and *Irish Cream* (2005). In these a young woman has a psychic vision when she visits the grave of her grandparents and becomes a psychic detective after finding the murderer of a 1920s Chicago gangster. Relatively newcomer Victoria Laurie also ties the psychic detective with the mob in *Better Read than Dead: A Psychic Eye Mystery* (2005). Her psychic character is hired not by the police but by a mob boss who makes her an offer she cannot refuse.

As with psi phenomena and powers, when it comes to psychic detectives, most of the texts come from writers who are normally categorized as publishing in the horror genre, perhaps because, in general, the motif of the psychic or occult detective goes hand in hand with the production of atmospheric, dark tales. The portrayal of the chase, the manhunt for what invariably turns out to be a deeply disturbed serial killer, often takes its toll psychologically on the protagonist, the psychically gifted detective who is in charge of the case. Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon* (1981) is the quintessential example. The novel emphasizes the almost psychic bond between the FBI profiler Will Graham and serial killers who he attempts to arrest, in this case the tattooed, sexually and psychically disturbed. More recently, Kay Hooper has emerged from being a romance novelist to one who has successfully made forays into the world of horror fiction, drawing readers into the mental and emotional worlds of clairvoyant Maggie Barnes. Hooper not only focuses on her catching mutilators of women, but also chronicles her fragile psychic state when she is allowing extrasensory information to filter into her consciousness.

CONCLUSION

Purveyors of parapsychology or psychical research continue to study the evidence for and against extrasensory ways of knowing, and mentally induced methods of influencing the world, without the use of our recognized senses and motor systems. The various manifestations of psi phenomena, including telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis, have been and should be continued to be ingenuously and methodically researched in both their spontaneous forms and in controlled situations. Psi research is relevant to both psychology and hard science, as is research on the afterlife and on spiritual communication, and this holds true no matter how controversial the evidence and conclusions pertaining to inquiries dealing with apparitions of the dead, hauntings, poltergeist occurrences, mediumistic communications, mediumistic physical phenomena, astral projections, some near-death experiences, and past lives. These phenomena continue to inspire popular culture and literature as well as the hard and soft sciences, perhaps because they examine that part of the human condition which Albert Einstein would have classed as one of those mysteries which make life worth examining.

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The Sea Creature

by Mike Ashley

INTRODUCTION

That great writer of sea stories, W. W. Jacobs, began his story "Over the Side" (*Today*, May 29, 1897) by saying: "Of all classes of men, those who follow the sea are probably the most prone to superstition." Moreover, a tall or exaggerated tale is often equated with a fisherman's tale about "the one that got away," so it is not surprising to find many tales of monsters and strange creatures of the sea. Howard Waldrop creates a clever spoof on the fisherman's boast in "God's Hooks" (*Universe #12*, 1982) in which Izaak Walton catches but loses a massive serpent.

Mankind's relationship to the sea has always been close, not only as a source of food or as a means of travel, but also as that lure known as "the call of the sea," which, like the "call of the wild," haunts us, compelling us to return to the sea whenever opportunity allows. The sea remains the last great unexplored area of the earth's surface. As so much is still unknown about what hides in the ocean depths, it allows us to continue to believe in creatures of myth and legend such as the sea serpent or the selkie or the kraken. Add to this

tales of ghost ships, Atlantis, the Sargasso Sea, and the Bermuda Triangle, and we find that the sea is probably home to more believable creatures and creations of myth and superstition than any other area of the supernatural.

This chapter will look at all forms of sea creatures and legends. While the emphasis is on supernatural creatures, it is difficult to determine a firm dividing line between the impossible and the possible when it comes to giant sea creatures, and so this essay will trespass into the domain of science fiction while seeking to define the borderland.

It will cover not only creatures of the sea, including mermaids, mermen, selkies, seal maidens, sea serpents, kraken, lorelei, sirens, and other such denizens of the deep, but also the power and lure of the sea itself, which is perhaps the ultimate sea "creature." It will also touch on worlds beneath and beyond the sea and other bodies of water such as lakes and rivers, where there are common areas of myth and folklore.

EARLY LEGENDS AND FOLKTALES

Our links to the sea—both physical and spiritual—are so strong and so ancient that virtually every race and culture has legends and folktales of the sea. In ancient Mesopotamia the sea was personified as the goddess Tiamat. No images of her are known to survive, but she was believed to take the form of a giant dragon, not unlike a sea serpent. The legend tells that Tiamat, who was once calm and kindly, is angered following the death of her consort, Apsu, the god of fresh water. She creates an army of beings to help in her battle, and among them are fish-men and serpents. Tiamat is eventually defeated by Marduk, the Sun god. Tiamat is representative of both the power of the sea and its ability to flood the land.

There are versions of Tiamat in most cultural legends, including the Polynesian Takaroa, the Japanese Owatatsumi, the Chinese Yu-qiang, the Nordic Aegir, and the ancient Greek Tethys. Almost all these take the form of a dragon or serpent, suggesting that the image of the sea serpent dates back to our earliest belief systems. Tethys was the wife of Oceanus (the original earth-girdling waters), who is also portrayed as a giant serpent wrapped around the earth with its tail in its mouth. He is thus the equivalent of the Scandinavian Midgard serpent called Jormangard.

Many ancient legends also talk of specific sea creatures, usually spawned by the gods, but which have an independent existence. Probably the best known in western cultures are those in the Greek legends. Although Poseidon (the Roman Neptune) was originally the god of earthquakes, later classical legends converted him into the god of the sea, with an underwater domain. He was the father of Triton, who calms the ocean by blowing through his sea-shell. Triton is always depicted as having a man's head and torso but the body and tail of a fish or dolphin, and thus is the original personification of the merman.

Triton's mother was Amphitrite, whose father was Nereus, known as the "Old Man of the Sea." Nereus is always portrayed as a very old man but according to Homer (*Iliad* 18.36) was capable of changing his shape, and thus is sometimes depicted as having a fish's tail. His wife, Doris, was the daughter of Oceanus, and they were the parents of the Nereids, the nymphs of the sea, who were always depicted as mermaids. Chief among the Nereids was Thetis, the primary goddess of the sea, whose name is derived from Tethys (and thus Tiamat). In one form or another she has appeared in Greek legends from the earliest days; indeed, she looked after the young Poseidon when he was cast into the sea as a child. Thetis later married a mortal, Peleus—the forerunner of many legends of humans marrying sea-nymphs—and was the mother of Achilles. A later similar story concerns the Syrian goddess Atargatis, equated with the Phoenician Derceto. Ctesias tells how she fell in love with a youth and bore the child Semiramis, later queen of Assyria. Ashamed, Atargatis-Derceto threw herself into a lake and was transformed into a fish with a human head. Atargatis was worshipped throughout the eastern Mediterranean and had sacred fishponds dedicated to her.

These and other sea deities feature in many of the Greek legends, not least the great sea voyages of Odysseus and of Jason and the Argonauts. Odysseus on his long voyage home after the Trojan War had to face many dangers, including the sea monster Scylla and the enchanting song of the Sirens. When the Argonauts had to pass the Sirens, Orpheus was able to outsing them and, as a result, they cast themselves into the sea.

The sea monster also appears in the story of the Trojan War when the priest Laocoön and his sons are killed by two sea serpents sent by Apollo, who is angered when Laocoön warns the Trojans about the danger of the Wooden Horse.

One legend that has given rise to many later stories is that of the sea monster that ravages the land until a sacrifice is made. The best known of the Greek stories concerns Andromeda, whose mother, Cassiopeia, boasted that her child was more beautiful than the Nereids. Angered, Poseidon sent a sea monster to destroy the land. Andromeda was tied to a rock as a sacrifice, but was rescued by Perseus. Robert Graves suggests (*The Greek Myths* 244) that this incident owes its origin to the Mesopotamian myth, discussed earlier, of Marduk killing Tiamat. A similar Greek myth concerns the Trojan king Laomedon, whose daughter is sacrificed to a sea monster sent by Poseidon after Laomedon had failed to pay his dues. All this is symbolic of tales created to celebrate man's growing control over the sea, especially controlling the flooding of cultivated land.

Greek legends are not alone in their depiction of sea creatures. In Vedic myth the omnipotent Varuna, who maintains order in all things, is frequently depicted as riding a sea monster, the *makara*, sometimes described as a fish, a shark, a dolphin, a crocodile, or any combination thereof. The first incarnation of Vishnu was as the fish Matsya, which grew rapidly in size and saved mankind during the Deluge. The Polynesian god of fishes is Ika-Tere, some of whose

children were also mermaids and mermen, though curiously it was usually the right side that was fish and the left side human. Ea (Greek, Oannes), the Babylonian god of wisdom, was a merman, described thus by the Babylonian priest Berossus in his now lost *Babylonaika* (c. 280 B.C.E.). "The whole body of the animal was like a fish; and had under a fish's head another head, and also feet below, similar to those of a man, subjoined to the fish's tail."

Perhaps the best known of the fish gods, because of its later incorporation into supernatural literature, is the Phoenician Dagon, who was also half-man, half-fish, though according to Michael Jordan (*The Encyclopedia of Gods* 69), this association was an Israelite mistranslation, and Dagon or Dagan was originally a god of grain and fertility. The Hebrew word *dagh* means giant fish and was also used to describe the "great fish" that swallowed Jonah (Jonah 1:17). The Bible refers to other monsters, most notably the Leviathan, which both Psalm 74 and Isaiah 27:1 equate with a sea monster. It may be that the word is symbolic for a major nation such as Assyria or Egypt. However, its use elsewhere, such as in the Book of Job, clearly means a water creature, and the reference at Job 41 is taken to mean a crocodile by most Bible scholars, as a parallel to the previous reference to *behemoth* (Hebrew for "great beast") in Job 40, which is usually taken as describing a hippopotamus.

> The universal belief in sea deities and monsters by ancient cultures has remained hidden deep in our collective consciousness and continues to permeate folk tales and legends of more recent vintage. These are common among the great maritime nations of the world, but those that feature predominantly in Western folklore come from Celtic and Scandinavian myth.

There is a passing reference to a mermaid in the twelfth-century Icelandic foundation saga *Landnámábok*, while the Irish *Annals of the Four Masters*, which survives in documents of the seventeenth century but compiled from ancient chronicles, records that in the year 558 C.E. the fisherman Beoan of Comhgall caught the mermaid Liban in his nets. Her story is preserved in the *Lebor na h-Uidre* or *Book of the Dun Cow*, compiled in the twelfth century from early documents and tradition. It tells how Eochaid, son of the king of Munster, was drowned in a well with his children, but Liban survived and underwent a sea-birth. She was transformed into a mermaid, half-human, half-salmon, and lived in Lough Neagh along with her dog, which had become an otter.

Such tales provide the fundament from which many later traditional tales and stories spring, and these are best explored by individual category.

MERMAIDS, MERMEN, SELKIES, AND SIRENS

In *The Magic Zoo*, Peter Costello refers to many recorded sightings of mermaids and mermen and even the occasional capture or discovery of a

body. The earliest surviving physical description was recorded by the second-century Greek geographer Pausanias in his *Description of Greece*.

Most "captured" mermaids are dismissed as fairground fakes, and most sightings attributed to the heightened imaginations of sailors mistaking seals, manatees, or dugongs for mermaids. Even so, the folk belief is so deeply rooted that it is easy for us to hope that such creatures might exist—or have existed once—and this adds an extra dimension to the various folktales that have been preserved.

Among several merfolk stories recorded by T. Crofton Croker in *Fairy Legends and Traditions in the South of Ireland* (1825) is "The Soul Cages." Here Jack Dogherty befriends a merman, known in western Ireland as a merrow, and is taken to the merrow's underworld home. The merrow shows Dogherty the cages in which he has benignly stored the souls of drowned sailors, and Dogherty schemes as how to release them. The merrow, which is of a great age, is described as having "green hair, long green teeth, a red nose, and pig's eyes. It had a fish's tail, legs with scales on them, and short arms like fins." It also talks Irish fluently, enjoys liquor, and wears a cocked hat.

Jonas Lie records a not dissimilar story in "Finn Blood" (*Trold*, 1891). Eilart's boat capsizes, and it is all the young man can do to stay afloat and awake. He finds himself taken down into the sea by a mermaid and introduced

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But a greater marvel still is the Triton. The grander of the two versions of the Triton legend relates that the women of Tanagra before the orgies of Dionysus went down to the sea to be purified, were attacked by the Triton as they were swimming, and prayed that Dionysus would come to their aid. The god, it is said, heard their cry and overcame the Triton in the fight. The other version is less grand but more credible. It says that the Triton would waylay and lift all the cattle that were driven to the sea. He used even to attack small vessels, until the people of Tanagra set out for him a bowl of wine. They say that, attracted by the smell, he came at once, drank the wine, flung himself on the shore and slept, and that a man of Tanagra struck him on the neck with an axe and chopped off his head. For this reason, the image has no head. And because they caught him drunk, it is supposed that it was Dionysus who killed him.

I saw another Triton among the curiosities at Rome, less in size than the one at Tanagra. The Tritons have the following appearance. On their heads they grow hair like that of marsh frogs not only in color, but also in the impossibility of separating one hair from another. The rest of their body is rough with fine scales just as is the shark. Under their ears they have gills and a man's nose; but the mouth is broader and the teeth are those of a beast. Their eyes seem to me blue, and they have hands, fingers, and nails like the shells of the *murex*. Under the breast and belly is a tail like a dolphin's instead of feet.

Pausanias, Description of Greece, *Book 9, section 20–21*

to a draug, a sea-demon in merman shape. Like Croker's merrow, this draug is fond of his drink, and he and Eilart enjoy a meal, although Eilart remains suspicious of the draug's intentions. Nevertheless, he is made welcome and eventually taken back to his boat. Later he learns it was a dream. The draug is described as

> a broad-shouldered, strongly built fellow, with a glazed hat shoved back on to the top of his head, with dark-red tangled hair and beard, small tearful dog-fish eyes, and a broad mouth, round which there lay for the moment a good-natured seaman's grin. The shape of his head reminded one somewhat of the big sort of seal, which is called Klakkekal, his skin about the neck looked dark and shaggy, and the tops of his fingers grew together.

While Dogherty's merrow and to some extent Lie's draug are relatively friendly, most folk tales treat merfolk with caution. Indeed, in Lie's other stories, including "The Fisherman and the Draug," "Tug of War," and "Jack of Sjöholm," the draug has more demonic powers, striking vindictive bargains through which it seeks to claim its victims. This is more like the mermaid of Celtic tradition. The sea-woman Seshelma, who appears in Sara Coleridge's *Phantasmion* (1837), the first fairy novel written in English, is portrayed as a scheming sorceress and is hideous to behold: "her skin was thick and glistering; there was a glaze upon it which made Phantasmion shiver." In "The Laird of Lorntie," collected by Robert Chambers in *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (1847), a servant stops his lord from rescuing a girl whom he believes is drowning in the loch. Only then does the maiden reveal her true colors as she tells the lord she was after his blood for supper. In "Lutey and the Mermaid," collected by William Bottrell in *Traditions and Hearthside Stories of West Cornwall* (1870), a fisherman rescues a stranded mermaid and is granted three wishes, but there are conditions and after nine years the mermaid claims the man and takes him into the deep waters. In "The Haunted Ships," included by Allan Cunningham in *Traditional Tales of the English and Scottish Peasantry* (1822), a local man is menaced by two mischievous water-elves who inhabit two rotting hulks.

Generally mermen are considered as having greater wisdom than their human equivalents. In "The Wise Merman," collected by Jón Árnason in *Icelandic Legends* (1862), a merman, caught in a fisherman's nets, reveals facts to the human of which he is ignorant, even though they are right under his nose. Their wisdom, though, may also be part of their cunning. In George A. Baker's "The Merman" (*Mrs Hephaestus*, 1887), which may be based on similar Nordic legends as used by Jonas Lie, a merman (or in this case a seal man) who is captured by a fisherman proves evil and destroys the fisherman's family.

The basic plot of finding or confronting a merman or mermaid, friendly or otherwise, is in itself limited. The more interesting development was in

exploring the relationship between a human and one of the merfolk. This has become the enduring theme in almost all subsequent merfolk stories. Initially they were allegories between Christianity and paganism, because it was frequently a requirement of the relationship that to secure the love of a human, and thereby acquire an immortal soul, mermaids (or mermen) must abandon their elemental spirit and become mortal. This is the premise behind the best known (and most imitated) of all mermaid stories, "Den lille Havfrue" ("The Little Mermaid," *Fairy Tales Told for Children*, 1837) by Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen tells how a young mermaid, just fifteen, rescues and falls in love with a prince. She is intrigued by the human world and learns that though humans die younger (merfolk can live to be three hundred years old), they have an immortal soul. She consults the sea-witch who gives her a potion that will transform her into human shape, but she warns the mermaid that she can never revert to her former shape, and if she fails to win the love of the human she will fade away, "like the foam on the sea." In payment for the potion the sea-witch takes the mermaid's beautiful singing voice, so that she becomes mute. Unfortunately, the prince does not reciprocate her love and marries another. Although given the opportunity to kill the prince, she refuses and sacrifices herself. She dissolves into foam but rises into the air and is greeted by the air elementals who tell her that because of her good deeds she may still receive an immortal soul one day.

Oscar Wilde used Andersen's story as the basis for "The Fisherman and His Soul" (*The House of Pomegranates*, 1891), where a fisherman finds he must lose his own soul in order to wed a mermaid, and though most of the story concerns the problems caused by his disembodied soul, there are some beautiful passages of sea lore and imagery.

Andersen's story is seen by some as a metaphor for the repression of women in society (Golden 98–101), though it is also an allegory for transcendence, showing that despite one's place in society, actions can brings rewards. Andersen had long been fascinated by the duality of sea and earth and of the suggestion of transformation from one existence to another. This fascination manifested itself in several of his tales (most notably "The Ugly Duckling"), and had been used before he started his fairy tales when he adapted a traditional folktale for his poem "Agnete og Havmanden" ["Agnete and the Merman"] (*Kjøbenhavnsposten*, November 14, 1833). Here the roles are reversed. A merman falls in love with a young human girl and lures her into his watery domain, where he fathers seven children. One day the woman hears the church bells of her former village and becomes homesick. The merman allows her to return on condition she reveal nothing, but she confesses everything to her mother and never returns to the sea or her children, despite the merman's forlorn cries. This tale was retold by Matthew Arnold as "The Forsaken Merman" (*The Strayed Reveller*, 1849).

The idea of love between merfolk and humans date back to the legends of Thetis and of Atargatis mentioned above. Another early tale, "The King and

the Merman,'' was captured by Walter Map in his twelfth-century compendium of court gossip, *De nugis curialium* (*Courtiers' Trifles*). It tells of a merman who rescues a sorcerer's child and is granted legs while on the land but a tail when in the sea. He must spend time in the sea every day or his skin will shrivel. Unfortunately, he is captured by the king and put on show until rescued by the woman who loves him. However, she cannot follow him back to his watery domain. In the Italian folktale ''Maredata and Giulio'' (1826), translated as *The Ocean Spirit* (Cowie, 1834), a man rescues a woman from the sea, marries her, and has a child. She remains mute but when eventually she speaks, she reveals that she is a mer-woman and must return to the sea.

Perhaps the most interesting of the legends of the transformed sea-maiden is that of Mélusine, which was recorded in *Le Roman de Mélusine* by Jean d'Arras in 1392. The basic story is that Raymond of Poitou became infatuated with Mélusine, the daughter of a fairy. She agreed to marry him but only on condition that he never spy upon her on a Saturday. When he did, and saw her in her natural form, part-woman part-serpent, she turned into a spirit, remaining to keep a watchful eye on her children, who became the de Lusignan dynasty. The Mélusine story has inspired several medieval and later works of literature, art, and music, including *Die schöne Melusine* by Thüring von Ringoltingen, the Mayor of Berne (1456); *Histoire de Mélusine* by Paul-François Nodot (1698); Ludwig's Tieck's nouvelle *Sehr wunderbare Historie von der Melusina* (1799); and Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892), which further inspired an opera by Claude Debussy (1902).

Its most lasting influence was through the nouvelle *Undine* (1811) by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué. Undine is a water elemental who is found and raised by a human couple. When old enough she falls in love with and marries the knight, Huldebrandt, but he later rejects her for another. Undine returns to her watery home but, encouraged by her uncle, she visits her husband one last time to impart a fatal kiss. Fouqué's treatment of the legend is regarded by many as definitive—George MacDonald, for instance, called it the ''most beautiful'' of all fairy tales—and as a consequence it has rarely been reworked and at best simply copied. It was adapted as a play, *Ondine* (Paris, April 1939), by the French writer Jean Giraudoux.

The Celtic equivalent of the undine is the *gwragedd annwn*, and John Rhys recorded several traditional tales about them in *Celtic Folk-lore* (1901). In these legends, these female water-sprites seek out human husbands on condition that if he strikes them three times they will return to their watery home, though they continue to watch over their children.

The more significant, and often more sinister, Celtic variant of the undine and mermaid is the seal-maiden or selkie. The word ''selkie'' is Orcadian (from the Orkney Islands) for seal, but through folklore has come to mean those seals that can shed their sealskin and transform themselves into human form, though they must retain their sealskin to return to seal shape. This transformation has become a strong metaphor, not just for paganism versus

Christianity, but also for civilized man versus the beings of nature. For instance, in "The Unchristened Child," one of the stories inspired by Cornish legends in *Drolls from Shadowland* (1893) by Joseph H. Pearce, an unchristened child is transformed into a seal and later seeks revenge. The title of Eugene Field's "The Pagan Seal-Wife" (*The Holy Cross*, 1893), says it all in this tale of a man whose mother and wife were both seal-maidens who return to the sea at the point of death. More recently, Delia Sherman explores the Christian-pagan dilemma in "The Maid on the Shore" (*F&SF*, October 1987) where a woman, whose father is killed by suspicious fishermen and whose seal-woman mother returns to the sea, considers whether and how she will exact her revenge.

William Sharp, hiding under the persona of Fiona Macleod, shows these opposing elements powerfully in two separate stories drawn from Celtic folklore. In "The Dark Nameless One" from *The Washer of the Ford* (1896), Black Angus, who may have inherited the spirit of Judas, has transformed into a seal, but he works his wiles on Kirsteen, a young Christian woman, whom he lures into the sea and she becomes a sea-witch or *cailleach-uisge*. In "The Judgment o' God" from *The Sin-Eater* (1895), young Murdoch has always been a strange child obsessed with the sea. One wintry night he disappears but is later seen being caressed by a seal and in a state of transformation. Murdoch then vanishes into the sea with the seal, his laughter sometimes being heard on stormy nights.

The Scottish solicitor and occultist John Brodie-Innes wrote what ought to have been the definitive novel on selkies, *Morag the Seal* (1908), but this tale of deviltry and magic, with Morag's seal-state explained as a psychic projection, is spoiled by occult technicalities. Nevertheless, at its core it maintains the sinister nature of the selkie.

John Masefield's poem "The Seal Man" (*Manchester Guardian*, April 12, 1907) and Victor Rousseau's story "The Seal Maiden" (*Cavalier*, November 15, 1913), the latter inspired by Newfoundland legends, while both telling the simple story of love overcoming physical and spiritual barriers, also depict the selkie as a personification of the call of the sea, an image evident in Fiona Macleod's "The Judgment o' God" and even more powerfully in "The Ninth Wave" (*The Sin-Eater*). When the tide turns, the Great Tide sends out nine waves, each with its own purpose, and those who hear the ninth wave cannot ignore it, for it is death itself. In this guise the call of the sea corresponds to the siren who lures sailors to their deaths with their songs.

The most famous siren of legend is the lorelei (originally *lurlei*) of the Rhine, near St. Goarshausen, a rocky promontory where once lived a beautiful maiden whose song caused boatmen to crash on the surrounding rocks. This image was first captured in literature in the poem *Die Lore Lay* by Clemens Brentano (1802) and later in Heinrich Heine's poem *Die Loreley* (1823). In "The Nymph of the Waters" (1826), Irish author Francis Saint Leger tells how when a Count's son seeks to capture the lorelei, one of his boatmen tries to kill her with an arrow and the nymph vanishes, never to be seen again.

"The Siren" (*Graphic*, Summer 1882) is an unusually somber story for F. Anstey, and tells of a siren who sacrifices herself in order that the sailor she loves, lives. *The Story of the Siren* (1920), by E. M. Forster, tells of a swimmer who is disfigured by a siren. He marries another who has been similarly deformed but locals, fearing their child will be a monster, kill the mother. In "The Wine-Dark Sea" (*Powers of Darkness*, 1966), Robert Aickman underplays the siren legend yet still creates a magical atmosphere of detachment when a holidaymaker is entranced by an uninhabited island only to find solace among its spiritual inhabitants.

The siren has been adapted into literature as the *femme fatale*. Oliver Onions retained some of the original concept in "The Painted Face" (1929), where a young girl reveals that she is the reincarnated spirit of a siren cursed by Poseidon. On land the girl is shy and withdrawn but when by water she blossoms. The erotic element of the siren is displayed in "The Sea-Witch" by Nictzin Dyalhis (*Weird Tales*, December 1937), where a retired professor rescues a women from the stormy seas, and in showing her appreciation she recants for actions in past lives that serve only to torment her savior. An equally dangerous sea demon appears in "The Merrow" by Seabury Quinn (*Weird Tales*, March 1948), who seduces men and sucks away their breath.

Because of the romantic or faery connotations of mermaids and, to a lesser extent, selkies, most modern interpretations tend to be written either for children or older girls, or the stories are humorous and presented as light entertainment.

Among children's fiction, E. Nesbit inevitably contributed a fantasy with her last novel, *Wet Magic* (1913), a rather lackluster story of children who rescue a mermaid from a fairground and then experience various undersea adventures—the submarine world becoming an allegory for the human imagination. Lucy M. Boston produced her own Nesbitesque version with *The Sea Egg* (1967), in which children hatch a triton's egg in Cornwall and are taken on a tour of the sea. Although Susan Cooper has retold the basic selkie folktale in the picture book *The Selkie Girl* (1986), she has created a more complex story in *Seaward* (1983), where two teenagers, one unknowingly a selkie, struggle through a bizarre world after the loss of their parents, until they reach their own goal. Cally, the selkie girl, is richly explored as is her growing awareness of her real world. Other books for young readers involving merfolk or selkies include the haunting *The Secret of Ron Mor Skerry* by Rosalie K. Fry (1959), filmed as *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1994); *The Seal-Singing* by Rosemary Harris (1971); *A Strange Came Ashore* by Mollie Hunter (1975), which is a particularly appealing reworking of the selkie story; *The Mystery in the Bottle* by Val Willis (1991); *The Selchie's Seed* by Sulamith Oppenheim (1996), in which a young girl becomes aware of her selkie heritage; and *The Merman* (1997) by Dick King-Smith. The most powerful selkie novel of recent years is *Daughter of the Sea* by Berlie Doherty (1996), and though marketed for young readers is a violent book

probably better appreciated by older readers. Years after a fisherman finds and rears a young child, the sea uses both its power and its creatures to retrieve it.

Jane Yolen has reworked most of the essential motifs into her own philosophy and in "The Lady and the Merman" (*F&SF*, September 1976), "The White Seal Maid" (*Parabola*, 1977), and "Undine" (*F&SF*, September 1982) has the female spirits assert their independence and return to their worlds. Other works by Yolen are listed in the Bibliography.

Among romantic fiction, Theodore Sturgeon's "A Touch of Strange" (*F&SF*, January 1958) stands out because no mermaids or mermen are featured in it and yet they are the catalyst that brings together a human couple. In "The Drowned Mermaid" by Christopher Barzak (*Realms of Fantasy*, June 2003) a rescued mermaid becomes a surrogate child for a mother who lost her own daughter; when at length the husband returns the creature to the sea, the mother is determined to follow. In "Sealskin Trousers" by Eric Linklater (1947), a romance blossoms between two university students, one of whom is a sealman who has studied the human world and does not trust it.

The selkie myth contains much for young readers, especially young girls, as it is a powerful metaphor for the girl who feels different and not part of this world and who seeks and eventually finds love with another outcast. As a consequence, the theme appears both literally and figuratively in several romance books aimed at all ages, including *Selkie* by Anne Cameron (1996); *Alice at Heart* (2002) and its rather renegade sequel *Diary of a Radical Mermaid* (2004) by Deborah Smith; *The Selkie* by Melanie Jackson (2003); *The Last Mermaid* by Shana Abe (2004); and, in more adult mode, *The Mermaids Singing* by Lisa Carey (1998), an emotive study of three generations of women, and *The Seal Wife* by Kathryn Harrison (2003), a powerful story set in Alaska in 1915 and a young man's affair with a strange woman.

The comic interpretation of the merfolk motif goes back at least as far as H. G. Wells's *The Sea Lady* (1901), though Wells uses the idea of a mermaid marrying a human only as a basis for a satirical study of society. Both better and shorter is "Fintale the Merman" by Bertram Atkey (*Red Magazine*, September 15, 1919), which portrays an entire city of merfolk called Mermanchester, with streets lit by lantern fish. Fintale is bored by the perfection of the place and is lured to the world of humans by an old newspaper found in a wreck. However, he soon discovers that the "new woman" of the dawning twenties is not what he is after. A couple of tall tales include the inevitable bragging of Lord Dunsany's Jorkens in "Mrs. Jorkens" (*Cosmopolitan*, October 1930), in which Jorkens marries a mermaid, and the similar "Bowleg Bill and the Mermaid" by Jeremiah Digges (1938). In "Something Rich and Strange" by Randall Garrett and Avram Davidson (*F&SF*, June 1961), a gourmet sets out to taste the meat of a mermaid but discovers more fruitful abilities of the merfolk. Esther Friesner wonderfully spoofs the genre in her comic novel *Yesterday We Saw Mermaids* (1992), set in an alternate world at

the time of Columbus's discovery of America, where his sighting of mermaids was for real.

Of special interest is *Peabody's Mermaid* by Guy and Constance Jones (1946) in which a husband while on holiday encounters a mermaid and tries to keep her hidden, much to the consternation of everyone else who believe that he is either trying to hide a wartime infiltrator or is having delusions. This novel was filmed effectively as a humorous fantasy in *Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid* (1948), starring William Powell and Ann Blyth. Most mermaid films tend to be humorous, such as *Miranda* (1948), based on the play by Peter Blackmore, its sequel *Mad About Men* (1954), and the Tom Hanks/Darryl Hannah hit *Splash* (1984). It is uncommon for films to depict an evil mermaid—the imagery of *The Little Mermaid* is deeply imbedded in our psyche—but both *Night Tide* (1961) and *She Creature* (2001) are distinctive efforts that should be congratulated for their originality.

Dead or dying merfolk do not usually appear in fiction other than at the end of a story. However, two stories in particular show the extremes of treatment meted out to such discoveries. In "The Thing on Outer Shoal" by P. Schuyler Miller (*Astounding SF*, September 1947), a giant merman is washed up dead on a reef after a storm. Townsfolk investigate but then encounter a giant merwoman who, Grendel-like, comes looking for her husband. A naval helicopter fires on her and she returns to the sea. In "The Shoreline at Sunset" by Ray Bradbury (*F&SF*, March 1959), two beachcombers stumble across a beautiful mermaid, dead or dying. They are torn between selling her to a university and returning her to the sea. Compassion wins and thereafter the boys share a bond of having witnessed something wonderful.

There are all too few stories that seek to undertake a serious study of merfolk, but one striking exception is "Miss Carstairs and the Merman" by Delia Sherman (*F&SF*, January 1989). Miss Carstairs, an amateur naturalist in nineteenth-century Massachusetts, discovers a stranded merman and spends many weeks studying it. The result is a telepathic rapport with the creature that nearly seduces her into venturing into the sea. Another recent story is "Singing Each to Each" by Paul di Filippo (*Interzone*, May 2000), in which a collector of postcards tracks down the model for a mermaid photograph taken thirty years before and discovers she was not alone.

Inevitably recent writers have turned their thoughts to the scientific creation of mermen. This may be by surgical means, as in "Driftglass" by Samuel Delany (*Worlds of If*, June 1967), genetically engineered as in "Selkies" (*Asimov's SF*, March 1994) and its sequels by Mary Rosenblum, or the products of natural evolution ("homo aquaticus"), as in "Sea Wrack" by Edward Jesby (*F&SF*, May 1964). The abilities of mermen also led to two short-lived series: the *Attar the Merman* books (1975) by Joe Haldeman (writing as Robert Graham), where two genetically enhanced mermen can communicate telepathically with dolphins, and the TV series *The Man from Atlantis* (1977–1978) where the "mer-man" is a separate line of evolution

Selected Mermaid TV Shows and Movies

Acri (Japan, 1996). Directed by Tatuya Ishii, based on story by Shunji Iwai. Scientist undertakes research into existence of mermaids.

Chechu y familia (Spain, 1992). Directed by Álvaro Sáenz de Heredio. Script, Rafael Azcona. In the mode of *The Addams Family* where a young boy's relatives include mermaids.

Diver Dan (US TV, 1961) 40 seven-minute episodes. Directed by Mort Heilig and Leon Rhodes. Children's series where Diver Dan fights various menaces with the help of Minerva the Mermaid.

Dyesebel (Philippines, 1950). Based on a comic-book character created by Mars Ravelo, there were four other spin-off films, in 1973, 1978, 1991, and 1996. Dyesebel is a mermaid of human parents.

The Little Mermaid (US, 1989). Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. Story, Roger Allers. There have been several short animated adaptations of Andersen's story, and an hour-long Japanese version (1975), but this is the first full-length English-language version from the Disney studios. Sequel *The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea* (2000). A more faithful adaptation is *Malá morská vila* (Czech, 1975).

Local Hero (UK, 1983). Written and directed by Bill Forsyth. Attempts by a Texas oil company to develop a Scottish village. Jenny Seagrove plays Marina, a marine biologist with webbed hands and toes.

Magic Island (US, 1995). Directed by Sam Irvin. Screenplay, Neil Ruttenberg and Brent V. Friedman. A boy runs away from home and is transported to a magical pirate island where he falls in love with a mermaid.

Manhoru no naka no ningyo (Japan, 1988) a.k.a. *Mermaid in the Manhole*. Directed by Hideshi Hino. An artist finds a mermaid in a sewer and though he chooses to paint her, can find no way of preserving her and she rots away.

Marinara (Philippines, 2004). Directed by Eric Quizon. A young mermaid goes in search of her sisters.

Mermaid Forest (Japan, 1991). Directed by Takaya Mizutani, based on comic-book series by Rumiko Takahashi. Yuta ate mermaid flesh 500 years ago and is now immortal and is seeking for a way to die. Sequel is *Mermaid's Scar* (1993).

Mermaids (US TV, 2003). Directed by Ian Barry. Teleplay, Daniel Cerone from story by Brent V. Friedman and Rebecca Swanson. Three mermaid sisters avenge the death of their father.

Mermaids of Tiburon (US, 1962). Written and directed by John Lamb. A man seeking lost treasure finds a greater treasure amongst the mermaids.

Miranda (UK, 1948). Directed by Ken Annakin from a play by Peter Blackmore. Various amusing adventures of the mermaid Miranda after she is rescued by a human. Sequel is *Mad About Men* (UK, 1954).

Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid (US, 1948). Directed by Irving Pichel. Screenplay, Nunnally Johnson from the novel by Guy and Constance Jones. Peabody tries to keep a mermaid hidden.

Night Tide (US, 1963). Written and directed by Curtis Harrington. A former sailor believes that a sideshow mermaid is real and discovers the true story of her past.

Phra Apai Mani (Thai, 2002). Directed by Chalart Sriwanda, based on the Thai classic poem *Soondhornpoo* by Sunthon Phu. A series of adventures in which a prince is captured by a sea witch and his brother seeks to rescue him.

Sea Creature (US TV 2001). Written and directed by Sebastian Gutierrez. Part 1 of *The Mermaid Chronicles*. A mermaid captured for a carnival takes her revenge.

Sea People (Canada, 1999). Directed by Vic Sarin. Screenplay, Wendy Biller and Christopher Hawthorne. A young woman believes she has rescued a man from drowning but the more she gets to know his family the more she discovers their links with the sea.

The Secret of Roan Inish (US, 1994). Written and directed by John Sayles from book by Rosalie K. Fry. A young woman in rural Ireland learns of the selkie legend of her family and seeks her baby brother, long ago washed out to sea.

Splash (US, 1984). Directed by Ron Howard. Screenplay by Bruce Jay Friedman and others from his development. Romantic comedy about a man who falls in love with a mermaid, not knowing she is one or that she had once rescued him as a child. There was a TV sequel, *Splash, Too* (1988). A Chinese version is *Ren yu Chuan Shuo* (Hong Kong, 1994), directed by Jing Wong.

The Thirteenth Year (US TV, 1999). Directed by Duwayne Dunham from a story by Jenny Arata. When a boy starts his teens he begins to develop fins and discovers his mother is a mermaid.

and a survivor from Atlantis. In both these series the mermen's abilities are used in an eco-war against megalomaniacs.

Behind several stories is the suggestion that the merfolk and selkies are of a dying race and may soon be extinct. It was inherent in Thomas Burnett Swann's "The Dolphin and the Deep" (*Science Fantasy*, August 1963), set in the prehistory world of legend when most creatures of faery still survived. The definitive treatment, however, is *The Merman's Children* by Poul Anderson (Putnam, 1979). This takes its cue from the same story of Agnete and the merman that inspired Hans Christian Andersen. Anderson portrays a race of mer-creatures excommunicated by the church and forced to seek refuge in the dwindling lands of faery. Unfortunately the relentless march of Christianity sees the merfolk being baptized and thus losing their spiritual roots and gradually passing from the world.

Selected Classic Mermaid Paintings

Edward Burne-Jones, *The Depths of the Sea* (1887)

John Collier, *The Land Baby* (1909)

Evelyn De Morgan, *The Sea Maidens* (1886)

Herbert James Draper, *The Sea Maiden* (1894), *The Water Nymph* (1898), *Water Baby* (1900), *Sea Melodies* (1904), *Ulysses and the Sirens* (1909), *The Kelpie* (1913)

Isobel Lilian Gloag, *The Kiss of the Enchantress* (1890)

Frederick Leighton, *The Fisherman and the Siren* (1858), *Actaea, the Nymph of the Shore* (1868)

René Magritte, *The Forbidden Universe* (1943), *Le Chant d'Amour* (1948), *Les merveilles de la nature* (1953)

Edvard Munch, *Mermaid* (1896)

Arthur Rackham, *Undine* (1916)

Collier Smithers, *A Race with Mermaids and Tritons* (1895)

Franz von Stuck, *Mermaid* (1891)

John Waterhouse, *Ulysses and the Sirens* (1891), *Studies for a Mermaid* (1892), *Naiad* (1893), *Hylas and the Nymphs* (1896), *The Siren* (1900), *A Mermaid* (1901)

Rowland Wheelwright, *The Enchanted Shore* (circa 1910)

The number and variety of stories dealing with mermaids, mermen, and selkies show how important the motif is in exploring relationships between humans and another race, one that may be both rewarding and dangerous. Merfolk have come to represent a forbidden desire, a metaphor of church versus paganism. Though some merfolk are depicted as cunning or dangerous, it is often the human who reveals a darker side and for whom the supernatural being must make some form of sacrifice. The stories are thus also parables of prejudice and humility.

SEA SERPENTS AND OTHER MONSTERS

While mermaids and selkies may be legendary, one cannot so easily dismiss sea serpents and other monsters of the deep. So little is known about the ocean depths that there is a willingness to believe that almost anything might exist and new species are being found on a regular basis—some, such as the giant squid (the kraken of legend), having been photographed alive for the first time only in September 2005.

Tales of sea monsters appear in many of the early travel tales. In the sixth century *The Voyage of St. Brendan* the eponymous Irish monk spends time on the back of a whale, believing it to be an island. A similar episode occurs in the equally fabled *Seven Voyages of Sinbad* in the *Arabian Nights*, which was appearing in the oral tradition at about the same time. St. Columba also lived at that time and his biographer, Adomnan, records how Columba confronted and subdued the Loch Ness Monster.

Ancient mapmakers would adorn the unknown extremities of their maps with dragons and other monsters though only one known map, the Lenox Globe of circa 1507 which actually used the phrase "*Hic Sunt Dracones*" ("Here be dragons"). Nevertheless, the implications were always there. Mercator's map of 1587 placed sea serpents in uncharted areas of the ocean, and later cartographers followed his example.

The earliest known reports of sea monsters may have been in the writings of the Carthaginian traveler and merchant Himilco, who lived around the sixth century B.C.E. and plied the route from Carthage to Britain. His writings are now lost, but the poet Festus Avienus referred to them in his *Ora Maritima* in the fourth century C.E., commenting on Himilco's siting of monsters in the western seas, as well as waters clogged by seaweed—perhaps the earliest reference to the Sargasso Sea.

The great expansion of naval conquest by European nations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries made people aware not only of the vastness of the oceans but also their strangeness. There were various reports of unusual creatures from such explorers as Columbus, Humphrey Gilbert, Martin Frobisher, and Richard Hakluyt. In the text accompanying his *Carta Marina* (Venice, 1539), the Swede Olaus Magnus refers to a 200-foot sea serpent that menaced the western coast of Norway.

By the eighteenth century, sightings of sea monsters were sufficiently frequent that the Norwegian Bishop of Bergen, Erik Pontopiddan, listed many in his *Natural History of Norway* (1752). He was the first to name and describe the *kraaken*, which was popularized by Lord Alfred Tennyson in "The Kraken" (*Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, 1830).

Sea serpents found their way into popular literature via the *Arabian Nights*–style *Pacha of Many Tales* (1835) by Frederick Marryat. In the "Fourth Voyage of Huckaback" the narrator is on board a ship stricken in a hurricane and floating out of control in the Gulf Stream. They are preyed upon by a sea serpent a hundred feet long, which takes men one at a time. The narrator succeeds in driving the serpent away with a broom coated in coal tar. This technique animal bears some similarity to an old Celtic legend recorded by Walter Traill Dennison in *The Orcadian Sketch Book* (1880) as "Asipattle and the Mester Stoor Worm." The Stoor Worm was a giant serpent that terrorized the sea around the Orkneys. On one appearance a farm worker, called Asipattle, rowed out and took battle with the creature, killing it by ramming burning peat into its wounds.

There is a rousing report of the chase, struggle, and killing of a 103-feet-long sea serpent near the Marquesas in the Pacific provided by Charles Seabury, Master of the whaling ship *Monongahela* in the London *Times* of March 10, 1852, taking the details from the *New York Tribune*. Though later dismissed as a hoax, the report, together with a compilation of 186 other sea-serpent sightings, was included by Dr. A. C. Oudemans, Director of the Zoological and Botanical Society at The Hague in the Netherlands, as *The Great Sea Serpent* in 1892, which long remained the primary study on the subject.

Perhaps the best-known genuine sea monster of Marryat's age was Mocha Dick, a huge white sperm whale in the seas around Cape Horn, which allegedly defied over 100 attempts to kill it. Jeremiah Reynolds wrote a vigorous account of the defeat of the whale in "Mocha Dick" (*Knickerbocker Magazine*, May 1839), the story that inspired Herman Melville to produce *Moby-Dick* (1851). Here the whale becomes a symbol in an iconic quest from life to death, an image that the endless sea readily evokes.

Victor Hugo vividly describes an encounter with a kraken, which he calls a *poulp* or devil-fish, in *Les Travailleurs de la mer* (*Toilers of the Sea*, 1866), set off the Channel Islands. But the book that probably did most to encourage interest in the monsters of the deep was *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* by Jules Verne (1869–1870). Verne employs the fear of sea monsters at the outset when Captain's Nemo's submarine, *Nautilus*, preys on ships like a creature of the deep and sets imaginations on fire. He writes: "The human mind delights in grand conceptions of supernatural beings. And the sea is precisely their best vehicle, the only medium through which these giants (against which terrestrial animals, such as elephants or rhinoceroses, are as nothing) can be produced or developed." Verne adds a few giants of his own. When the explorers approach what prove to be the ruins of Atlantis, the narrator remarks on the "giant crustacea crouched in their holes; giant lobsters setting themselves up like halberdiers, and moving their claws with the clicking sound of pincers; titanic crabs, pointed like a gun on its carriage; and

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As I am preparing a minute description of the serpent, I will merely give you a few general points. It was a male; the length 103 feet 7 inches; 19 feet 1 inch around the neck; 24 feet 6 inches around the shoulders; and the largest part of the body, which appeared distended, 49 feet 4 inches. The head was long and flat, with ridges; the bones of the lower jaw, separate; the tongue had its end like the head of a heart. The tail ran nearly to a point, on the end of which was a flat firm cartilage. The back was black, turning brown on the sides; then yellow, and on the centre of the belly a narrow white streak two-thirds of its length; there were also scattered over the body dark spots.

Charles Seabury, Master, Whale-ship Monongahela *of New Bedford, February 6, 1852*

frightful-looking poulps, interweaving their tentacles like a living nest of serpents."

But Verne's most memorable scene deals with the giant "poulps" or squids, seven of which, at one point, attack the *Nautilus*. Verne's description of it, for readers who had never seen a squid, is powerful indeed:

> It was an immense cuttlefish, being eight yards long. It swam crossways in the direction of the Nautilus with great speed, watching us with its enormous staring green eyes. Its eight arms, or rather feet, fixed to its head, that have given the name of cephalopod to these animals, were twice as long as its body, and were twisted like the furies' hair. One could see the 250 air holes on the inner side of the tentacles. The monster's mouth, a horned beak like a parrot's, opened and shut vertically. Its tongue, a horned substance, furnished with several rows of pointed teeth, came out quivering from this veritable pair of shears. What a freak of nature, a bird's beak on a mollusc! Its spindle-like body formed a fleshy mass that might weigh 4,000 to 5,000 lb.; the, varying colour changing with great rapidity, according to the irritation of the animal, passed successively from livid grey to reddish brown.

Verne's novel is full of the wonders of the oceans; though none of his creatures is supernatural, they are as fearful as any monsters of legend, and both the giant squid and the sea serpent (which Verne mentions but does not exploit) have become truly iconic.

It was all too easy for authors of nautical adventures to incorporate a battle with a sea serpent or kraken, but apart from frequent recurrences in boys' fiction, it soon ceased to be of interest in mainstream literature. Even the reportage of it grew stale, to the extent that the London *Times* referred to another batch of sightings in 1871 as the "sea-serpent season" (*Times*, October 4, 1871). Rudyard Kipling used this as the basis for "A Matter of Fact" (*Many Inventions*, 1893), in which a journalist is witness to two sea serpents driven to the surface following an underwater earthquake, but is unable to sell the story because editors think it is another hoax. Sea serpents soon became parodies of themselves in such humorous stories of the early twentieth century as "The Sea Serpent Syndicate" by Everard Jack Appleton (*Royal Magazine*, April 1905), "The Call of the Wild Water" by Bertram Atkey (*Red Magazine*, November 1918), and, best known of all, "Daniel Webster and the Sea Serpent" (*Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1937) by Stephen Vincent Benét.

Authors had to be creative to breathe life into the sea monster story. In "The Water-Devil" (*Scribner's*, October 1874), Frank R. Stockton reveals that the underwater monster that seems to trap metal ships at a certain location is in fact a giant lodestone. In "The Rival Beauties" (*Million*, March 30, 1895) W. W. Jacobs has a sea serpent frightened away from a ship by the sound of the foghorn. Ray Bradbury later turned that idea on its head in "The Fog Horn" (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 23, 1951), where a serpent is

attracted to a lighthouse by the sound of the foghorn. This was filmed as *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953). In "The Sea Raiders" (*Weekly Sun Literary Supplement*, December 6, 1896) H. G. Wells has bathers along the South Devon coast suddenly threatened by a brief but deadly shoal of giant octopi, *Haploteuthis ferox* as he calls them, which go as mysteriously as they came.

In "Port of Many Ships" (*Manchester Guardian*, April 2, 1904) John Masefield has the sea serpent symbolic of the end of the world, like the Midgard Serpent, rising like a demon in the final apocalypse. Masefield was wonderfully creative in "The Yarn of Lanky Job" (*Manchester Guardian*, July 16, 1904), where certain rats have evolved into semi-human form and operate at sea, rescuing normal rats from sinking ships. Owen Oliver has giant fish attack English cities in "Out of the Deep" (*London Magazine*, July 1904). Morgan Robertson suggested invisible giant octopi that can be seen only in ultraviolet light in "From the Darkness and the Depths" (*New Story Magazine*, January 1913), while Frank Belknap Long introduced giant vampiric leeches in "The Ocean Leech" (*Weird Tales*, January 1925).

Sea serpents and kraken would continue to pepper fiction for many years—John Wyndham was able to use the symbolism as suitable for his appearance of an alien from beneath the ocean in *The Kraken Wakes* (1953), though in fact his novel was symptomatic of a new wave of monsters that would emerge from the post-atomic waters, of which the most notorious was the dinosaur-like Gojira (or Godzilla) in the Japanese film of that name in 1954. Godzilla and its many B-movie imitations of the 1950s and 1960s were, for the most part, atomic mutations, and while they are continuing evidence of the acceptability of the ocean depths as the home of giant monsters, they are not the same as the natural or supernatural monsters of myth and imagination.

Two authors were responsible for reworking the sea monster theme in two distinctive ways in the early years of the twentieth century and, in so doing, refreshed the concept and revived it for future generations. These were William Hope Hodgson and H. P. Lovecraft.

Hodgson spent seven years in the merchant navy (1891–1898) and during that time traveled several times around the world. His experiences served as the basis for many short stories and two of his novels. Hodgson had a fertile imagination and his stories avoid the traditional horrors and superstitions of the sea. Doubtless long hours on the night watch or becalmed in open seas allowed him time to speculate on what form organic life might take. His first nautical horror story, "A Tropical Horror" (*Grand Magazine*, June 1905), though crude in its development, reads like one of these nocturnal musings. A ship is menaced by a giant sea serpent with "a vast slobbering mouth a fathom across," from which hang many tentacles. But this is no ordinary serpent. It also has a giant claw, like a lobster's, with which it crushes anything in its way. Thereafter Hodgson endeavored to create new and ever more bizarre abominations. In "The Voice in the Night" (*Blue Book*, November 1907), sailors on

a fog-bound ship learn the terrible story of two travelers shipwrecked on a fungus-covered island who find that they have also become fungoid. In "The Derelict" (*Red Magazine*, December 1, 1912) a rotting ship's hulk is smothered in a mold that has taken on a basic sentience. In "The Stone Ship" (*Red Magazine*, July 1, 1914) an undersea eruption brings briefly to the surface an ancient ship that has been petrified but which is also the home for several denizens of the deep, including huge red sea caterpillars and giant eels. Another undersea eruption brings another ancient hulk to the surface in "Demons of the Sea" (*Sea Stories*, October 5, 1923), though here they are tentacled seal-like creatures, "parodies of human beings." "Out of the Storm" (*Putnam's Monthly*, February 1909) presents arguably the ultimate monster, the sea itself, as if it has a being and purpose in its restlessness.

Among Hodgson's body of work are several that took as their milieu the weed-clogged Sargasso Sea, in the North Atlantic. Strong currents encircle this area, creating a large body of water that effectively rotates upon itself. Within that area is an aggregation of large bodies of weed, which the Portuguese called "sargaco" after its grape-like pods. The legend grew that ships became becalmed and trapped by the weed. In fact, the weed is not strong enough to do this, but the sea and weather conditions here do becalm ships, leading to growing superstition. This is the area known as the "horse latitudes" or "doldrums" and equates with the more recent idea of the Bermuda Triangle.

Jules Verne takes the *Nautilus* through the Sargasso in *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*, describing it rather poetically as "a perfect meadow, a close carpet of seaweed, fucus, and tropical berries, so thick and so compact that the stem of a vessel could hardly tear its way through it." His adventurers encounter no monsters, though they see small creatures in the weed, and it is indeed the home of many crabs and small fishes. Before Hodgson, several writers used the Sargasso as a setting for societies of people trapped there for generations. Julius Chambers has a colony descended from Spanish slavers 300 years earlier in *"In Sargasso" Missing* (1896). Thomas Janvier's *In the Sargasso Sea* (1898) is a journey through the hulks and remnants trapped in the sea, while Frank Atkins (writing as Frank Aubrey) has it as the home of survivors of Atlantis in *A Queen of Atlantis* (1899). Although the last book includes some unusual creatures, none of these focus on the Sargasso as a haunt of monsters.

This became William Hope Hodgson's speciality. In six stories and one novel he created an astonishing Sargassan world in which its victims have to cope with a variety of bizarre creatures. This is most evident in *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* (1907), in which survivors of a shipwreck try to make their way through the weed-clogged sea beset by giant crabs, octopodes, and tentacled devil-fish, as well as giant fungi and trees that howl. Perhaps worst of all were the weed men, which Hodgson calls "human slugs." In the other, unconnected stories we encounter further giant crabs, giant shrimps, kraken, devil-fish, and a ship alive with an intelligent strain of rats. Hodgson's Sargasso

stories have been collected in *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig" and Other Nautical Adventures* (2003), while the best of his other sea horror stories has been assembled in *Adrift on the Haunted Seas* (2005).

Hodgson's Sargasso milieu inspired others including Ward Muir, who in "Sargasso" (*Pearson's*, October 1908) has trapped sailors menaced by a giant sea serpent, and most notably Dennis Wheatley, whose *Uncharted Seas* (1938) is an homage to Hodgson. It was filmed as *The Lost Continent* (1968). Others who brought some originality to the Sargasso include Joel Martin Nichols who, in "The Lure of Atlantis" (*Weird Tales*, April 1925), depicts the weed itself as a sentient monster, and Murray Leinster who, in "The Silver Menace" (*Thrill Book*, September 1–15, 1919), has a jelly-like mass that reproduces rapidly, like amoeba, and clogs the eastern American seaboard. A natural extension of this appeared in "Slime" by Joseph Payne Brennan (*Weird Tales*, March 1953), in which a protoplasmic ooze is disturbed from the seabed and terrorizes a coastal town. Stephen King used a similar idea of "killer scum" in "The Raft" (*Gallery*, November 1982).

Although H. P. Lovecraft was a great admirer of Hodgson's work, he had already commenced his tales of marine monsters long before he discovered Hodgson. Although these later developed into what came to be called the Cthulhu Mythos, the early stories were simple one-off ideas that nevertheless showed an interest in what lurks beneath the seas. The first was "Dagon" (*Vagrant*, November 1919), where a shipwrecked sailor discovers evidence of worship of a sea monster that subsequently appears and turns out to be the ancient fish-god Dagon. In "The Temple" (*Weird Tales*, September 1925), crimes at sea are punished by strange sea creatures that may once have been human. "The Call of Cthulhu" (*Weird Tales*, February 1928) set out the premise of the Cthulhu concept, wherein ancient powerful entities that once dominated the earth have been imprisoned in various places under the sea or the earth. Among them is many-tentacled Cthulhu, who is freed from the sunken city of R'lyeh by an earthquake. As the Cthulhu ideas permeated his stories, Lovecraft became fascinated with the idea of intermarriage between humans and other creatures. One such story is "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1931). Several generations earlier Obed Marsh had brought back strange half-human sea people from the South Seas and allowed them to live on the reefs out to sea. These creatures mated with Marsh and others from Innsmouth, spawning descendants who are more at home in water than on land. They have the Innsmouth look, "queer narrow heads with flat noses and bulgy, stary eyes that never seem to shut" (*Dunwich Horror* 308). Their skin is scabby and their necks shriveled.

The idea of humanoid races evolving in the seas or through miscegenation on land has been around probably as long as the selkie legend. In *The Tempest* (Act 3, Scene 2) Shakespeare has Trinculo call Caliban "half a fish and half a monster." In "Fishhead" (*Cavalier*, January 11, 1913), Irvin S. Cobb describes similar horrors at a lake in the southern States where somehow a woman gave

birth to a monstrosity with the body of a man but the head of a fish. Cobb's description is vivid:

> His skull sloped back so abruptly that he could hardly be said to have a forehead at all; his chin slanted off right into nothing. His eyes were small and round with shallow, glazed, pale-yellow pupils, and they were set wide apart in his head, and they were unwinking and staring, like a fish's eyes.
>
> His nose was no more than a pair of tiny slits in the middle of the yellow mask. His mouth was the worst of all. It was the awful mouth of a catfish, lipless and almost inconceivably wide, stretching from side to side.
>
> Also when Fishhead became a man grown his likeness to a fish increased, for the hair upon his face grew out into two tightly kinked slender pendants that drooped down either side of the mouth like the beards of a fish!

In "In the Abyss" (*Pearson's Magazine*, August 1896), H. G. Wells's adventurer witnesses a bizarre reptilian humanoid deep in the ocean trench who captures his bathysphere and takes it to a cavernous underwater city. Wells speculates on the possibility of intelligent aqua-vertebrates evolving deep in the ocean and developing their own society. Victor Rousseau took it a step further in *The Sea Demons* (*All-Story Weekly*, January 1–22, 1916), with Britain threatened by an intelligent humanoid aquatic race that has evolved to breathe air. They are transparent and thus almost invisible in water, and operate with a form of hive mind controlled by their queen.

Humanoid sea monsters were ideal for the movie industry, as it did not require so many special effects and could be potentially more realistic. *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), developed for the screen by Harry Essex and Arthur Ross, was a surprising hit for Universal Pictures and led to two sequels, *Revenge of the Creature* (1955) and *The Creature Walks among Us* (1956). The creature, dubbed the Gill-Man, is an amphibious human survivor from prehistoric times that survives in the Amazon. The success of the film led to a spin-off novelization by Vargo Statten [John Russell Fearn] (1954), and its continued popularity has led to two more novelizations: by Carl Dreadstone (1977) and by Larry Mike Garmon as *Black Water Horror* (2002). Paul di Filippo has written a sequel, *Time's Black Lagoon* (2006).

There have been many stories about undersea societies and cultures. As far back as 1873, in *Colymbia* (1873) the noted British homeopathic doctor, Robert Ellis Dudgeon, created a world peopled by descendants of British explorers who have interbred with the remnants of an ancient oceanic race and now live underwater. However, they have not evolved to breathe underwater and still require oxygen. Frequently, these undersea communities are populated by survivors from Atlantis. This occurs in both *The Scarlet Empire* by David M. Parry (1906), which includes episodes where criminals are fed to kraken, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Maracot Deep* (1928), both of which have survivors of Atlantis living in air-filled caverns deep beneath the

ocean. Both pepper their stories with bizarre undersea creatures, Doyle adding a spiritualist dimension with a strange supernatural being who may be the last remnant of an earlier malign race.

Most recent sea monster stories are little more than variants on earlier material with few moments of originality. "The Rig" by Chris Boyce (*Impulse*, September 1966) depicts a giant sea plant that becomes attached to an oil rig. John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971) is a variant on the *Beowulf* story, with the events told from the viewpoint of Grendel, who is a troll-like monster inhabiting an undersea cavern.

In "The Shark God" (*Unknown*, January 1940), A. E. van Vogt depicts a shark god who takes human form to intervene in the local slaughter of sharks but finds his human shape has its limits. Sharks, in particular the great white shark, was the cause of the return to popularity of the sea monster with the success of Peter Benchley's *Jaws* (1974). There is nothing supernatural in the novel, but the action and suspense provide the same thrills as any sea monster or serpent. Filmmakers and publishers alike pounced on the theme looking for other underwater horrors, resulting in such films as *Tentacles* (1977), *Piranha* (1978), *Barracuda* (1978), *Up from the Depths* (1979), *Monster* (1979), featuring a sea serpent, *Humanoids from the Deep* (1980), *Island Claws* (1980), with giant crabs, and so on.

Benchley himself pulled back on the throttle in *The Deep* (1976), but came back with a vengeance in *Beast* (1991), where the menace is a 100-foot-long giant squid, and again in *White Shark* (1994), later reworked as *Creature* (1998). In the latter, scientific experiments in hybrids produce a monster, which is half-man/half-shark.

Other writers took advantage of the resurgent popularity for sea monsters. There was *Night of the Crabs* from Guy N. Smith (1976); *Sphere* by Michael Crichton (1987), in which scientists investigating a strange artifact at the bottom of the ocean have to combat not only bizarre technology and their own neuroses but also giant squid and monster jellyfish; and *Megalodon* from Robin Brown (1981), featuring the prehistoric ancestor of the great white shark. That monster also appears in *Meg* by Steve Alten (1997) and its sequels, and *Extinct* by Charles Wilson (1997). In *Wurm* (1991) by Matthew Costello, exploration into undersea volcanic vents unleashes a parasitic worm that first devastates New York and, in the sequel *Garden* (1993), the rest of the world. In *Sea Change* (1999), James Powlik returned to a concept similar to Leinster's "Silver Menace," when plankton mutates and grows out of control, threatening to engulf the American seaboard.

Steve Alten's *The Loch* (2005) forms a link between the Sargasso Sea, where the main protagonist has an altercation with a giant squid, and Loch Ness, where he faces an old enemy from his childhood. The Loch Ness Monster is one of the best known of all aquatic monsters, but has seldom been given a serious treatment in fiction, tending to appear mostly in children's books, such as *The Water Horse* by Dick King-Smith (1990) and *The Boggart and*

the Monster by Susan Cooper (1997). Inevitably, Doctor Who became in-volved when the monster began attacking oil rigs in *Doctor Who and the Lochness Monster* by Terrance Dicks (1976), while time travel also features in *The Ultimate Dragon* by Daniel N. Jason (TimeDancer, 1999), set in Scotland's past. John Christopher provided a more serious view of the crea-ture's outlook in "Monster" (*Science Fantasy* #1, 1950), while Leslie Char-teris wrapped it in an enigma in "Fish Story" (*Blue Book*, November 1953). One of the few longer stories is *The Monster of Loch Ness* by Fred and Geoffrey Hoyle (1971), where a scientist tackles other mysteries related to the loch.

The monster has not fared well in films, either, though the first of them, *The Secret of the Loch* (1934), directed by Milton Rosmer, was a reasonable attempt at a serious story. Far worse films include *The Loch Ness Horror* (1981), written and directed by Larry Buchanan, and the gratuitously violent *Beneath Loch Ness* (2001), written and directed by Chuck Comisky. Only the family film *Loch Ness* (1996), directed by John Henderson from a script by John Fusco, makes any attempt at a proper ecological assessment of the creature. Other lake monsters fare little better, although the film *Lake Placid* (1999), directed by Steve Miney from a script by David E. Kelley, featuring a massive crocodile, is effective. Joseph Citro's novel *Dark Twilight* (1991) is a serious treatment of the alleged monster in Lake Champlain.

The ocean depths will long hold their secrets, and authors will continue to invent new monsters or recycle old ones to frighten us. There is one other area in which the sea continues to capture our imagination, and that is when it gives up its dead.

GHOST SHIPS AND OTHER HAUNTINGS

The most famous of all phantom ships is the *Flying Dutchman*, though tellings vary on how the legend came about. The most common version is that a ship with a valuable cargo was returning from the Dutch East Indies to Holland and the Captain, Van der Decken, was determined to make it round the Cape of Good Hope despite the hostile weather. He swore to God and in-voked the Devil and, as a consequence, was cursed to sail forever around the Cape without ever making landfall. There have been many alleged sightings of the ship over the years, always in full sail even when other ships are be-calmed, and it is believed to bring bad luck to those who see her.

The dating of this incident is usually the mid-seventeenth century, but no written account actually naming this legend seems to have survived until 1813. In his poem *Rokeby*, Sir Walter Scott refers to the "Demon Frigate," "harbinger of wreck and woe" (327), and in his notes to the poem specifically names the Flying Dutchman, stating that this a "well-known nautical su-perstition" (389). His note refers to a different and possibly earlier version of

the legend stating that murder and piracy had occurred on the ship and the crew was afflicted by the plague. No port would admit them, and the ship was forced to sail on forever.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge had included a phantom ship in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (*Lyrical Ballads*, 1798) but did not name it. John Leyden refers to the fated ship, though again not by name, in his poem "Scenes of Infancy" (1803) where he states that it was the first ship to start the slave trade, leaving Benin (West Africa), and was cursed with plague. He concludes his vivid portrayal of the ship's fate with:

> The Spectre Ship, in livid glimpsing light,
> Glares baleful on the shuddering watch at night,
> Unblest of God and man:—Till time shall end,
> Its view strange horror to the storm shall lend.

The first to name the captain appears to be John Howison, to whom is attributed the anonymous "Vanderdecken's Message Home" (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, May 1821), which tells how the crew try to get mail back to their loved ones who are now long dead. Washington Irving took the legend to American shores in "The Storm-Ship" (*Bracebridge Hall*, 1822) by having the ship approach the port of New Amsterdam and then continue sailing around Manhattan. Irving adds an interesting feature that when sailors row out to the boat they can never reach it, rather like the end of the rainbow. Doubtless the legend was in Poe's mind when he wrote his story "MS. Found in a Bottle" (*Baltimore Saturday Visiter*, October 19, 1833), in which a stricken ship encounters a vast ghost vessel manned by ancient sailors driven on to some inexorable fate.

The name itself became popularized in Britain through Edward Fitzball's *burletta* or light comic opera, *The Flying Dutchman; or, The Phantom Ship* (*Cumberland's Minor Theatre*, vol. 2, 1829). This was performed nightly at the Adelphi Theatre from December 5, 1826 and then at other London venues for well over a year, and encouraged many imitations throughout the nineteenth century as well as an anonymous penny weekly *The Flying Dutchman; or, The Demon Ship* (Foster & Hextall, 1827?).

The author who produced what most regard as the definitive story was Frederick Marryat in *The Phantom Ship* (1839). He allowed that Vanderdecken might be redeemed by kissing a fragment of the True Cross. Vanderdecken's son, in whose family is just such a fragment, sets off in what becomes a lifetime's quest for his father.

German writers further developed the story, starting with Heinrich Smidt in his poem "Der ewige Segler" ["The Eternal Seafarer"] (*Hammonia*, 1822), where the ship is called *Von Evert*, and culminating with Heinrich Heine, who incorporated a chapter on the legend in his bogus autobiography "Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski" ["From the Memoirs of

Lord Schnabelewopski''] (*Der Salon*, vol. 1, 1834). In Heine's version the captain can only be redeemed by the love of a devoted woman, and he is allowed ashore once every seven years to seek such a woman. Although he marries, he remains restless and returns to the ship, but to show her devotion his wife casts herself into the sea. It was this version that became the source for Richard Wagner's renowned opera *Der fliegende Holländer* (Dresden, January 2, 1843).

Stories about the *Flying Dutchman* appeared throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the captain became symbolic of the accursed wanderer. *The Death Ship* by W. Clark Russell (1888) is an overly long story of a traveler washed overboard who is rescued by the crew of the *Flying Dutchman* and experiences life on board, eventually trying to escape with another rescuee, a young woman. A more positive variant on this was ''By the Light of the Lanterns'' by Pierre MacOrlan (1931), in which the Dutchman, here called Peter Maus, rescues a child and rears him on board, but returns him to land when they are able.

In a neat twist that united two legends, George Griffith has an old sailor recount how he encountered the *Flying Dutchman* in its final days trapped in the weeds of the Sargasso Sea in ''The True Fate of the 'Flying Dutchman' '' (*Pearson's Weekly*, July 21, 1894). In ''The Crew of the 'Flying Dutchman' '' by Henry A. Hering (*Temple Bar*, January 1896) we learn how Vanderdecken finds his crew; while in ''A Primer of Imaginary Geography'' by Brander Matthews (*Scribner's*, December 1894), Vanderdecken takes the narrator on a tour of various lands of legend. The captain remarks that the Wandering Jew is the only person with whom he can now talk over old times!

More recently *The Flying Dutchman* has been parodied in *Flying Dutch* by Tom Holt (Orbit, 1991), and it is featured in the series for young adults by Brian Jacques that started with *Castaways of the Flying Dutchman* (2001). Nicholas Monsarrat used the legend for his planned series *The Master Mariner*, where, following an act of cowardice, a sailor is cursed to travel the seas till the end of time. Alas, Monsarrat died with only the first book, *Running Proud* (1978), completed. Other cursed ships in fiction will be found in ''The Brute'' by Joseph Conrad (*Daily Chronicle*, December 5, 1906) and *The Jonah Watch* by Jack Cady (1981).

Other similar tales of ghost ships include ''The Ship That Saw a Ghost'' by Frank Norris (*Overland Monthly*, December 1902) and *The Ghost Pirates* by William Hope Hodgson (1909), one of the best of all phantom ship stories, in which Hodgson speculates that such ships exist on another plane of existence, like another dimension, which he calls a ''mist-world.'' Other ghostly pirates, so memorably portrayed in the film *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003), directed by Gore Verbinski, will be found in *On Stranger Tides* by Tim Powers (1987).

Other ships have developed legends about them even more memorable than the *Flying Dutchman*. This includes the *Mary Celeste*, which was found floating unmanned in the Atlantic in 1872 but with everything on board

indicating that the boat had only recently and hurriedly been abandoned. The mystery has never been adequately resolved. Much of the legend we know was established by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in "J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement" (*Cornhill*, January 1884), which many readers believed to be true. Alfred Noyes reworked the basic story in "The Log of the *Evening Star*" (*Walking Shadows*, 1918), in which he proposes a supernatural solution. Howard Pease switched the locale to the Pacific but used the same idea in *The Ship without a Crew* (1934), while more recently Brian Freemantle reassessed all the facts and came up with his own solution, in fictional form, in *The Mary Celeste* (1980) under the alias John Maxwell.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German U-boat in 1915 caused an outcry at the time and prompted several authors to write tales of ghostly revenge. In "The Lusitania Waits" (*New York Tribune*, December 31, 1916), Alfred Noyes has the ghostly victims of the ship take their revenge on a U-boat. F. Britten Austin's "From the Depths" (*Strand*, February 1920) is on similar lines. In "The Murdered Ships" (*Premier Magazine*, June 1918), James Francis Dwyer has the ghost of the *Lusitania* forever reliving its final voyage.

The *Titanic* is far and above the most famous of all lost ships. Most fiction about her tends to be either romantic, mystery, or science fiction. Some supernatural stories focus on the premonitions some of the travelers had beforehand, which caused them to avoid the journey. There is are also the remarkable cases of the stories *Futility* by Morgan Robertson (1898) and "The White Ghost of Disaster" by Mayn Clew Garnett (*Popular Magazine*, May 1912), both of which relate incidents which parallel the *Titanic* disaster in many ways. The last story appeared in print just a few days before the *Titanic* set sail. One of the better supernatural novels is *Something's Alive on the Titanic* by Robert J. Serling (1990), in which something unnatural is protecting the wreck and killing any who venture near. Perhaps the most striking novel to date is *Latitudes of Melt* by Joan Clark (2002), which, in its tale of the discovery of a young child on an ice-flow by a Newfoundland fisherman who is raised as their own and turns out to be an infant survivor of the *Titanic*, has a mythic quality that links it to the legends of sea-people.

The motif of the *Flying Dutchman* is also an allegory of that eternal quest through life seeking salvation, and the sea is an ideal symbol for both life and death. It was this concept of the eternal sea that permeated Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and Conrad Aiken used the same imagery in "Mr. Arcularis" (*Harper's*, March 1931), in which the eponymous victim undergoes an operation and, while under the anesthetic, dreams of a strange sea voyage. Compulsive sea voyages between life and death occur in C. S. Lewis's Narnia book *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952) and E. H. Visiak's *Medusa* (1929) and its spiritual companion, "The Shadow" (*Crimes, Creeps and Thrills*, 1936).

That the sea gives up its dead is hauntingly depicted in several stories and novels. Most depict weed-covered skeletons, but a few stories show more

originality. Often the stories are about the drowned seeking revenge, as in "On the Elevator" by Joseph Payne Brennan (*Weird Tales*, July 1953), and effectively depicted in John Carpenter's film *The Fog* (1980). In "Out of the Sea" (*Isles of Sunset*, 1904), A. C. Benson has a goat-like creature emerge from the sea as the spirit of a murdered sailor on a local wreck. E. F. Benson turns the idea on its head in "The Outcast" (*Hutchinson's Magazine*, April 1922) and has the sea reject the body of a woman who dies at sea, because her body contains the spirit of a former suicide. "Ringing the Changes" by Robert Aickman (*The Third Ghost Book*, ed. Cynthia Asquith, 1955) tells how every year a small seaside resort rings its bells sufficient to raise the dead. These come both from the land and from the sea, and the shoreline is depicted by Aickman as a division between life and death.

Lakes may also give up their dead. Lakes are frequently bewitched or cursed as in Arthur Machen's "The Children of the Pool" (1936), H. Russell Wakefield's "Woe Water" (*Weird Tales*, July 1950), Ian Watson's "Evil Water" (*F&SF*, March 1987), and Matthew Costello's novel *Beneath Still Waters* (1989). L.T.C. Rolt brought several threads together in "Bosworth Summit Pound" (*Sleep No More*, 1948), in which the ghost of a murdered gipsy woman acts as a siren to lure men to their deaths in an eerie stretch of an old canal.

The ancients envisaged heaven or the other world as being beyond the sea, at the Isles of the Blessed. For many the sea remains symbolic of the barrier between life and death and beneath the sea lies all that thwarts or tempts us through life. It has a lure and fascination that we cannot deny and will both tempt and threaten us for as long as the human race survives.

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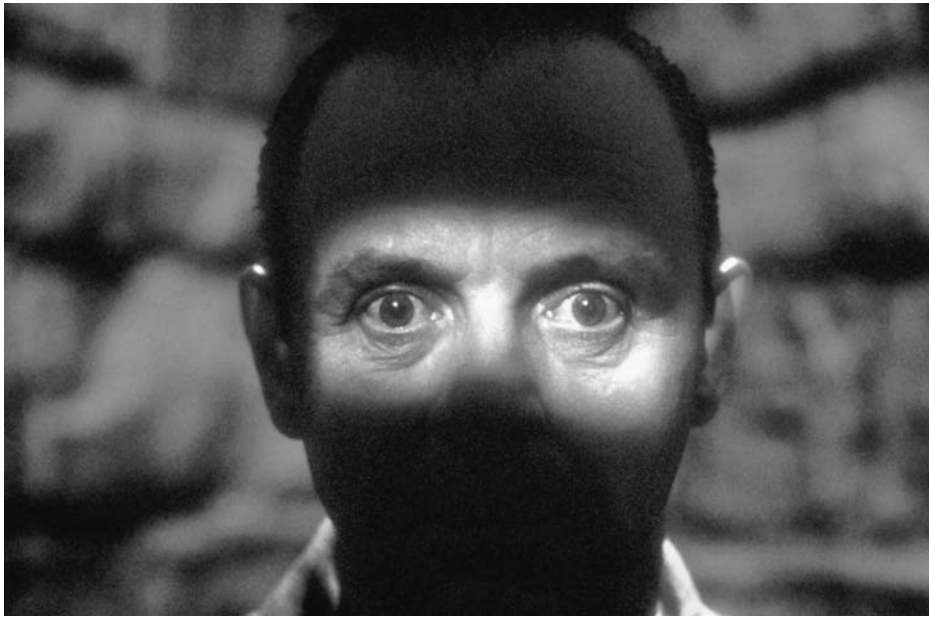
Courtesy of Photofest.

The Serial Killer

by Hank Wagner

INTRODUCTION

There is a clever little throwaway line in the Tim Burton film *The Addams Family* (1994) that is as chilling as it is humorous. Young Wednesday Addams, portrayed by Christina Ricci, is out trick or treating for Halloween. When questioned by an adult puzzled by her seeming lack of a costume, Wednesday coolly replies, "I'm dressed as a homicidal maniac, we look like everyone else."

Substitute "serial killer" for "homicidal maniac" and you capture the essence of the public's fascination with serial killers, contrasting the mundane aspects of these killers with their more outré characteristics: we fear them because they don't stand out, because they can be a lover, a friend, the guy with a cast on his arm asking for our help, someone we hire to entertain our children, a doctor, even someone prominent in our communities.

Mass murderers have always intrigued the public; they form the basis of numerous fairy tales and have provided fodder for the mass media since its

infancy. Often saddled with catchy nicknames, they appeal to our basest, most prurient instincts, and our love for the sensational and the grim. In fact, serial killers are so much a part of modern pop culture that they even provide the inspiration for the lyrics of many modern songs, as attested by Kurt Weil's "Die Morität von Mackie Messer" (adapted by Louis Armstrong as "Mack the Knife," which later became a pop hit for Bobby Darin), the Doors's "Riders on the Storm" and "The End," The Rolling Stones's "Midnight Rambler," Warren Zevon's "Excitable Boy," Meat Loaf's "Bat out of Hell," and The Talking Heads's "Psycho Killer."

How much a part of our everyday consciousness have they become? Well, one indication is that a recent Google search of the words "serial killer" resulted in more than twenty million hits. Another is the presence of a serial killer storyline on the soap opera "Days of Our Lives" in 2003 and 2004. According to soapcentral.com, the reasons for adopting this story arc were simple and pragmatic: the daytime drama's head writer, James E. Reilly, was said to have pitched the idea of a serial killer storyline "as a way to accomplish two distinct goals—to devise an intriguing storyline to generate interest in the show and raise the ratings and to help trim the cast in an attempt to cut the show's operating budget."

Even though it did not have a formal label at the time, the general concept of a "serial killer" was first widely introduced in popular culture in 1960, with the premiere of Alfred Hitchcock's film adaptation of Robert Bloch's 1959 novel, *Psycho*. That film, with its infamous shower scene, told the story of a strange young man named Norman Bates, a troubled soul who dressed up as his mother to kill women to whom he was attracted sexually. The image of a sexual deviant who could only express his frustrations through violent acts became part of the cultural zeitgeist; over the ensuing decades, serial killers came to hold a special fascination for the general public, inspiring myriad works of nonfiction, novels, short stories, comic books, films, and even trading cards. The prominence of these killers in public consciousness reached a pinnacle in the latter part of the twentieth century with the rise of the fictional Dr. Hannibal Lecter (featured in Thomas Harris's novels, and portrayed by Sir Anthony Hopkins on the silver screen) to virtual superstardom. Like Frankenstein's Monster, Dracula, the Wolfman, and the Mummy, Hannibal the Cannibal has become a cultural icon, one that will be sending shivers down the spines of generations yet to come. Unlike the other monsters mentioned, however, the good doctor is a bit scarier for being all the more plausible a danger.

For all their recent notoriety, it's probable that serial killers have always been with us; as long as people have been living in groups, it's likely that serial killers have preyed on the fellow cave people, villagers, or city dwellers. Perhaps though, it's only the rise of the city, with an attendant rise in anonymity among citizens, that's allowed them to operate with greater ease. So maybe, just maybe, serial killers, who may have indeed inspired the fantastic legends of the werewolf or the vampire, are only finally being appreciated for

what they truly are: damaged human beings who find release by killing and mutilating other human beings.

DEFINITIONS

The term "serial killer," first coined in the 1970s, entered the common parlance over the course of that decade, thanks to the prominence of the term in media coverage of such celebrated killers as Ted Bundy, David Berkowitz (a.k.a. "Son of Sam"), and others. The term allows criminologists to distinguish between three broad types of killers—the serial killer, the mass murderer, and the spree killer.

> A *serial killer* is someone who commits three or more murders over an extended period of time.
>
> A *mass murderer* is an individual who kills three or more people in a single event and in one location.
>
> A *spree killer* commits multiple murders in different locations over a period of time that may last from a few hours to a few days.

A key factor in distinguishing these types of killers from one another is their actions in between their crimes. The serial killer blends into the woodwork, adopting what some have labeled a "a mask of sanity." Mass murderers often commit suicide after their outbursts; those who are captured often claim they

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What Bloch had to say in *Psycho* influenced the whole art of horror writing. Back onto dusty shelves went most of the vampires, the werewolves, and other such beasties of the Victorian novelists. To front and centre came a probing of people's minds and an awareness of the frightening things to be found lurking there. Never mind the crumbling old castle, the mad scientist, the ancient, horrid gods we wrote about in *Weird Tales* and other grand old magazines. Those were good stories for their time and will always be fun to re-read or collect; of course they will! But take a good look now at your next-door neighbor who goes to an office every day or sells insurance or, in this case, runs a motel haunted by memories of an overpowering mother.

With this novel Robert Bloch took us from then to now in one big, scary leap, raising the hair of his readers while they eagerly turned the pages of what was scaring them, and showing writers how to handle a new kind of horror story.

Almost every present-day writer of horror has in one way or another been influenced by *Psycho.* Call it a milestone in horror fiction, written by one of the greats. That's what it is and what he is.

—*Hugh B. Cave on Robert Bloch's* Psycho

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cannot remember their actions. Spree killers do not revert to normal behavior in between slayings; they tend to flare up, then burn out.

There is, of course, an almost desperate need to understand what creates a killer, arising from the desire both to treat and, more importantly, predict/ prevent such deviant behavior. Are serial killers born that way, or are they a product of their environment? What compels them to kill? Although some maintain that serial killers will often manifest certain childhood behaviors— fire starting, cruelty to animals, and bedwetting—this idea has recently come under some fire (the TV psychologist Dr. Phil was recently lambasted for telling one of his TV patients that her son, who exhibited these behaviors, was on the path to becoming a serial killer). Still, the search for relevant characteristics and traits continues.

A 1984 study of thirty-six serial killers led the professionals conducting the research to publish a paper listing ten general traits associated with serial killers. Please note the deliberate use of the words like "most," "tend," and "generally" below—like any rules, there are always exceptions. Serial killers don't necessarily exhibit all of these traits, and people who exhibit these traits are not necessarily serial killers.

- Most are single white males.
- They tend to be smart.
- They tend to do poorly in school.
- Most have dysfunctional backgrounds.
- Many display a long history of psychiatric problems.
- Many are the victims of abuse—mental, physical, and sexual.
- They tend to have a great deal of trouble with male authority figures.
- They manifest psychiatric problems at an early age.
- They often feel suicidal as teenagers.
- They display a deep interest in deviant sexuality.

How prevalent is this behavior? How many serial killers are active at any given time? In the United States, estimates have ranged from 35 to 500. The lower figure was posited by the FBI in the 1980s and is probably the most realistic. This means that at any given moment in the United States, around thirty-five serial killers have committed at least one murder without being apprehended or stopped by other means, such as suicide or a natural death.

Statistics show that serial killers are more prevalent in developed Western nations, but this could be a function of more advanced detection techniques, a more sophisticated mass media, or the level of government censorship in any given region. Some have suggested that serial killings are distinctly American phenomena—true, they seem to be more prevalent in the United States, but they have surfaced in all parts of the world.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SERIAL KILLING

How far back does serial killing go? Probably to the dawn of mankind. But relatively few names register in our consciousness today. But oh, those that do! Below is a timeline of serial killing, beginning with ancient Rome and continuing through today.

First Century C.E.

Apparently a born psychopath, Nero displayed disturbing tendencies from a young age. Historians claim that he hunted human prey even as a boy, attacking pedestrians on the street and disposing of their bodies in the sewer system. He only grew worse as he matured, biting and ripping off the genitals of men and women tied to stakes. Among his more heinous acts: tearing out the womb of his mother Agrippina.

Fifteenth Century

One of the most famous serial killers of all time, Gilles de Rais, the original Bluebeard, was executed in 1440 for the torture and murder of 140 children.

Overshadowing de Rais, however, is Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia, more commonly known as Dracula (literally, son of Dracul, Romanian for Dragon). He was also known as Vlad the Impaler, due to reports of his habit of impaling his enemies on greased, pointed poles, relying on gravity to insure a slow painful death for those who opposed him.

Sixteenth Century

It is believed that Erzbet Bathory, also known as the "Blood Countess," was responsible for as many as 650 murders. Most of her victims were peasants whom she lured to her castle under false pretenses. Once inside, the girls were subjected to torture. It is reported that the Countess was fond of bathing in the blood of virgins, believing that it preserved her youth.

Seventeenth Century

Thomas Sherwood and Elizabeth Evans, also known as "Country Tom" and "Canterbury Bess," respectively, prowled the streets of London in search of their prey. Evans would lure men to a remote location where Tom would be waiting. These men were then murdered and stripped of all their possessions. They were believed to have been responsible for the deaths of at least five men. The dastardly duo was eventually apprehended, meeting their demise on the Newgate gallows.

Eighteenth Century

The murderess known as "La Tofina" was active in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Operating in Naples, Italy, until well into her sixties, she would dispatch her victims with a specially brewed potion containing arsenic. After she was captured, she confessed to having committed 600 murders.

There is some dispute as to whether the legendary Sweeney Todd actually existed. One account claimed this mass killer was born in the slums of London in 1756. Todd acquired two skills as a youth. As a teenager, he was apprenticed to a cutler, during which time he became adept at handling and sharpening razors. Imprisoned after being accused of petty theft, he became a barber's assistant. At nineteen, he opened a barber shop on Fleet Street. Over the next quarter-century, Todd reportedly killed 160 patrons. Afterward, he butchered their bodies; his accomplice, Margery Lovett, used the body parts as a basic ingredient in the meat pies she sold in her bakeshop.

Nineteenth Century

Making a living as "resurrection men," or grave robbers, early in their careers, William Burke and William Hare hit on an easier method of obtaining corpses which they could sell to doctors and medical students looking for specimens to dissect and study—instead of digging them up, they'd make their own by poisoning Hare's lodgers.

A similar modus operandi was used by the Bender family of Labette County, Kansas. Around 1870, the Benders would murder visitors to their frontier inn, strip their corpses, and throw the bodies into their cellar. The Benders' criminal activity was halted in 1873, when a posse made up of local residents tracked them down and dealt them some lethal frontier justice. These events are mentioned in the memoirs of Laura Ingalls Wilder, who wrote that her father was one of the men who brought the Benders down.

Another American killer, the infamous Herman Mudgett, a.k.a. Dr. H. H. Holmes, was active in Chicago during the time of the 1893 World's Fair. He confessed to having committed more than two dozen murders, but many think he was responsible for several hundred deaths.

Of course, the most famous serial killer of the nineteenth century, and, perhaps, of all time has to be Jack the Ripper, a.k.a. Leather Apron, a.k.a. Saucy Jack. Active during August through November 1888, the Ripper slashed and killed five women (all prostitutes), his heinous acts causing a city-wide panic. Not content to let the killings convey his message, the killer also wrote letters to a local news agency and to a local vigilance committee, ending one missive with the chilling send-off "From Hell." After taking his final victim, Mary Kelly, the Ripper was never heard from again.

The Ripper, however, was not to be forgotten. Since 1888, his activities and identity have provided fodder for hundreds of works of fiction and nonfiction. The most famous recent example of Ripper-mania is Patricia Cornwell's 2002 exposé, *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper, Case Closed.*

Twentieth Century

While other centuries have their notable serial killers, conditions in the twentieth century seem to have conspired to create a veritable explosion of aberrant behavior. Whether that is because modern conditions create more serial killers or because the media have made the public more aware of their presence in general is hard to say; the answer probably lies in a middle ground. Here is a brief list of some of the more infamous characters to surface:

Albert Fish (1870–1936). No one knows for sure how many victims fell prey to Fish, but experts feel sure he molested several hundred and killed at least sixteen. He was captured in 1934, when he wrote a letter to the mother of one of his victims. In custody, Fish opened up to Dr. Frederic Wertham (author of *Seduction of the Innocent*, the book that almost single-handedly destroyed the comic-book industry), revealing a personal history so horrifying that it shook even the good doctor, who had a wealth of experience dealing with such types.

Ed Gein (1906–1984). Warped by the fanaticism of his intensely religious mother, Ed found himself an ''orphan'' at the age of thirty-nine after she died. Living alone in an isolated Wisconsin farmhouse, Gein slipped into madness, carrying out abominable acts of depravity in the privacy of his home. When the local police arrived at his doorstep in November 1957 to question him in relation to a missing person's case, they found the corpse of the woman they sought, hanging from her heels in the summer kitchen behind his house. Exploring the property further, the authorities discovered a shocking museum of horrors: among other equally disturbing finds, they came upon chairs upholstered in human flesh, a boxful of noses, a shoe box containing preserved female genitalia, and the faces of nine women stuffed and mounted on a wall. Being more a ghoul/grave robber than a serial killer, Gein nevertheless admitted to killing two women. His exploits provided inspiration for Robert Bloch's seminal serial killer novel, *Psycho*, which was later adapted for a film by Alfred Hitchcock.

Charles Manson. Manson is unique among serial killers in that he was able to commit murder by proxy, sending his acolytes out into the night to kill to provoke the race war he felt sure was coming. The case was written up by prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi in his famous book *Helter Skelter* (1974).

Ted Bundy (1946–1989). Perhaps one of the most famous serial killers of modern times, Bundy began killing young women after dropping out of law school in 1973. Feigning an injury such as a broken arm, Bundy would lure his victims to his car under the pretense of needing their assistance. A sadist and

necrophile who confessed to killing at least 30 women, he may actually have murdered 100 or more. Bundy was electrocuted on the morning of January 24, 1989.

Aileen Wuornos (1956–2002). Although many think she was the first female serial killer in America, Wuornos had predecessors. Wuornos was unique in that she aggressively attacked total strangers, as women nearly always kill someone with whom they already have a relationship. A prostitute, Wuornos would kill men seeking her favors; she eventually confessed to killing seven men, insisting all the murders were in self-defense. Wuornos was executed in 2002. Her story was made into a movie called *Monster*, starring Charlize Theron.

Jeffrey Dahmer (1960–1994). In 1991, the Milwaukee police answered a 911 call from a couple of black teenaged girls who were concerned about a young Asian boy they had seen running naked in the street. Arriving on the scene, the police could get no answers from the boy, who was incoherent; rather than relying on him to determine what was going on, they listened to an older white man who convinced them that the boy was nineteen and had fled his apartment during a lover's spat. The police accepted the man's story and left the boy with the man. That event has been recounted numerous times since, as people struggle to understand how Jeffrey Dahmer could have gotten away with subsequently strangling that boy and consuming parts of his body. Unbelievably, Dahmer had been killing boys in his Milwaukee home for years, keeping some body parts to eat and others as trophies. Dahmer was eventually charged with fifteen counts of murder and sentenced to fifteen life terms. Dahmer was murdered by an inmate two years into his prison term.

The list of twentieth-century American serial killers also includes Earle Leonard Nelson (1897–1928), Harvey Murray Glatman (1928–1959), John Wayne Gacy (1942–1994), Gary Heidnik (1943–1999), Henry Lee Lucas (and Ottis Toole), Edmund Emil Kemper III, Wayne Williams, and Joel Rifkin. Some were known initially by colorful nicknames, such as the Lipstick Killer (William Hierens), the Green River Killer (Gary Leon Ridgway), The Boston Strangler (Albert DeSalvo), the Night Stalker (Richard Ramirez), and the Son of Sam or .44-caliber killer (David Berkowitz). And those are the killers who were captured; others, like California's Zodiac Killer, are presumably still at large.

Twenty-first Century

The current century isn't even a decade old as of this writing, yet it has seen the capture of three of the more unusual killers in recent memory.

The first is the Beltway Sniper, John Muhammad who, traveling in a specially modified Chevrolet Caprice, terrorized the American capital and the surrounding area during the fall of 2002. Originally thought by profilers to be a white loner, Muhammad, the killer of at least fourteen people, turned out to be a black man who was accompanied by a young man named Lee Malvo.

On trial, both were found guilty of murder. In March 2004, Muhammad was sentenced to death, while Malvo received a sentence of life imprisonment. Muhammad reportedly plans to appeal his sentence.

The second was the German killer known as Armin M. who posted an ad on the Internet that read: ''Wanted: Well-built man for slaughter.'' Astoundingly, someone answered the ad. Together, the two men dined on the respondent's privates. Later, M. stabbed him to death, carved him up, and stored parts of him in a freezer for later consumption. Said M. of the experience of dining with his victim, ''It felt like communion.'' Only quick action by the German police prevented M. from claiming additional victims (he was caught after placing another ad), thus becoming a bona fide serial killer.

The third was Denis Rader, the self-dubbed BTK (for bind, torture, kill) killer, who terrorized Wichita, Kansas, for decades. Perversely proud of his deeds, Rader has readily confessed to ten killings. A careful planner who patiently stalked his victims before striking, Rader, whose bland façade makes him all the more frightening, blamed his demented behavior on an evil spirit he called Rex. Rader derived sick pleasure from killing people in front of their families and photographing victims' corpses in S&M poses.

It is evident from the cases described above that the shocking nature of this phenomenon is one key element in the elevation of serial killer from oddity to horror icon. Besides the mass media, another key element in keeping serial killers in the public eye is the development of an entire category of books on

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Some Remarks by Real and Fictional Serial Killers

''Mary started to scream, and then the curtains parted further and a hand appeared, holding a butcher's knife. It was the knife that, a moment later, cut off her scream.

   And her head.''

—*Robert Bloch,* Psycho

''For Heaven's sake catch me before I kill more. I cannot control myself.''
—*William Hierens, a.k.a. The Lipstick Killer*

''Keep this letter back till I do a bit more work, then give it out straight. My knife's so nice and sharp I want to go to work right away if I get a chance. Good luck. Yours truly, Jack the Ripper.''
—*From a letter purportedly written by Jack the Ripper to police*

''A census taker tried to quantify me once. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a big Amarone. Go back to school, little Starling.''
—*Hannibal Lecter, from* The Silence of the Lambs

the subject, books written by journalists like Anne Rule about particular cases (among them *Green River, Running Red* [2004] and *The Stranger Beside Me* [2000]), or books written by professionals like former FBI agents like Robert K. Ressler, who wrote about his career spent trying to understand and track down killers (*Whoever Fights Monsters, I Have Lived in the Monster, Justice Is Served*). Indeed, there are even encyclopedias on the subject, among them *The Serial Killer Files* (2004) by Harold Schecter and *The Encyclopedia of Serial Killers* (2000) by Michael Newton. Intended to demystify the notion of serial killing, they also work against that notion, making these killers even more intriguing and fascinating to the general public.

FICTIONAL SERIAL KILLERS

Their exploits are the stuff of legend, their colorful nicknames a tabloid editor's dream come true. Thus, it is natural that serial killers would also inspire works of fiction, whether it be fairy tales, short stories, novels, films, or even television shows. Throughout history, and especially in modern times, serial killers have inspired numerous works of terror, suspense, and dread, building to the point where a member of their fictional ranks, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, has risen to icon status; his global recognition factor today certainly rivals that of other, more innocent pop icons such as Sherlock Holmes, Superman, and Mickey Mouse.

The tale of Bluebeard is perhaps one of the earliest recorded tales of a serial murderer. Originally included by Frenchman Charles Perrault in his famous collection *Contes du temps passé* (Tales of Past Times), known in English as *Mother Goose's Tales*, the story involves a wealthy gentleman who marries a young woman. He brings the woman to live with him at one of his country estates, allowing her access to all the rooms in the castle except one, which he specifically forbids her to enter. Curious, his young bride takes advantage of Bluebeard's absence to explore the room. Upon entering, she sees that the room contains the corpses of several women, all of whom Bluebeard had in turn married and murdered.

The Brothers Grimm also recorded tales of serial killers. In "The Robber Bridegroom," a young woman, hiding in her paramour's home, is shocked to witness the killing and consumption of a young woman by her boyfriend and his pals. In "Fitcher's Feathered Bird," a tale reminiscent of Bluebeard, a new bride enters a forbidden room and finds a vat filled with the dismembered remains of several human beings.

One need not look too deep to support the notion that the villains of fairy tales are actually serial killers. For example, consider the witch in "Hansel and Gretel," an old woman who is both a kidnapper and a cannibal. Even "Little Red Riding Hood" can be thought to be about a serial killer, albeit one suffering from lycanthropy, defined by the *American Heritage College*

Dictionary as "the magical ability to assume the form and characteristics of a wolf." Some experts believe that the degradations of some deranged individual may have given this tale its grisly subtext.

Serial killers began appearing more frequently in fiction as the nineteenth century drew to a close. A case could be made that, if looked at in a certain way, Bram Stoker's horror novel *Dracula* (1897) could also be about serial killing. If one ignores the vampirism angle, Dracula certainly fits the profile of a serial killer, and Van Helsing and his associates could be viewed as early profilers, professionals relying on a combination of modern science and their powers of observation and intuition to bring a killer to justice.

Richard Connell wrote about an exotic type of serial killer in his short story "The Most Dangerous Game" (1924). There, crazed Russian General Zaroff, a man who has hunted every kind of wild game there is to hunt, has resorted to hunting human prey, which he captures by luring ships to their doom on the rocks which surround his private island.

In his noir masterpiece *The Killer Inside Me* (1952), Jim Thompson takes readers inside the head of a serial killer. The story is narrated by small-town sheriff Lou Ford. Seemingly normal to outward appearances, Lou suffers from what he calls "the sickness," a penchant for killing people that first manifested itself in adolescence. Lou is drawn into a plot to rid the town of a prostitute with the potential to embarrass one of his town's leading families. After taking care of the problem at hand, Lou falls under suspicion, forcing him to eliminate an ever-growing number of human loose ends—including several people he claims to love. The genius of Thompson's classic noir novel is that he manages to describe the truly vicious murders and all the careful premeditation that goes into them—narrated in Lou's wonderfully deadpan voice—and yet still has you feeling for the man.

In 1954 William March published his disturbing novel *The Bad Seed*, the story of a doting mother who slowly comes to realize that her beautiful eight-year-old daughter Rhoda is a ruthless killer. The novel was adapted into a play and also into a memorable 1956 movie starring Patty McCormack as Rhoda. As an adult, McCormack starred in two features written and directed by mystery writer Max Allan Collins, which flipped the premise of *The Bad Seed*; instead of a mother realizing her child was evil, *Mommy* (1995) and *Mommy II: Mommy's Day* (1997) featured a child who discovers that her mother has been killing all those who she feels have wronged her baby.

Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1955) offers an interesting take on Southern manners and serial killers. The story begins with a combative Southern family embarking on a vacation trip to Florida against the wishes of an old woman in their midst, their grandmother. The woman is reluctant to travel to the Sunshine state because she has read about a crazed killer by the name of the Misfit; on the run from the law, the killer was last seen heading toward Florida. Decked out in her finest clothes for the sole purpose of being recognized as a lady in case someone sees her dead on

the highway, the grandmother is forced to endure her family's antics while on the road. Stranded after the car is involved in an accident, the group is accosted by three men who arrive on the scene in their own vehicle. When the men exit their car, the grandmother suddenly realizes she is in the presence of the Misfit, who reveals himself to be quite amiable and polite despite the fact that he has just casually ordered his cronies to escort the rest of her family off into the woods to kill them. The grandmother and the Misfit engage in a strange, protracted conversation. Suddenly, the old woman has an epiphany; she reaches out to him and remarks, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children." The Misfit, who is obviously affected, shoots her three times.

One of the great crime novels of the twentieth century, Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), is a warped but highly entertaining example of a bildungsroman. It tells the story of a young man, Tom Ripley, whose love of the good life leads to murder. The novel begins as Ripley, benefiting from a case of mistaken identity, is asked by the wealthy Herbert Greenleaf to find Greenleaf's son, Dickie, in Italy, and convince him to return home (Dickie is enjoying a sybaritic existence there with his girlfriend). Tom agrees and allows Greenleaf to sponsor his trip to Italy. There, Tom makes contact with Dickie, who takes him under his wing. He becomes comfortable living in this alternate reality, and soon finds that his passion for a lifestyle of wealth and sophistication transcends moral compunction. When Tom cannot win Dickie over, he kills him and assumes his identity. Highsmith brings this sympathetic sociopath to vivid life; Tom Ripley seduces readers into empathizing with him even as his actions defy all moral standards.

Robert Bloch explored the dark recesses of the psyche in three of his novels, *The Scarf*, *American Gothic*, and, most famously, *Psycho*. *The Scarf* (1947) was Bloch's first novel. The story is narrated by a young man turned into a serial strangler by a childhood trauma. It begins with the eerie lines: "Fetish? You name it. All I know is that I've always had to have it with me..." Published in 1959, *Psycho* was later made into a movie by Alfred Hitchcock. The serial killer was hardly new ground for Hitchcock, having directed *The Lodger* in 1927 and *Shadow of a Doubt* in 1943. Although he made some changes to adapt Bloch's book to the screen, he kept its basic plot intact: Marian Crane steals money from her boss and runs away to be with her boyfriend. She ends up in a small rundown motel run by the shy but noticeably odd Norman Bates. That evening, Marian is brutally slaughtered in her hotel shower by what appears to be an older woman wielding a knife. In one of the biggest, most stunning twists in literary and cinematic history, the "woman" is later revealed to be Norman, who, sexually aroused by Marian, dressed in his deceased mother's clothing and took on her warped personality.

American Gothic (1974) is Bloch's take on the activities of H. H. Holmes in Chicago circa 1890–1893. As is detailed in Erik Larson's excellent 2004

book *The Devil in the White City*, even as the Chicago World's Fair site was being built, Holmes was building "The World's Fair Hotel," a personal charnel house containing a dissection table, walk-in vault, greased wooden chute, gas chamber, and a 3,000-degree crematorium. No one can be sure, but some estimate that Holmes did away with upwards of 200 unfortunate souls. The main character of Bloch's novel, the handsome G. Gordon Gregg, is a doctor, pharmacist, hotel entrepreneur, ruthless thief, and killer. Like Holmes, Gregg dispatches dozens of victims in his house of horrors.

A murder mystery set in New York City, Lawrence Sanders's *The First Deadly Sin* (1973) focuses on killer Daniel Blank. Obsessive, orderly, and cold, Blank is driven to commit several horrendous murders on Manhattan's upper East side. Searching for Blank is retired police officer Edward X. Delaney (known as "Old Iron Balls" in his old precinct). As obsessive in his way as the man he is pursuing, Delaney is not above using questionable tactics to solve the crime. Delaney would go on to appear in Sanders's *The Second Deadly Sin* (1973), *The Third Deadly Sin* (1981), *and The Fourth Deadly Sin* (1985).

Written in 1978, Shane Stevens's groundbreaking *By Reason of Insanity* preceded *Red Dragon* by a few years, but many of the elements are similar, particularly the theory that serial killers are made, not born. Detailing a murderous rampage of a brilliant serial killer (the level of violence portrayed was uncommon at that time), the novel portrays him as more foxy, less a superman than someone like Hannibal Lecter. The killer's chief nemesis is a savvy journalist who gets inside his opponent's head as authorities race from one part of the country to another trying to apprehend the madman, always seemingly one step behind. Stevens ratchets up the tension with every scene, building toward a truly horrific climax, setting a tone in his prose that almost feels as if he is a journalist writing a book about the crimes a few years later, à la *The Executioner's Song* or *In Cold Blood*. Along the way, readers are exposed to the limitations of local law enforcement, wildly ambitious politicians, and national opinion makers out to add to their reputations; in addition to taking on the nature versus nurture argument, Stevens also presents all sides of the capital punishment issue.

One of the scariest serial killers in modern literature made his first appearance in Stephen King's 1979 thriller, *The Dead Zone*. The novel tells the tragic story of everyman Johnny Smith who, awakening from a lengthy coma, discovers that he has developed psychic powers that allow him to receive impressions through touch, and sometimes to glimpse the future. Asked by the Castle Rock, Maine, police to assist them in tracking down the serial killer who has been terrorizing their small town, Johnny continually receives the feeling that the killer thinks he is "slick." Johnny eventually realizes the killer is Frank Dodd, a Castle Rock policeman who commits suicide before he can be apprehended. Frank, it turns out, wore a slick yellow poncho each time he killed.

Ramsey Campbell has written many novels, both supernatural and nonsupernatural. They include *The Face That Must Die* (issued in a heavily edited version in 1979 and in a restored edition in 1983), the story of a homophobic serial killer, told largely from the killer's point of view. A more sympathetic serial murderer appears in the later novel *The Count of Eleven* (1991), which displays Campbell's gift for word play. Campbell has been quoted as saying that the novel is disturbing "because it doesn't stop being funny when you think it should."

A riveting exploration of lycanthropy and insanity, Thomas Tessier's *The Nightwalker* (1979) has several things going for it, among them the author's lucid prose, expert plotting, and a remarkable evocation of the city of London. The novel tells the story of American expatriate Bobby Ives, an aimless Vietnam veteran living in London with his girlfriend. The extremely volatile Ives is obsessed with two strange events in his past: the fact that he was declared dead in Vietnam via administrative error, and the time he experienced a vivid waking dream, in which he became a zombie.

Ives finds himself becoming more susceptible to uncontrolled rage; he also experiences quasi-fugue states where he lets that rage overwhelm him. In the midst of such a fugue state, he pushes his girlfriend into the path of an oncoming bus, killing her. Shortly after that "accident," he stalks and attacks a man in Hyde Park, tearing his victim's throat out. At first, he revels in the changes that occur. Then, realizing that he is swiftly losing control, he seeks help from a clairvoyant who seems to have insight into his condition. She initially refuses, and his rampages continue. Eventually, she relents, and tries to help him by imprisoning him. Her efforts prove unsuccessful, as he escapes confinement. Later, she is forced to kill him with a silver knife.

The Nightwalker is an effective and disturbing exploration of one man's descent into madness, exploring the chaos that results when a troubled individual gives in to his inner rage. Whether viewed as a terrifying novel of the supernatural or as a gripping psychological study, *The Nightwalker*, to paraphrase Stephen King's words in praise of the book (see *Danse Macabre*), is perhaps the finest werewolf novel of the past forty years.

Tessier would follow another man's descent into depravity with his 1986 novel *Finishing Touches*. It only takes a few pages for readers to realize they are in the hands of the master, as Tessier quickly and expertly establishes his characters and milieu. After completing his medical education, Dr. Tom Sutherland, an American in London, decides to spend some time in Europe before embarking on his career. At a major crossroads in his life, the twenty-eight-year-old Sutherland is unsure of himself as he embarks in a new direction. While in London, Sutherland meets the enigmatic Roger Nordhagen, a plastic surgeon who sees himself as the man who puts the "finishing touches" on his patients. Intrigued by the strange old man, Sutherland allows Nordhagen to show him a hidden London. His education is furthered by the lovely and dangerous Lina Ravachol, Nordhagen's assistant. Together, Nordhagen

and Ravachol provide some unique and decidedly disturbing "finishing touches" to Sutherland's personality and psyche, ultimately transforming him into someone who can kill with impunity.

Jack Ketchum exploits a plot similar to the one that drives the classic horror films *The Hills Have Eyes* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in his groundbreaking work of horror, *Off Season* (1981). Accompanied by some friends, Carla, a book editor from Manhattan, travels to an isolated cabin in Maine for a few days of R&R. There, the group is attacked by a group of cannibals, plunging them into a battle for their very survival. Ketchum uses the devastation of a group of tourists by a band of cannibals not to titillate and shock, as so many horror writers might have done, but to explore the reactions of ordinary people placed in extraordinary situations.

In recent years, serial killers, like vampires, have come to occupy their own subgenre in horror and suspense. Many authors have attempted to tackle the subject, with varying degrees of success. No one, however, has been more successful with this subject matter than Thomas Harris, author of *Red Dragon* (1981), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), and *Hannibal* (1999). Taken together, these books constitute a bridge between such groundbreaking work as Robert Bloch's *Psycho* and the surfeit of serial killer novels published over the last three decades. These modern classics also introduced the public to the concept of serial killer as media star, featuring the most popular anti-hero of modern times, Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Lecter is enigmatic, highly intelligent, and erudite. Before his capture, he killed and cannibalized at least nine people (the media later dubbed him "Hannibal the Cannibal"). As you might suspect, Lecter's activities created quite a stir, eventually bringing Will Graham, an FBI investigator, to Lecter's office (Lecter had actually been the treating physician for one of the victims). During a conversation with the doctor, Graham has an epiphany and realizes Lecter is the killer. Lecter, perceiving that Graham has found him out, attempts escape. Catching Graham off guard, he guts him with a linoleum knife and flees, only to be captured later by the authorities.

All this is background taken from *Red Dragon*. As the novel begins, Lecter resides in a high security mental facility, placed there by a court. Graham, recuperating from his wounds, is in semi-retirement. He is approached by Jack Crawford, his former boss at the FBI. Crawford seeks Graham's aid in the pursuit of a serial killer named Francis Dolarhyde, a.k.a. the Tooth Fairy (so named for his penchant for biting his victims), who has already slaughtered two innocent families.

Graham reluctantly agrees to help. Hoping to revive his investigative instincts, he visits Lecter in his lair. Lecter, unhelpful, nevertheless takes an interest in the case and manages to insert himself into the action, providing Dolarhyde with Will's home address. This information puts Will and his family in danger, as the hunted turns on the hunter. At the book's end, the Tooth Fairy is dead, and Will is disfigured for life. Despite being locked in a

maximum security cell, Lecter has managed to achieve a measure of vengeance on Graham.

Lecter also plays a key role in the sequel to *Red Dragon*, *The Silence of the Lambs*. Clarice Starling, an FBI trainee, is asked by Jack Crawford to interview the doctor for a study on serial killers. Clarice visits Lecter, but is unable to convince him to participate in the study. Lecter, intrigued by young Clarice, offers her something better—his assistance on a current case involving a killer nicknamed "Buffalo Bill" (so named because he "skins his humps").

Clarice becomes an active participant in the hunt for Buffalo Bill, acting as intermediary between Lector and the FBI. Lector, with previous knowledge of the killer, cunningly manipulates all involved. His orchestrations eventually provide him with an opportunity to escape, one which he eagerly seizes. Clarice, acting on hints dropped by the doctor, eventually tracks Bill down, but her victory is tempered by the knowledge that Dr. Lecter is once again at large.

These two novels are acknowledged classics of suspense and the aforementioned serial killer genre. Well written, they do not rely on shock value alone to jolt readers. Harris masterfully creates and sustains tension, building to tremendous crescendos in both books. Other authors have written successfully in this genre, but they tend to rely on splatter to achieve their horrific effect, each subsequent novel trying to outdo its predecessors in terms of gore and perversion. Harris avoids this trap, relying on good old-fashioned story telling to make his point.

Harris resisted the obvious temptation to feature Lecter more prominently in these novels, showing admirable restraint in reining in this strong character, using him to enhance rather than dominate the action. It would have been very easy for Harris to allow the doctor to move to center stage—Lecter is mesmerizing. Like Sherlock Holmes, he transcends the boundaries of literature, leaving his many fans clamoring for more. Anthony Hopkins's riveting portrayal of Dr. Lecter on the screen only added to his luster, introducing him to an audience unfamiliar with Harris's novels.

Harris's *Hannibal* changed that forever. Featuring Lecter as its chief protagonist and Clarice Starling in a supporting role, this ambitious novel began to unravel the mystery behind the killer, providing tantalizing glimpses into his history and motivations. Many were upset by this, preferring Lecter's past to remain murky. A large portion of Harris's readership was also turned off by the book's ending, feeling that Starling's fate (brainwashed by Lecter, she becomes his companion) was inappropriate. However one views it, one has to admire the risks Harris takes, making Lecter into an almost "Bondian" hero, having him square off against the obsessive Mason Verger, a horribly scarred, megarich supervillain he helped create.

It is hard to say whether Michael Slade's *Headhunter* (1984) is a thriller, a mystery, or a work of horror. Extremely dark, this novel of psychological suspense functions splendidly as a mystery, yet also gleefully revels in the conventions of the horror genre, serving up shocking set pieces of brutal violence.

The story is set in Vancouver in October 1982. Robert DeClercq, a retired detective, has been summoned by the powers that be to spearhead an investigation into two murders which have been linked by the same weapon (the bodies have been savagely mutilated). DeClercq assumes command of the Headhunter Squad and immediately assembles a crack team of Special External (Special X) investigators to help ferret out the diabolical killer. As political pressure mounts and widespread hysteria begins to grip the city, DeClercq and his team race against time to snare their cunning adversary before another victim is butchered. Slade's debut has spawned numerous sequels featuring the members of Special X, the most recent being *Swastika* (2005).

Serial Killer Nicknames and Aliases

Serial killers are often tagged with memorable colorful names by the authorities and the media. Here are twenty especially evocative nom de plumes:

Richard Angelo	The Angel of Death
Joe Ball	The Alligator Man
Harvey Carnigan	The Want-Ad Killer
Nannie Doss	The Giggling Granny
Larry Eyler	The Interstate Killer
Carlton Gary	The Stocking Strangler
John Haigh	The Acid Bath Murderer
Colin Ireland	The Gay Slayer
Keith Hunter Jesperson	The Happy Face Killer
Ted Kaczynski	The Unabomber
Paul Knowles	The Casanova Killer
Posteal Laskey	The Cincinnati Strangler
George Metesky	The Mad Bomber
Earle Nelson	The Gorilla Murderer
Thierry Paulin	The Monster of Montmarte
Louis Pette	The Dutchess of Death
Melvin David Rees	The Sex Beast
John Scripps	The Tourist From Hell
Joseph Vacher	The French Ripper
Carol Eugene Watts	The Sunday Morning Slasher

Source: http://members.tripod.com/~SerialKillr/SerialKillersExposed/index.html

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Serial killers loom large in author Peter Straub's universe, so much so that his Web site has a special section on the topic ("The Serial Killers of Millhaven"). In *Koko* (1988), a group of Vietnam veterans tries to track down a serial killer who they fear was once a part of their unit. Led by one-time suspect Tim Underhill (a writer who dealt with serial murder in a novel called *The Divided Man*), the men learn that the killer's pathology is linked to a tortured childhood and the strangeness and savagery of their collective Vietnam experience. Tim Underhill figured in several of Straub's subsequent works, most notably *The Throat* (1993) and *lost boy lost girl* (2003), both of which are primarily set in Millhaven, Wisconsin, Straub's fictional version of Milwaukee.

The Throat, which deals with a series of killings collectively known as the Blue Rose Murders, focused on the serial killers Bob Bandolier, his son Fee Bandolier, John Ransom, and Walter Dragonette. Bob Bandolier was the original Blue Rose killer, named for the words found written on the walls above his victims. A victim of child abuse, Fee Bandolier, who took his first victim at the age of thirteen, found an outlet for his murderous impulses in Vietnam, where he traveled under the name Franklin Bachelor. John Ransom committed several murders using the second round of Blue Rose Killings as cover to conceal the murder of his wife, April. Dragonette, who untruthfully confessed to having committed the murder of April Ransom, murdered at least fifteen young men, had sex with their corpses, cooked and ate their body parts, and stored the remains, wrapped in Cling-Film, in his freezer. His actions were inspired, he claimed, at least in part by Tim Underhill's novel, *The Divided Man*.

lost boy lost girl details the deprivations of two more of Millhaven's finest, Joseph Kalendar and Ronnie Lloyd-Jones. The homophobic Kalendar was a master carpenter who added hidden rooms to the interior of his house. After killing his son and then his wife, Kalendar began abducting women and taking them to his house, where he terrorized and murdered them. He was eventually apprehended, tried, found insane, and sent to a state mental institution, where he was subsequently murdered by another inmate. The whereabouts of his daughter, who he tortured and sexually abused, are unknown.

Known as "The Sherman Park Killer" for the locale where he came upon his victims, Jones took numerous victims, nearly all of them boys between the ages of fourteen to nineteen. After his arrest, Jones tried to interest Tim Underhill in collaborating on the story of his life, which he saw at least in part as a tribute to the achievements of Joseph Kalendar. Tim declined. Two nights after his arrest, Lloyd-Jones killed himself in his cell. The Millhaven police department discovered sixteen bodies buried in his backyard.

Set in 1848, Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* (1985) initially focuses on a fourteen-year-old boy named the Kid, a vicious delinquent from Tennessee who travels down the Mississippi River, eventually reaching Texas.

There, he falls in with a rogue Army unit making raids into Mexico. After the unit is wiped out by Apaches in the Sonora desert, the Kid is imprisoned in a Mexican jail, where he meets and joins a group of bounty hunters retained by the government to collect Indian scalps as retaliation for a string of Apache massacres in remote border villages.

The gang, made up of misfits, outlaws, drifters, and psychopaths, is dominated by two of the nastiest characters ever to stride across a fictional landscape: the nominal leader of the group, Ike Glanton, a sadistic mercenary with a nasty temper, and Glanton's advisor, the fat, hairless, erudite, and volatile Judge Holden. The gang finds an Indian tribe—not Apache marauders but rather the denizens of a peaceful fishing village—and slaughters all its members. Unable to catch the elusive Apaches, the company elects to pursue easier prey, slaughtering the innocent denizens of villages and mining camps spread across the arid wastes of the Southwest. As their bounty hunt turns into a genocidal killing spree, the gang forgets its original motivations, becoming increasingly entranced by the overwhelming magnetism of the Judge, a madman who convinces them they are agents of a ruthless natural law.

The bestial Chaingang, the creation of the late Rex Miller, made his first appearance in Miller's debut novel, *Slob* (1987). A genius, the slobbering 500-pound giant, a.k.a. Daniel Edward Flowers Bunkowski, likes to snack on the hearts of his victims. Jack Eichord is the detective who must hunt this human monster. Bunkowski subsequently appeared in the novels *Slice*, *Chaingang*, *Savant*, and *Butcher*. Eichord went on to star in his own series, which included the titles *Frenzy*, *Stone Shadow*, and *Iceman*.

James Ellroy's *Silent Terror* (1990) is the startling fictional autobiography of captured serial killer Martin Michael Plunkett. In this incredibly graphic novel, the articulate Plunkett tells his sordid story, providing the repulsive details relating to his life and his kills, right up to his eventual capture by FBI Serial Killer Task Force agent Thomas Dusenberry. Interspersed with his narrative are newspaper clippings detailing his murderous and depraved odyssey across 1970s America.

According to *Publishers Weekly*, John Sanford's debut novel, *Rules of Prey* (1990), took "a stock suspense plot—a dedicated cop pursuing an ingenious serial killer—and dressed it up into the kind of pulse-quickening, irresistibly readable thriller that many of the genre's best-known authors would be proud to call their own." In that novel, Lieutenant Lucas Davenport (star of sixteen "Prey" books at this writing) is called in to aid a Minneapolis task force scrambling to stop a psychopathic serial woman-slayer. Viewing his activities as a game, the self-styled "mad dog" murderer takes pride in choosing his victims and in setting up obstacles for the police.

Although Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) contains some truly repulsive scenes, these set pieces need to be viewed in the context of the book as a whole; the horror does not lie in the killer's actions, but in the society

they reflect. In the first third of the book, Patrick Bateman, a twenty-six-year-old Wall Street professional, describes his designer lifestyle in excruciating detail—brand names abound. It becomes obvious that Bateman inhabits a very superficial world. Then, out of the blue, Bateman coldly blinds and stabs a homeless man. From here, the body count rapidly escalates, as he kills a male acquaintance and sadistically tortures and murders two prostitutes, an old girlfriend, and a child he passes in the zoo. The brutalization of Bateman's victims is made even more horrible by his cold, flat, impersonal first person narration.

The Corinthian, from Neil Gaiman's Sandman series, is the source of both humor and horror. Featured prominently in Gaiman's second major Sandman story (collected in a graphic novel called *The Sandman: Volume II: The Doll's House* [1991]), the Corinthian, a minion of Gaiman's main character Dream, is the ultimate serial killer. He first appears in Gaiman's story "Collectors," which concentrates almost exclusively on serial killers. While, on the surface, mass murder would not appear to be particularly amusing, Gaiman concocts a scenario wherein famous serial killers attend a "Cereal" convention at a hotel. The story is a hilarious send-up of genre conventions and America's fascination with serial killers.

Along Came a Spider (1993) by James Patterson introduced his continuing character Dr. Alex Cross, who has appeared in several subsequent novels with titles like *Cat and Mouse* (1997), *Roses Are Red* (2000), *Violets Are Blue* (2001), and *Four Blind Mice* (2002). In *Along Came a Spider*, Cross investigates crimes committed by a serial killer who finds his targets in the ghettos of Washington, D.C. Cross, a ghetto resident himself, is vexed when he is suddenly called away, along with his partner John Sampson, to investigate a kidnapping at an exclusive academy. Patterson weaves these and other threads together, providing glimpses into the mind of the kidnapper, as Cross eventually discerns a connection to the ghetto serial murders.

Caleb Carr's *The Alienist* (1994) is set in 1896 New York City. A serial killer who preys upon cross-dressing boy prostitutes is on the loose. The police are making no progress on the case; in fact, someone with power or influence seems to be bent on hindering the investigation. A team formed by police commissioner Theodore Roosevelt is charged with finding the killer. Leading the unconventional group is "alienist" Dr. Lazlo Kreizler (in the nineteenth century, when psychology was in its infancy, the mentally ill were considered "alienated" from themselves and society, and the experts who treated them were therefore known as "alienists"). Dr. Kreizler's team includes his former Harvard classmate, *New York Times* crime reporter John Moore; Moore's longtime friend, feisty heiress-turned-NYPD-secretary Sara Hamilton; and two former mental patients who now work as his servants.

The Alienist is filled with rich details about both the seamy underside and more privileged sections of late-nineteenth-century New York City and then-novel crime detection techniques such as fingerprinting. For instance, to help

in apprehending the elusive killer, Kreizler's team develops a psychological profile for him.

Carr followed *The Alienist* with another adventure featuring Kreizler's team in 1997. Titled *The Angel of Darkness*, the story centers on the kidnapping of the infant daughter of a Spanish diplomat just as tensions between Spain and the United States have reached critical mass. The group soon discovers something even more horrific: their chief suspect seems to have been involved in the murders of several other young children, (including two of her own) and seems to be willing to take any measures necessary to cover her tracks. It becomes a race against time to save her latest victim.

In *Zombie* (1995), Joyce Carol Oates attempts to get inside the mind of a serial killer. This short novel, which purports to be the diary of one Quentin P——, includes strange capitalizations and crude drawings. As is typical of Oates, the language used adds to the overall feeling of disquiet she is trying to create; the simple prose creates an intimacy that becomes almost too much to take, as readers experience the killer's dark obsession and heinous acts (he's trying to create a zombie, attempting to achieve his goals by performing crude lobotomies on his victims) first hand. Oates never lets the tension ease as one victim after another falls prey to the killer.

In *Serial Killer Days* (1996), David Prill satirizes society's fascination with serial murder and its love affair with commerce, with a story about the small town of Standard Springs, Minnesota, where an annual visit and murder (twenty years in a row!) by a serial killer has become, in fine American tradition, a tourist attraction, replete with floats in a "Parade of Fear," and the crowning of a "Scream Queen." Although some regret the loss of life, nobody really wants the killer caught because his activities have proved a welcome boon to the local economy.

In *The Poet* (1996), a departure from his crime novels featuring Los Angeles Police Department's Harry Bosch, Michael Connelly tells the story of journalist Jack McEvoy. Apparently distraught over his inability to crack a murder case, Jack's twin brother, Sean, a Denver homicide detective, appears to have committed suicide. Jack's investigation uncovers a series of cop suicides across the country, all of which have in common both the cops' deep concerns over recent cases and their last messages, which Jack recognizes as having been taken from the works of Edgar Allan Poe. As his information reopens cases across the United States, Jack joins forces with a team from the FBI's Behavioral Science Section. In a shocking twist, the killer, known as The Poet, turns out to be a member of that task force.

Connelly delivered a sequel to *The Poet* in 2004 called *The Narrows*. In that book, retired Los Angeles homicide detective Harry Bosch investigates the death of his friend, ex-FBI profiler Terry McCalab. Bosch's inquiry leads him directly to a burial site that the FBI has been trying to conceal from the media, as it may be the work of the Poet, who, until now, was presumed dead. Teaming up with Rachel Walling, the FBI agent who discerned the

Poet's identity some eight years before, Bosch attempts to bring the killer to justice.

Stephen Dobyns's *The Church of Dead Girls* (1997) begins with a description of an attic containing the bodies of three girls, two aged thirteen, one aged fourteen. The bodies are seated in straight back chairs, bound loosely by rope. Their mummified corpses have been dressed in velvet, and their frocks contain a variety of symbols, together with fragments of words like "CK" and "NT" and "TCH" and "FIL." Each girl has had her left hand severed at the wrist. This macabre image sets the tone for the entire novel, creating a feeling of foreboding that author Dobyns sustains over the rest of his compelling narrative. Readers are offered clues as to how these girls came to be in the attic on nearly every page, as Dobyns describes the profound effects their disappearances have on the insular upstate New York town of Aurelius.

Jeffery Deaver has written seven novels about paraplegic Lincoln Rhyme and his partner/paramour policewoman Amelia Sachs, including the series debut, *The Bone Collector* (1997), and his latest, *Cold Moon* (2006). In each installment, Rhyme battles larger-than-life villains with colorful monikers like The Conjurer and the aforementioned Bone Collector by utilizing his keen mind and the principles and techniques of modern forensics. In *The Bone Collector*, Rhyme squares off against a killer who is recreating crimes which occurred at the turn of the century in New York City.

Eric Bowman (a pseudonym for Mark Frost) looks deep into the mind of a killer in his 1997 novel *Before I Wake*. Famous for bringing serial killer Wendell "the Slug" to justice, New York City homicide detective Jimmy Montone is accustomed to the spotlight, and so doesn't think twice before agreeing to allow British novelist Terence Peregrine Keyes to observe as he works a case "from start to finish." Soon after agreeing to this arrangement, Montone is confronted with the apparent suicide of TV news anchor Mackenzie Davis. Skeptical from the start, Montone quickly determines that the "suicide" was staged: someone forced Davis to tape a suicide video, then hurled him from the window of his thirty-fifth-floor apartment. Days later, when Montone's new girlfriend is found dead under similar circumstances, he realizes that the killings are meant as a personal attack. It takes him longer, however, to realize that the murderer, one Terry Keyes, has been under his nose the whole time.

In *Endless Honeymoon* (2001), Don Webb chronicles the exploits of a serial killer with a unique obsession: the aptly named "Shitkiller," on a personal mission to rid the world of those who delight in the misery of others, targets only the mean and cruel spirited. Although he has made dozens of kills across America over the course of several decades, the FBI has few clues as to his identity or motive. The job of tracking down this legendary killer has ended several careers, most recently that of Abel Salazar. Although severed from the Bureau, Salazar, funded by a mysterious benefactor, continues the pursuit, obsessively following up every lead regarding his nemesis, including

several uncovered by his successor in the investigation, the hapless Special Agent William Mondragon. Recent events have led Mondragon to focus on Willis and Virginia Spencer, a couple who, stumbling upon an early version of the killer's victim selection software, have put it to an entirely different use: instead of killing the targets, they play elaborate pranks on them, hoping to scare them into changing their ways. Unfortunately for the well-meaning couple, their activities bring them into direct contact with their spiritual ''mentor'' when they one night find they have selected the same target. That fateful encounter is a catalyst for the rest of the novel, setting in motion a bizarre scenario where all parties are eventually thrown together. The results are by turns outrageous, tragic, and comic.

In *Black House* (2001), their sequel to their collaborative effort, *The Talisman* (1984), Stephen King and Peter Straub drop in again on the hero of that fantasy novel, Jack Sawyer. Now in his thirties, Jack has thoroughly repressed all memories of his fantastic past. Since that time, Jack has become, to use his own word, a ''coppiceman,'' a Los Angeles Police Department detective whose exploits have garnered considerable attention in the national press. Apparently, his success is largely related to his time spent in the alternate reality known as the Territories and his experiences with the mystical Talisman. One of Jack's greatest professional triumphs occurred in the small town of French Landing, Wisconsin, where he apprehended a killer who had taken a life while visiting Los Angeles. Jack's visit to the Landing left a deep impression on him, so profound that he retired there shortly after closing the case. Jack had looked forward to a peaceful retirement, but that was not to be. French Landing is being terrorized by the Fisherman, a serial killer who dismembers and cannibalizes young children, a la Albert Fish. Baffled by the complete absence of leads, the local sheriff asks Jack for assistance. Although initially reluctant to become involved, Jack decides to help, in part due to the prodding of his friend, blind disk jockey Henry Leydon. Immersing himself in the case, Jack realizes that the killings are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the evil present in French Landing.

On her way home from school on a wintry December day in 1973, fourteen-year-old Susie Salmon, the narrator of Alice Sebold's bestseller *The Lovely Bones* (2002), is lured into a makeshift underground den in a cornfield and brutally raped and murdered, the latest victim of a serial killer, who is one of her neighbors, Mr. Harvey. The description of the crime is chilling, but never vulgar, and Sebold maintains this delicate balance between homey and horrid as she depicts the grieving process that Susie's family and friends go through. Sebold's debut novel unfolds from heaven, where ''life is a perpetual yesterday''; Susie narrates and keeps watch over her loved ones and her killer. Though maudlin at times, *The Lovely Bones* is a moving exploration of loss and mourning.

In his 2002 novel *The Straw Men*, Michael Marshall (a.k.a. Michael Marshall Smith) delivers a tale of paranoia and despair, told, until late in the

novel, on two parallel tracks, one dealing with the Los Angeles Police Department homicide detective John Zandt's hunt for The Upright Man, a serial killer who taunts the authorities with a unique calling card, the other with ex-CIA agent Ward Hopkins's search for the truth behind his parents' untimely death. Their independent investigations lead to discoveries that rock both their worlds. Marshall has written three sequels to this novel: *The Upright Man* (2004), *The Lonely Dead* (2005), and *Blood of Angels* (2005).

Gregory Frost gave "Bluebeard" and "Fitcher's Feathered Bird" a unique spin in his 2002 novel *Fitcher's Brides*. Frost's version takes place in 1830, in New York's Finger Lakes district. That district is the site of a community founded by Elias Fitcher, a community that prays and works while awaiting the end of the world prophesied for 1843. Inspired by Fitcher's preaching, the Charter family moves there with their three daughters to await the final days. Fitcher first marries Vernelia Charter, who disappears, then Amy Charter who also vanishes, finally moving on to Catherine, the youngest Charter daughter. In order to survive, Catherine must rely on her wits and the information passed on from her sisters before they disappeared. Frost riffs on the plots of the classic short stories even as he explores more mature themes of lust and desire.

Robert Frost's poem provides a title and an epigram to Blake Crouch's engrossing first novel, *Desert Places* (2004), the pulse-pounding tale of an outwardly civilized man forced into acting in an uncivilized (to say the least) manner. That man is Andrew Thomas, best-selling author of suspense novels with titles like *Blue Murder* and *The Scorcher*. Thomas lives the good life until the day he receives a letter in the mail, telling him that a woman's body has been buried on his property, a body soaked in the author's blood. Confirming this sad fact, Thomas is forced to play a serial killer's twisted game, one which requires him to make a journey to Wyoming, where he ultimately must confront his own mortality, and question his morality and sanity.

Crouch's sequel, *Locked Doors* (2005), picks up seven years after the conclusion of *Desert Places*. Having barely survived the events related in that harrowing thriller, famous writer Andrew Thomas, now one of America's most wanted criminals, has settled in the Yukon after many years on the run. Believing his ordeal over, Thomas is stunned to learn of the murder of a friend's wife and the kidnapping of a former flame. Apparently, someone is trying to send him a message that the trials that commenced seven years prior are not over, and that a reckoning must occur. Thomas travels to North Carolina and the Outerbanks island of Ocracoke to confront his adversary, setting the stage for an epic battle between the author and a man who can only be described as a relentless killing machine.

Dexter Morgan, the hero of Jeff Lindsay's subversive 2004 novel *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* (and its 2005 sequel *Dearly Devoted Dexter*), is a highly respected lab technician specializing in blood spatter for the Miami Dade Police Department. He is handsome and polite, and rarely calls attention to

himself. He is also a sociopathic serial killer whose "Dark Passenger" drives him to commit the occasional killing and dismemberment. Adopted as a toddler, Dexter has learned, with help from his strangely accepting policeman father, to focus his talents, killing only those who deal with death themselves. Dexter has found his niche, but when a new serial killer working in Miami stages several grisly scenes that Dexter discerns are actually attempts at communication from one killer to another, he finds himself facing a dilemma. Should he help find the fiend? Or should he locate this new killer himself, so he can talk shop?

In Robert Randisi's *Arch Angels* (2004), the fifth Joe Keough mystery, the detective returns to his old stomping grounds when it becomes apparent that a serial killer is kidnapping and murdering young boys in St. Louis. It is a bittersweet experience for Keough for several reasons besides the killings. One is that he is now considered an outsider by local police, having spent the last year working for the Federal Serial Killer Task Force in Washington, D.C. Another complication occurs when he is brought face-to-face with his ex-partner Marc Jeter, with whom he has some very serious unfinished business. Finally, it appears as if the killer, or a copycat with a similar modus operandi, is snatching young girls off the street a few hundred miles away in Chicago, always within days of the St. Louis killings. Still, Keough endures, relying on razor sharp instincts to bring the killer down.

Florida writer Tim Dorsey has written a series of books featuring the antics of a serial killer named Serge Storms. Also somewhat of a political activist/terrorist, Serge takes on numerous pet projects to fill the time when he's not killing someone. Witness his to do list from *Cadillac Beach* (2005), the sixth novel to feature the homicidal lunatic:

> Develop and market my new line of South Beach energy drinks, complete rehabilitation and release of Loxahtachee marsh mouse, solve mystery of grandfather's death, recover fortune in missing diamonds from America's largest gem heist, cripple the mob in South Florida, embarrass Castro on the global stage, help Chamber of Commerce with image crisis, restore respect for the brave men and women of the US intelligence community, lure the Today Show to Miami for local pride/economic boost, participate in my times like Robert Kennedy (depending on the weather), and accomplish it all through the launch of my new-economy, clean-burning, earth friendly venture capital business that involves spiritual growth, historical appreciation, and the Internet. (27)

Of course, Serge notes, the list is "subject to change without notice."

A happy blend of police procedural and international thriller, *The Sacred Cut* (2005), David Hewson's third Nic Costa novel, finds the trinity of Costa, Peroni, and their chief, the irascible Leo Falcone, in fine form, fearlessly grappling with criminals, bureaucracies, significant others, and the American intelligence community in their pursuit of the truth. It is five days before

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Serial Killer Profilers

Professional profilers, experts who use their knowledge of serial killers to construct detailed descriptions of these killers, have in the last decade also become popular players on television dramas. The trend began in the early 1990s with the characters of Mulder and Scully in ''The X-Files,'' developed by Chris Carter. Although they specialized in investigating the paranormal, they cut their professional teeth as FBI profilers. Carter also created the show ''Millennium,'' which featured a former FBI profiler named Frank Black, who unknowingly was a player in a larger battle between good and evil. The trend continued, resulting, inevitably, in a short-lived show predictably called ''Profiler.''

Christmas, and Rome is covered in snow. Braving the elements on this cold winter night are policemen Nic Costa and Gianni Peroni, accompanied by civilian Mauro Sandri. A photographer, Sandri is assembling a documentary on the policeman and their city. Summoned to the Pantheon by a shaken security guard, the policemen are ambushed by an intruder, who begins shooting before fleeing into the night. The policemen are unharmed, but the photographer is fatally wounded. Later, a woman's body, bearing knife marks in the elaborate pattern of the so-called Sacred Cut, is found on the premises. Seeking justice for the photographer, Costa and Peroni begin searching for the murderer; their investigation will bring them into conflict with one of the strangest killers they have ever faced, a man out to settle scores with origins in the days of Desert Storm.

PLAYS

An argument can be made that one of Shakespeare's most complex villains, the wicked Iago, was a serial killer. In *Othello* (1604), the completely amoral Iago will do anything to secure what he perceives as his rightful position. Iago begins scheming when Othello gives the ''ignorant, ill-suited'' Cassio the position the evil one desires. Infuriated, Iago plots to steal the position he feels he justly deserves. A consummate liar, Iago guiltlessly manipulates those around him to his benefit. Scarily pragmatic, Iago kills anyone who stands in his way, starting with his friend Roderigo and moving on to his spouse, Emilia. Many readers of *Othello* considered him evil personified; today, Iago would readily be labeled a psychopath.

Serial killers made their way to Broadway in 1939 with the premiere of Joseph Kesserling's *Arsenic and Old Lace*, later adapted to film in 1944 by Frank Capra. This play focuses on the travails of one Mortimer Brewster, a newspaperman who has come to Brooklyn, New York, to inform his eccentric

aunts, Abby and Martha Brewster, of his impetuous engagement to the girl of his dreams. During his visit, he discovers his aunts have been quietly murdering old men without families to spare them the agony of growing old alone; the results of their efforts are buried in their basement. His efforts to cover up his aunts' crimes are complicated by the reappearance of his psychopathic brother Jonathan, whose body count rivals that of Abby and Martha. As Mortimer (essayed in the movie version by Cary Grant) tells his fiancée: "Look, I probably should have told you this before, but you see, well, insanity runs in my family. It practically gallops."

Serial mayhem would again hold sway over Broadway when Stephen Sondheim's grand guignol, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, opened in 1979. Based on the exploits of the legendary barber, the play won eight Tony Awards including the best musical. To quote the play's clever tag lines, "Sweeney Todd, hell-bent on revenge, takes up with his enterprising neighbor in a delicious plot to slice their way through London's upper crust. Justice will be served—along with lush melody, audacious humor and bloody good thrills."

FILMS/TELEVISION

A serial killer who preyed on children was featured in Fritz Lang's film, *M.* (1931). Starring Peter Lorre as the despicable killer, the film tells the story of a criminal element that feels threatened by the intense police scrutiny resulting from a string of child murders. Realizing it is in their best interests, the criminals launch an intense search for the killer.

As mentioned above, Alfred Hitchcock directed a handful of movies dealing with serial killers. Starting with *The Lodger* in 1927, he moved on to *Shadow of a Doubt* in 1943. This particularly suspenseful movie focuses on a young girl named Charlie (Teresa Wright) who slowly becomes convinced that her namesake, her beloved Uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten), temporarily living under the same roof with her, is actually the murderer the media has dubbed The Merry Widow Killer. Following *Psycho*, Hitchcock directed the thriller *Frenzy* (1972), featuring a madman known as "The Neck-Tie Killer."

Brian DePalma would later pay homage to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* in his 1980 film *Dressed to Kill*, at its heart a retelling of that movie set in modern Manhattan. Angie Dickinson plays the sexually frustrated, middle-aged wife who becomes the razor-wielding killer's first victim, confessing her sexual fantasies to her psychiatrist (Michael Caine). After she is cut down, the focus of the film switches to a murder witness (Nancy Allen) and Dickinson's grieving son (Keith Gordon), who team up in an attempt to track the killer down. The plot twist upon which the story turns is slyly hinted at in the film's title.

Fans of Wes Craven's more recent work (e.g., the *Scream* series) may not appreciate his second feature, *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), but many consider

it a classic example of 1970s horror. Originally titled *Blood Relations*, this unsettling fable of disparate cultures clashing strands a suburban family in the desert, then pits them against a clan of inbred cannibals. Working from a similar premise, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the over-the-top but extremely influential 1974 low-budget horror movie directed by Tobe Hooper, follows a group of teenagers who pick up a hitchhiker and wind up in a backwoods house of horror where they endure grievous tortures inflicted on them by a demented cannibalistic family, including a masked, aproned giant known as Leatherface. This chainsaw toting maniac, himself inspired in part by Ed Gein, no doubt provided inspiration for the next generation of cinematic serial killers, including the larger-than-life (or death) Michael Myers (of *Halloween* fame), Freddy Krueger (from The Nightmare on Elm Street series), Jason Vorhees (from the Friday the 13th franchise), and Charles Lee Ray (a.k.a. Chucky).

Nearly twenty years after its premiere, *The Stepfather* (1987) is still considered a classic by many. Directed by Joseph Ruben and sporting a screenplay from crime novelist Donald E. Westlake, the film is based on the true story of New Jersey family killer Joseph List. The movie's version of List is real estate agent, Jerry Blake (Terry O'Quinn). Jerry is outwardly calm and reasonable. Underneath that pleasant façade, however, lurks a psychopath, a man flies into murderous rages when his family fails to live up to his unrealistically high standards—presumably, that is why he kills his first family, an act that is revealed to the audience as the film's opening credits roll. The film picks up one year later, with Jerry living in a new home. He has got his new wife eating out of his hand, but her rebellious teenage daughter is less than thrilled by her stepfather. In fact, she knows something is wrong with Jerry from the moment they meet, despite Jerry's best attempts to win her over. The more she rebels, the closer Jerry comes to snapping once again.

The 1986 film *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* was loosely based on the life of Henry Lee Lucas, reputedly one of the most prolific serial killers in American history (though Lucas has since recanted previous confessions). From the beginning, Henry plunges the audience into a world seen solely through the eyes of a sociopath. The power of Henry lies in its grounding in the mundane existence of everyday life. Michael Rooker plays Henry with great subtlety, not as a raving lunatic, but as the frumpy guy next door, a drifter who takes out his frustrations on random victims and escalates his body count after teaming up with the violent ex-con Otis (Tom Towles). Director John McNaughton's straightforward, matter of fact presentation creates a chilling sense of realism.

In *Serial Mom* (1994), director John Waters delivers a wickedly funny black comedy starring Kathleen Turner as Beverly, the ultimate suburbanite, a woman so obsessed with order and perfection that she kills a neighbor for not complying with her town's recycling mandates. Her spouse Sam Waterston

and kids Matthew Lillard and Ricki Lake don't have a clue that it is in fact their June Cleaver clone of a mom who is offing the neighbors. The final courtroom scene is hilarious, as Beverly is turned into a celebrity defendant, long before O.J.

Peter Jackson's 1996 film *The Frighteners* manages to evoke both laughs and chills. Ever since the car accident that took the life of his wife, Frank Bannister has been able to see ghosts. Exploiting this talent, Frank sets up shop as a ghost buster. The only problem with his job is that he is the one who put the ghosts in his customer's homes in the first place. In other words, he is a con artist, enlisting his ghostly friends The Judge (John Astin), Stuart (Troy Evans), and Cyrus (Chi McBride) to create other worldly mayhem, such that folks will hire him to rid their homes of the spirits. When a series of mysterious murders take place in town, FBI Agent Milton Dammers, who believes Frank is responsible for the deaths of his wife and of the recent victims, appears on the scene to assist local law enforcement. The demented FBI agent will stop at nothing to catch Frank. Frank, who can see ghostly numbers on the foreheads of future victims, knows who the real killer is but can't prove it. In the early 1960s, a serial killer named Johnny Charles Bartlett (Jake Busey) murdered what was then a record number of victims ("That's one more than Starkweather!" he crows at one point), with the help of his teenage girlfriend Patricia Ann Bradley (Dee Wallace-Stone). The new killings all point to Bannister, but Bannister soon figures out that Bartlett, who was executed decades before, is once again active, having somehow found a way to bolster his kill count from beyond the grave.

One of the most visceral and frightening serial killer movies ever made, *Se7en* (1995), is based on an intriguing notion—a serial killer named John Doe who dispatches his victims by forcing them to act out one of the seven deadly sins, afterwards artfully arranging the murder scene into a tribute to a particular mortal vice. From its jerky opening credits to its horrifying twist ending, *Se7en*, directed by David Fancher, leads viewers further into a murky abyss, ratcheting up the tension to almost unbearable levels. Morgan Freeman and Brad Pitt play the detectives who dog the killer's footsteps, all the while unaware that the hunters can easily become the hunted.

JACK THE RIPPER

Jack the Ripper's activities in Whitechapel triggered myriad fictional interpretations. One early take was Marie Belloc Lowndes 1913 novel, *The Lodger*, later made into the 1927 film of the same name directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

One of the more famous short stories in the horror genre, "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper," written by Robert Bloch, appeared in *Weird Tales*, July

1943. The tale is one of the most famous pieces about the most notorious of all serial killers, and it has been reprinted in countless anthologies. The narrator is one John Carmody, a psychiatrist living in Chicago. Carmody is approached by Sir Guy Hollis of the British Embassy who has an interesting theory: he hypothesizes that Jack the Ripper did not grow old, and asks Carmody's help to capture the killer, who he thinks is presently active in Carmody's home town. In an alley Hollis finds out that his hunch was right. "Never mind the 'John,'" Carmody whispers, revealing a knife. "Just call me . . . Jack" (20). The adaptation of this story for radio resulted in Bloch's own radio series, "Stay Tuned for Terror," in 1945.

Bloch would later use the Ripper in another short story, "A Toy for Juliette," which appeared in the Harlan Ellison's famous anthology *Dangerous Visions* (1967). Ellison himself used Bloch's story as a springboard for a Ripper story of his own called "The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World" (1967), featuring the madman in a futuristic setting.

In 1967, Jack was the subject of a "Star Trek" episode, also written by Bloch, called "Wolf in the Fold." That second-season story found Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy escorting Chief Engineer Scott, who is recovering from a head wound accidentally inflicted on him by a female crewmember, to a nightclub on the planet Aregelius II. There, Scotty becomes enamored of a lovely dancer and they leave together. Kirk and McCoy remain in the bar. A scream sends them to a mist-filled alley adjacent to the bar, where they find Scotty holding the dancer's corpse and a bloody knife. McCoy suggests that perhaps Scotty's subconscious distrust of women since his accident has manifested itself in murder. Hengist, the local constable, wants to arrest Scotty, but Kirk intervenes. Unfortunately, another local is killed, and, once again, Scotty appears to be the perpetrator. Before she dies, the woman says that something with an insatiable hunger and hatred of women is present in the room. Scotty still claims to have amnesia during the time when the women were killed. In the end, the entity turns out to be an ancient life form that calls itself Redjac, which Spock identifies as an alternate name for Earth's Jack the Ripper. The entity reveals itself as a non-corporeal vampire who thrives on others' fear. Apparently, it preys on women because they "are more easily frightened." Hengist is its current host; when discovered, it leaves his body and takes over Kirk's ship, the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. Seeking to thwart the creature, McCoy administers tranquilizers to all on board, dampening their fear. Enraged, the entity is forced to return to Hengist's body. Hoping this would happen, Kirk beams it into space at maximum dispersal, where it will presumably die for lack of nourishment.

Director/writer Nicholas Meyer put the killer to interesting use in his 1979 movie *Time After Time*, which had the Ripper escape to modern-day America using a time machine created by H. G. Wells. Wells (played by Malcolm McDowell) follows the killer (played by David Warner) to the future, hoping to bring him to justice.

In the late 1990s, the creative team of Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell created a lengthy graphic novel based on Moore's research into the Ripper's crimes titled *From Hell* (2004). This critically acclaimed work, which originally appeared (appropriately) serially in a standard comic book format, pinned the murders on the Queen's physician, William Gull. Moore and Campbell's graphic novel eventually became the basis for the 2001 film of the same name, featuring Johnny Depp, Heather Graham, Ian Holm, and Robbie Coltrane.

Horror writer Richard Laymon offered an interesting solution to the Whitechapel murders; like others, he guessed that the Ripper had escaped to America, where he resumed his killing ways on the frontier. Laymon's novel *Savage* (1993) tells the story of Trevor, a young man impacted by the killer's actions, who tracks him to America, hoping to put an end to the madman.

In Michael Slade's *Ripper* (1994), American feminist Brigid Marsh is found hanging dead in Vancouver, her face flayed. Local Mountie Nick Craven calls in Robert de Clerq, commander of Special X, an elite division of the Mounties specializing in outré crime. Marsh's murder has the hallmarks both of satanic ritual and serial murder and, as other grisly deaths ensue, they seem to be following a pattern established in *Jolly Roger*, a new paperback thriller due to be published soon. As de Clerq uses the novel to trace the motivations of the group of killers back to the same demons that drove the original Jack the Ripper, a coven of mystery writers and an ex-police chief find members of their group being killed off as they try to solve the mystery on an isolated island.

CONCLUSION

Serial killer mania seemed to reach its zenith in the early 1990s, an era marked by the premiere of the film version of *The Silence of the Lambs* and the issuance of a 54-card set of serial killer trading cards by Eclipse Enterprises. Despite a noticeable lessening of interest in them since then, serial killers have never totally been out of the spotlight since (witness the news coverage in the aftermath of the capture of the BTK killer in 2005). Because the media understandably focus on sensational news, real life serial killers will continue to be obsessively scrutinized whenever they emerge, thus insuring that they will remain a part of the public's collective consciousness. As a result, consumers in search of thrills will continue to eagerly seek out fictional treatments about these killers, whether it be through film or literature (for instance, Thomas Harris's next book featuring Hannibal Lector, listed on Amazon.com as *Behind the Mask*). Hopefully, through advances in medical science's understanding of the causes of this sad phenomenon, serial killers may one day become a part of folklore, rather than continuing to dominate current events.

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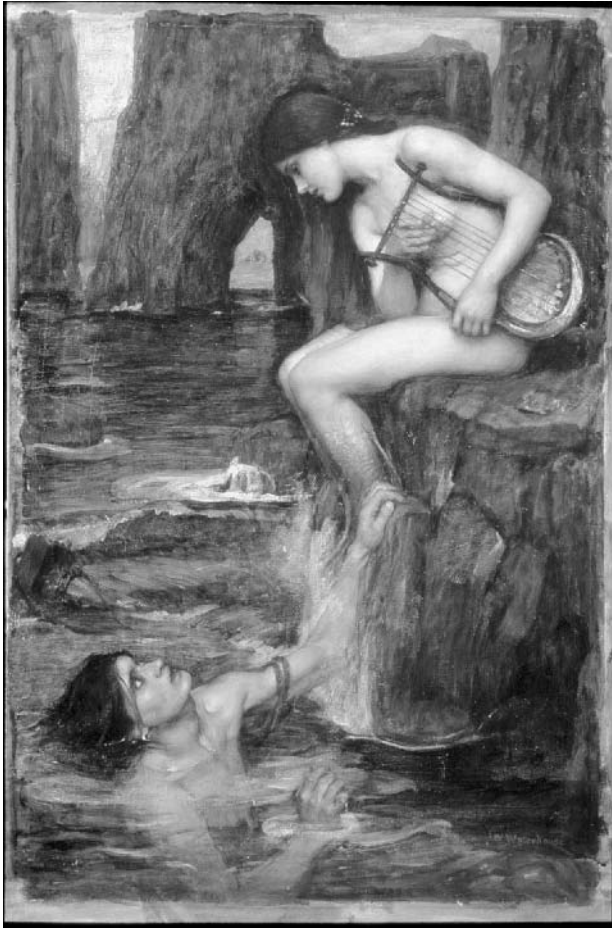
The Siren

by Melissa Mia Hall

At first she sang "Come to Love," and of the sweetness of Love she said many things. And next she sang, "Come to Life;" and life was sweet in her song. But long before I reached her, she knew that all her will was mine: and then her voice rose softer than ever, and her words were, "Come to Death;" and Death's name in her mouth was the very swoon of all sweetest things that can be . . .

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The Orchard Pit" (1868) (Weeks 30)

> "All men are my slaves and—glad to be!"
>
> Marlene Dietrich in *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935)

This seductive icon of horror and the supernatural is often associated with her equally alluring sister, the femme fatale. The roots of this enchanting but often deadly icon run deep into the ocean of Greek myth, but now no longer remain strictly in the water or in the air. Now she finds her admirers (or victims) on land as well.

Homer wrote about them in Book IV and Book XII of the *Odyssey*. In the beginning, Sirens were merely lovely, unlucky sea-nymphs cursed by Circe, a jealous and very dangerous sorceress who turned any man who approached her into a beast. The naiads are thought to be the daughters of Zeus, and they reigned over fresh-water sources such as fountains, wells, streams, and springs. As enchanted half-women, half-seahawks, sometimes they are confused with the monstrous winged harpies, who were sisters of Iris, daughter of Electra and Thaumas. Originally Hesiod (*Theogony*) described the harpies as two "lovely-haired creatures" (99), but as the myths were retold, the harpies increased in number and transformed into fierce ugly creatures who not only stole human food but ruined what they didn't eat. They also had an extreme fondness for torturing people. So the confusion over the beautiful Sirens and repulsive harpies creates both a dark agent of destruction as much as well as a gorgeous sexual temptress. Factor in extraordinary musical ability, the evolution of Greek Siren into today's glamorous Femme Fatale is not surprising, and her place in horror and the supernatural continues to expand with her claws digging with a vengeance. The Siren's path also cuts into other genres, including comedy, mystery (film noir especially), general fiction, fantasy, and paranormal romance. She can be found flourishing in all areas of entertainment literature and visual media. Beauty plus talent plus power equals an enduring and beloved dark icon. Whether an intelligent empowered vixen, a misunderstood woman in a thriller, refusing to be a victim or a shrill, brazen hussy in a sexploitation potboiler, she is a stunner who enlightens and entertains her captive audience.

Such a dangerous combination is not only valued in contemporary society; it appears to frighten those who do not have it. The gorgeous woman (or man?) of supernatural power, especially in the bedroom, appeals to everyone even as it creates tension. Someone totally self-absorbed, using such power for their own ends, is terrifying if their own ends means something awful will happen to you if you don't submit.

Plato saw the Sirens producing the harmony of the Speres in the *Republic*, and throughout time they have been used as metaphors for the lust for knowledge as well as lots and lots of sex and turbulent desire for power.

Sirens have also been transformed into harpies, screaming monsters, and the "winged things that hunt in the night" of Robert E. Howard ("Wings in

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A Legend in Her Own Mind

One of the best examples of a femme fatale who doesn't know she has lost her power is Norma Desmond in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Gloria Swanson plays Norma Desmond, a forgotten silent screen Siren hoping for a comeback, praying for another close-up. William Holden plays Joe Gillis, a young writer who is being kept by her. Swanson was only fifty-three when she made the film, although Desmond seems much older (mentally she's unstable). Curiously, the character is supposed to be only fifty years old, a reflection of the era in which it was made, when women of a certain age suddenly became, well, ancient.

In *The Great Movies* (349) Roger Ebert notes:

''*Sunset Blvd.* remains the best drama ever made about the movies because it sees through the illusions, even if Norma Desmond doesn't. When the silent star first greets the penniless writer inside her mansion, they have a classic exchange. 'You used to be big,' he says. Norma responds with the great line 'I *am* big. It's the pictures that got small.' Hardly anyone remembers Joe's next line: 'I knew there was something wrong with them.' ''

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the Night,'' *Weird Tales*, July 1932), who have more in common with vampire bats than mystical Sirens. And the bloodthirsty and sexy Queen in Howard's ''The Moon of Skulls'' (*Weird Tales*, June–July 1930), who may or may not be a vampire, certainly qualifies as a Siren who has turned into a femme fatale. The original Sirens were great beauties who could captivate lonely, love-starved sailors and lure them to their doom or captivity. The lonely Sirens did not necessarily enjoy watching a sailor die. And some mermaids in folklore take human shape in order to be loved by an earthbound man. She might then lure him deep into Poseidon's watery kingdom because she wants him to become a merman, not because she wants him to drown. Or maybe she just wants to have fun, like the Southern Sirens who tempt the three hapless escaped convicts in Ethan and Joel Cohen's *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000), a wry Depression-era update of the *Odyssey*. Ulysses Everett McGill (George Clooney) and his pals encounter three gospel-singing naiads who seduce them into a river of temptation, then vanish after leading one of the trio straight into the hands of the law.

The harpy aspect is not to be confused with the mermaid or lovely sea nymph whose siren song—

> . . . To seek the unforgotten face
> Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me
> Anigh the murmuring of the sea.

—lures a certain golden haired Greek hero into a blissful sleep and summons her fellow sisters of the deep to capture the hopelessly enamored Theban Hylas (who was foolish enough to visit a mermaid haunted place) and drag him into the depths of the sea—wondering:

> At all his beauty they desired so much.
> And then with gentle hands began to touch
> His hair, his hands, his closed eyes; and at last
> Their eager naked arms about him cast,
> And bore him, sleeping still, as by some spell,
> Unto the depths where they were wont to dwell'
> And with small noise the gurgling river hid
> The flushed nymphs and the heedless sleeping man.
> But ere the water covered them, one ran
> Across the mead and caught up from the ground
> The brass-bound spear, and buckler bossed and round,
> The ivory-hilted sword, and coat of mail,
> Then took the stream; so what might tell the tale,
> Unless the wind should tell it, or the bird
> Who from the reed these things had seen and heard?
>   William Morris, *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), Book 4

Contrast that depiction with Book V's description of the harpies (also referred to as ''Snatchers'') tormenting Phineus and later, poor Jason and the Argo crew:

> The dreadful Snatchers, who like women were
> Down to the breast, with scanty coarse black hair
> About their heads, and dim eyes ringed with red,
> And bestial mouths set round with lips of lead,
> But from their gnarled necks there began to spring
> Half hair, half feathers, and a sweeping wing
> Grew out instead of arm on either side,
> And thick plum underneath the breast did hide
> The place where joined the fearful natures twain.
> Grey feathered were they else, with many a stain
> Of blood thereon, and on birds' claws they went.

Not so attractive an image, not like the Germanic legend, Lorelei or Lore Lay as Clemens Brentano dubbed her in 1801, in his ballad about a Rhine maiden whose eyes no man could apparently resist. Only poor Lorelei killed herself because she couldn't handle being a Siren, but she still sings to warn sailors *away* from dangerous rocks.

LILITH AND OTHERS

In Judeo-Christian myth, Lilith, Adam's supposed first wife, is thrown over for Eve, kicked out of Eden because she was not a good wife or perhaps because she wanted to be equal to Adam. Was it the first divorce? Was it a bad one? Was Lilith just a bitch or a femme fatale? George MacDonald, a Scottish author who excelled in children's fantasy literature, wrote a feverish adult fantasy about her mystique, *Lilith* (1895). And Lilith has also inspired many other works, including Remy de Gourmont's play *Lilith* (1892). Jules Lemaître wrote a story about her in "Lilith" (1890), and Penelope Farmer wrote a feminist novel, *Eve: Her Story* (1985).

Brian Stableford described the deadly femme fatale as a "a woman whose powers of sexual attraction are so great that her pursuers become utterly careless of their own well-being, often perishing as a result" (Joshi and Dziemianowicz 411). Stableford edited *The Dedalus Book of Femme Fatales* (1992). He cited Salome, another archetypal femme fatale of Judeo-Christian myth. Salome, the daughter of Herodias, not only pleased Herod with her dancing and claimed the head of John the Baptist as her reward; she served as the muse in *Salome* (1893) by Oscar Wilde; *Salome the Wandering Jewess* (1930) by George Sylvester Viereck and Paul Eldridge; *Salome, Princess of Galilee* by Henry Denker (1952), *Veils of Salome* (1962) by John Jakes, revised by Jay Scotland (1976), and "Herodias" (1877) by Gustave Flaubert.

Enter Cleopatra, another ancient Siren whose legendary power over men has figured in film and in literature for years. French author Théophile Gautier wrote "Un Nuit de Cléopâtre" ("One of Cleopatra's Nights," 1838), serving as an early expert in discovering the erotic power of this femme fatale. He also wrote "La Morte Amoureuse," often translated as "Clarimonde."

Are all Sirens just angry women out for blood or a better bank account? And what about blood-drinking lamias or the sexy vampire brides in *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897), the lesbian vampire in "Carmilla" (*Dark Blue*, December 1871–March 1872) by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, or Akasha, the mother of all vampires in *The Queen of the Damned* by Anne Rice (1988)? The blood-sucking predator who has become a vampire via another's "curse" or "bite" kills for survival by seducing victims not only with her magnetic beauty but also the considerable lure of immortality. The vampire appears to be just another variation of the Siren theme.

Fritz Leiber honed in on the Siren as the "model" vampire, focusing on man's desire for a very primal, predatory "image" that devours as much as it satisfies in his timeless story, "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" (1949). This story heralds the arrival of the contemporary fashion/pop icon as Siren and begs the question, whether a man or woman turns a victim into a vampire by seduction, which makes the vampire a blood relation (pun intended) to the Siren.

Witches are also related to Sirens dating back to the Arthurian era. Remember Morgan Le Fey? King Arthur's beloved Merlin could testify to the

dangers of dealing with a Siren enchantress: his seductive nemesis certainly knew how to work her fatal powers. Being ensorcelled into a tree, Merlin, a wizard as well, still suffered from a Siren who knew how to ensnare men to do their bidding. Many fantasies have explored Celtic Sirens memorably. Arthurian classics include *The Once and Future King* (1958) and *The Book of Merlin* (1977), both by T. H. White, and Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1982).

Fritz Leiber focused on the fear men have of being married to a Siren with weird powers in *Conjure Wife* (*Unknown*, April 1943). Anne Rice has explored the delights of the seductress Witch in *The Witching Hour* (1990) and *Merrick* (2000). And more mainstream authors like Alice Hoffman have examined the allure of contemporary sister Sirens who embrace being part of a family of witches in *Practical Magic* (1995). And who can forget the devilishly funny film *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), based on the novel (1984) by John Updike, starring witchy Sirens, Susan Sarandon, Michele Pfieffer, and Cher taunting his Satanic majesty as played by Jack Nicholson?

The traditional witch canon is filled with sexy urban witches including the happy-go-lucky Tabitha, played by Elizabeth Montgomery in the popular 1960s sitcom "Bewitched" (Nicole Kidman in the flawed 2004 updated film tries and fails to capture the wit Montgomery brought to the role, although her nose-twitching skills were impressive). Other contemporary TV witches include the young vixens on "Charmed" (1998–): Prue (Shannon Doherty) is no longer on the show, but Phoebe (Alyssa Milano), Piper (Holly Marie Combs), and Paige (Rose McGowan) mix a little Siren mojo in with their wiccan skills on occasion to achieve their desires with flair but little, if any, evil intent.

Can a man be a Siren, an homme fatale who seduces his victim through his handsome charms? If he is sexy, elegant, and good with the drums, piano, or cars, well, why not? If "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (from the John Keats poem) meets the *man* without mercy, what do they beget? A glittering child of power who wants nothing more than to be fearless and in total control, a subject that lends itself to the creation of a monster or a saint. A monster or a saint can't be controlled if he or she is utterly fearless. Add in a sexually gorgeous body and abundant multi-talents (music, art, lust, gardening, or even extreme expertise in haute cuisine, Swedish massage, sports, financial wizardry, or acting) and a siren is a deadly diva, a master of erotic power, or merely a witch. By seduction we know the Siren. By fearlessness we know the femme or homme fatale.

In Germany and Scandinavia the shapeshifting Näcken or Nix are male water spirits who enchant listeners with their violin music. Pregnant women and children, especially unbaptised children, are thought to be especially vulnerable to the handsome Nix. Mysterious drowning deaths were sometimes attributed to hearing the spellbinding songs of these dangerous male Sirens, but some folk tales suggest they can also be harmless, unlike the female Siren of Greek myth. The Nixe is a river mermaid who can be male or female, who lures unsuspecting humans to a watery death, much like the Celtic Melusine, a

female water spirit who appears to be a fish, serpent, or a dragon from the waist down. She can also mate with humans.

The Huldra is a Wild Woman mixture of Siren and femme fatale because she is not only female and gorgeous but can also use her considerable seduction skills to achieve her desires. She does not fly or live near water but in the forests of Scandinavia. She has a cow or fox tail and lures men to have sex with her. If she is pleased, he is rewarded; if not, he is cruelly punished.

The Wild Woman is a woman in touch with her primal self, like an animal or femme fatale, intent on survival at all costs. The Siren who has evolved into a deadly femme fatale and then grown up is the empowered woman who has thrown off Circe's curse. She can be good or evil. If she is vengeful, it is because she is protecting something or someone, but still has an almost magical power much like the Naiads before Circe took out her jealous wrath upon them. She is a Force of Nature who is free and in total control of her life, for good or ill.

CAN A MAN CREATE A FEMALE SIREN?

George du Maurier created Svengali, a fictional siren-maker in his self-illustrated novel, *Trilby* (1894). He is far more dangerous than Professor Higgins of *My Fair Lady* (inspired by George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*), who merely transformed a grubby little flower seller into a glamorous high society Ascot-attending beauty. Fans of the classic musical might remember stuffy Rex Harrison falling for Audrey Hepburn's Eliza Doolittle. He was a charming, gently archaic, vaguely chauvinistic ''Svengali'' of sorts, but du Maurier's Svengali was evil and domineering, and his mesmerizing transformation of Trilby, the artist's model, into a singing ''Siren'' is one of the aspects of the Siren which should be remembered: A Siren is created by others, usually someone of power.

Svengali manipulated a young and beautiful artist model to his ends, hypnotizing her into singing a siren's song to achieve fame and fortune. Thus the false ''siren'' became a puppet for the true Siren, the manipulative Svengali whose power over her vanishes when she assumes her own self, throwing off her magic spell, much as a sailor might have survived the siren song heard off the island.

The Siren song of seduction that lures the sailor to the rocky shores of the lonely naiads changes over time. And the curse hurled at Sirens probably should be directed at the Circes or Svengalis who created them. It is significant that Sirens became winged harpies, devilish divas, vixens, vamps, femmes fatales, or wild women because they were *cursed or threatened* by jealous power-hungry entities. The sea nymphs were given the magic of flight; but due to the curse they did not know how to remove, they could not escape the area surrounding the Amazons' island. How could they control their own power in order to satisfy their needs?

The sailors who listened to the Siren's call are rumored in myth to have crashed their ships on the rocks near the fabled island populated only by warrior women, the Amazons. Thus the forbidden dark side of the Siren gave birth to the femme fatale and to the female vampire and the more feral aspects of the unfettered female, the wild woman.

Eventually, as the Siren left the sea and made landfall in the contemporary world, the manipulated siren controls her own destiny and revels in her power, whether it is to seduce or merely survive. A great modern cinematic symbol for this transformation is found in *La Femme Nikita* (1990). A young street punk is transformed into a gorgeous killing machine only to be manipulated by a covert French agency. Nikita, a Siren, thanks to the expert training and her own natural beauty and talent, chooses to take control of a bad situation and liberates herself from those who would manipulate her, doing what the original Sirens could not do—remove the curse. The original French film features a César award-winning performance by Anne Parrilaud and was written and directed by the formidable Luc Besson. This Siren is a wild woman who makes her own rules in order to survive. Nikita is a street junkie turned weapon for a secret government agency. This particular woman is beyond being empowered; she is triumphantly determined to survive at all costs, even if it means destroying or enchanting a man or a woman via questionable but glamorous means. But she uses her brains as much as her body. *Point of No Return* (1993) was an American remake of this French film, and a successful American TV series, "La Femme Nikita" (1997–2001), starring Peta Wilson, lasted five years.

DANGEROUS BEAUTY

The contemporary Siren handles the role well by celebrating it, but sometimes her sheer beauty and power may draw too much attention or tempt her to overestimate her strength when she makes a landfall. The sea-nymph Siren, the mermaid, and the harpy make earliest landfall most notably in the artistic and literary movement created by the Pre-Raphaelites. The art of the Pre-Raphaelites was notable for developing the earthly vision of sirens who did not have to be bound to the sea. Three young British artists John Everett Millais (1829–1896), Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Holman Hunt (1827–1910) originated the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, and by the mid-1850s Millais and Hunt had fallen away from the group as others joined, including Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909), William Morris (1834–1896), and Edward Burne-Jones (1835–1898).

Rossetti's romantic Pre-Raphaelite portraits come to mind. *Venus Verticordia* (1864–1868) is wonderful as Jane Burden Morris posing as a goddess who is either dead or alive. What we do know is that she is holding an arrow pointed at one of her exposed breasts. Rossetti idolized beautiful women,

especially Lizzie Siddal, his doomed model/wife, and Fanny Conforth, another flame-haired stunner, but his absolute favorite model and object of somewhat unrequited lust was Jane Burden, the wife of William Morris. Janey became a lifelong obsession, but with Siren-like zeal her constant rejection of him appeared to hasten his death. One notable portrait, *Proserpine* (1873–1877) recalls another stunner so beautiful that the Greek god Hades stole her from earth to make her the Queen of his underworld.

Janey, though, was not as ethereal as his second great love. Elizabeth "Lizzie" Siddal was a flame-haired millinery clerk who first caught his eye. Her pale, delicate beauty also inspired John Everett Millais, another artist of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, to paint his iconic painting of Shakespeare's Ophelia (1852), a painting that has forever captured Lizzie's haunting Siren-like quality as she floats, in luminous death, hands outstretched.

Lizzie Siddal represents the tragic quality of the Siren. Rossetti fell in love with a fragile woman with her own artistic talent with an addiction to chloral (prescribed after a miscarriage) that caused her death in 1852. Lizzie was the archetype of what came to be known as the Pre-Raphaelite stunner who seduced artists such as Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones and photographers like Julia Margaret Cameron, who was not immune to reproducing the PRB type in her Victorian photographs. Artists of later periods further glamorized or focused on the erotic image of the Siren archetype of devastatingly attractive icons, particularly the Symbolists and other early contemporary artists who were addicted to depicting sirens whose sexuality shouts off the canvas in an often feral way. Among them are Gustave Moreau; Fernand Hodler; Franz von Stuck, whose *Sin* (1897) depicts a pale bare-breasted diva shrouded in shadow; Emile Bernard; Paul Gauguin (*Ondine* [1889] evokes the Siren best); Gustave Klimt; Félix Vallotton; Toulouse Lautrec; Odilon Redon; Puvis de Chavanne; Henri Matisse; John William Waterhouse; Evelyn de Morgan; Edvard Munch; Jean Delville; Alphonse Mucha; and notably, two Surrealists, Salvador Dali (his wife Gala was very much a real-life femme fatale) and René Magritte. Picasso, of course, also heeded the Siren call, as did other contemporary artists such as Tamara de Lempicka, Vargas, Yves Klein, Joan Brown, and fashion photographers like Helmut Newton, Richard Avedon, Annie Leibovitz, and cheesecake photographers such as Bruno Bernard, David Hamilton, and others. Bernard's staged studio images of Marilyn Monroe echo the sad quality of how the original Sirens' eyes must have looked after Circe ensorcelled them, haunted and feral, the "hungry eyes" of women who have been cursed by fate or circumstances beyond their control.

Jan Marsh noted society's tendency to take PRB models and turn them into stars: "the romance of the Pre-Raphaelite women tends both to glorify them, raising them like Hollywood film stars above the level of ordinary mortals into a mythic realm of tragic heroine and fatal sirens, and paradoxically to diminish them, reducing their contradictory personalities and lives to flat figures in a fantasy landscape" (*Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* 3).

Siren worship thrives in pop media's fascination with fashion models ranging from vintage superstars Verushka, Twiggy, Lauren Hutton, and Iman, to younger mannequins like Naomi Campbell, Tyra Banks, and Kate Moss—whose every travail is covered with the same morbid delight as the sundry life stories of screen celebrities like Angelina Jolie, Julia Roberts, Pamela Sue Anderson, Demi Moore, Britney Spears, Madonna, Gwyneth Paltrow, Drew Barrymore, Jennifer Aniston, and other stunners. Will they gain the mystique of classic screen femmes fatales Greta Garbo, Marilyn Monroe, Jean Harlow, and Rita Hayworth? Only time will tell, but the key thing to remember is how they reflect a quality that all classic Sirens should have: beauty that tantalizes and lures men or women just as honey attracts bees.

THE SEDUCTIVE SHORT STORY

The Siren features in many short stories in all genres. It would be impossible to make a comprehensive ''best of'' list, but it is always fun to provide a menu of short stories that will remind readers why they are so enjoyable.

There are anthologies that feature Sirens, femmes fatales, wild women, or dangerous divas who use their seductive powers for revenge or just entertainment. A few titles: *The Dadelus Book of Femmes Fatales*, edited by Brian Stableford; *Wild Women*, edited by Sue Thomas (1994); *Wild Women*, edited by Melissa Mia Hall (1997); *Love Kills*, edited by Ed Gorman and Martin Greenberg (1997); *Sirens and Other Daemon Lovers*, edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling (1998). Others target the Siren's (male and female) erotic powers as found in *I Shudder at Your Touch* (1991) and *Shudder Again* (2003), both edited by Michele Slung; *Alien Sex* (Dutton, 1990), *Little Deaths* (1994), and *Lethal Kisses* (1996), all edited by Ellen Datlow. *The Mammoth Book of Vampire Stories by Women*, edited by Stephen Jones (2002) provides many toothsome Vamp Sirens as well.

A chronological listing of pivotal sirens/femmes fatales stories:

I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the Lady Ligeia. Long years have elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering. Or, perhaps, I cannot now bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placed cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive, that they have been unnoticed and unknown.

—*Edgar Allan Poe, ''Ligeia''*

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1. "Ligeia" (*Baltimore American Museum*, September 1838) by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe's early American grotesque tale of obsessive love might very well be his masterpiece. A perverse, nameless narrator falls in love with the Lady Ligeia, who sickens and dies but whose Femme Fatale persona leads him into opium addiction and encourages the torture of his beautiful young wife Rowena, whose dying body becomes the vessel for Ligeia's ill-fated return.

2. "Berenice" (*Southern Literary Messenger*, March 1835; revised and re-published in *Broadway Journal*, April 5, 1845) by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe excelled in writing about Femmes Fatales, as they symbolized his mistrust of seductive women and romance in general. Egaeus, the narrator, lives with his beautiful cousin Berenice, who becomes ill. He obsesses about her changing appearance, especially her teeth, to the point where he goes to her grave, unearths her still living corpse, and pulls her haunting teeth.

3. "The Orchard Pit" (1886; in *The Dream Weavers*, ed. John Weeks) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This tale is of considerable significance but is often overlooked by readers of the Supernatural Siren. The Siren's evolution from a watery temptress into a more modern land-bound seductress is as impor-tant as much as Gautier's Cleopatra Femme Fatale in 1838 and the immortal lovers in John Keats's "Lamia" (1820) and Keats's Femme Fatale in "La Belle Dame sans Merci," whose beauty is the ultimate weapon. Rossetti's Siren story was written in 1869, not long before a failed suicide attempt, and was not published until seventeen years later in *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1886). The lush poetic imagery in the short story becomes rapidly feverish as the protagonist falls deeper into the spell of the Siren of the glen, at first a childish memory, then a present-day beckoning He feels compelled to bite the Siren's apple, to heed her Siren call.

4. "The Great God Pan" (1894) by Arthur Machen. Much has been written about this often reprinted classic about Helen Vaughan, who becomes a

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Men tell me that sleep has many dreams, but all my life I have dreamt one dream alone.

I see a glen whose sides slope upward from the deep bed of a dried-up stream, and either slope is covered with wild apple-trees. In the largest tree, within the fork whence the limbs divide, a fair golden-haired woman stands and sings, with one white arm stretched along a branch of the tree, and with the other holding forth a bright red apple as if to some one coming down the slope. Below her feet the trees grow more and more tangled and stretch from both sides across the deep pit below: and the pit is full of the bodies of men.

They lie in heaps beneath the screen of boughs, with her apples bitten in their hands' and some are no more than ancient bones now and some seem dead but yesterday. She stands over them in the glen, and sings for ever, and offers her apple still.

—*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The Orchard Pit"*

Siren by mysterious and hideous ways. Is she the progeny of a satyr and Mary, a servant girl who has been operated on by a mad doctor so she can see the Great God Pan? Helen is a Femme Fatale who grows up to have a deadly impact on many men.

5. "How Love Came to Professor Guildea" (1900) by Robert Hichens. A ghost as Siren, and a very unwelcome one at that—she haunts a cold-hearted genius to a tragic end. In this case, the Siren is not at all charming or seductive, she is the antithesis of what this professor believes to be desirable. The ghost is a Femme Fatale who is in love with him, love being something the professor can not understand, leading to heart failure. A tour de force of the imagination and the will of an extraordinary Siren.

5. "The Song of the Sirens" (*Sunset*, March 1909) by Edward Lucas White. White envisioned a more traditional Siren in this quiet jewel, written by the *Weird Tales* writer who also wrote "Sorcery Island" (1922), which featured a male Siren who holds an entire island in thrall.

6. "The Beckoning Fair One" (1911) by Oliver Onions. Onions produced a memorable ghost Siren/Femme Fatale haunting a writer first through a seemingly innocuous song suggested in the title, which also plays upon the musical bent of the original Greek Siren myth. Is he driven insane by the ghost or merely ensorcelled?

7. "The Seal Maiden" (*Cavalier*, November 15, 1913) by Victor Rousseau. Rousseau, a British-born American journalist who also wrote under the name H. M. Egbert, wrote about one of the Siren's well-known mythological relatives, a shapeshifting selky who just happens to be a seductive Femme Fatale in this early fantasy.

8. "Wings in the Night" (*Weird Tales*, July 1932) by Robert E. Howard. Howard tackles the harpies myth in this exciting Solomon Kane adventure, but these creatures are not very attractive. They may have wings but they represent the grotesque side of the Siren.

9. "The Rainy Moon" (1940) by Colette. An overlooked supernatural gem, Colette's exquisite tale is about a Siren's revenge. In Paris, a narrator, a writer much like Colette herself, hires Mademoiselle Rosita Barberet, a middle-aged typist, to temporarily fill in for her regular typist. Rosita lives with her lovely younger sister, Madame Délia Essendier, who is estranged from her husband Eugene—in a flat the narrator once lived in long ago. The flat has a window with an old wavy pane of glass that creates a mysterious colorful "rainy moon" when light shows through it, similar to a prism's rainbow shimmer, once charming and now sinister as the narrator learns what Délia is doing. The pretty neglected wife is one of the most convincing natural "witches" in European literature. She is a Femme Fatale who has decided to kill her husband by putting him to death through magical rituals. Why? Because he has fallen out of love with her. Colette's understated handling of dark magic and the narrator's growing unease with the rituals, cleverly conducted "offstage," enhance the chill factor of convoking and cast a relentless spell over the reader that lingers long after the story is done, much like the silence after a Siren's song has ended.

10. "The Daemon Lover" (*Woman's Home Companion*, February 1949) by Shirley Jackson. Jackson creates a memorable, if invisible, Siren for her lonely protagonist, Margaret, who goes in search of a James Harris, the Daemon Lover of the title. Is he real? Is her exhausting search fruitless? Horrific in its poignant portrait of a woman obsessed with finding a man to love, it also insists that readers make up their own ending.

11. "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" (1949) by Fritz Leiber. Leiber dissects the glamor-girl complex and the ravenous aspect of the Siren as Goddess and how she is created to distract us from reality.

12. "Hot Eyes, Cold Eyes" (1980) by Lawrence Block. A wonderful story that complements Leiber's. It provides a timeless portrait of the Siren who scorns the adulation of men because of a savage mistrust, reflecting a more Circe-like trait than that of the Siren who does not willingly hurt the men she desires.

13. "Revenge" (1987) by Isabel Allende. Allende wrote several Sirenesque tales in this incredible collection "written" by the protagonist from Allende's novel, *Eva Luna* (1987). This one focuses on the plight of a Dulce Rosa Orellano, who at fifteen was crowned the Queen of Carnival during a civil war. A violent rebel, Tadeo Céspedes murders her father, Senator Orellano, and rapes the young virginal beauty but is forever tormented by his subsequent desire for her. When they meet again, she allows him to love her only to avenge his death and her sorrow in a brutal way on their wedding day.

14. "Tallulah" (1991) by Charles de Lint. De Lint's mysterious Siren in this bittersweet urban fantasy haunts a young Canadian writer. Tallulah or Tally, as she prefers to be called, seduces the writer with a poignant urgency, meeting him only at night in a crumbling section of a city much like Toronto. He falls in love with her and notes, "She mesmerized me— right from that very first night. I sensed a portent in her casual appearance into my life, though a portent of what, I couldn't say" (189). He believes she is a ghost, and her secretive aura about her past loves—"When they move away, they leave my life, because I can't follow them"—suggests that Tally might be cursed to haunt a place much like the island the Greek Sirens could never leave. De Lint's Siren song of lost love is also a shrewd depiction of the Siren motif reflecting the spirit of urban decay.

15. "Medusa's Child" (1991) by Kim Antieau. Antieau presents a Siren vampire/model who poses for artists in order to devour their creativity. It is a fresh take on the model/artist obsession, turning the tables on artists who take advantage of muses. It relates neatly to Leiber's "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" and the whole bizarre Siren cult of beauty school.

16. "Predators" (1997) by Edward Bryant. This tale features a feral Femme Fatale who is pushed into a corner and retaliates. It is an uncanny exploration of how a Siren fights to survive, even if it means utilizing a physical attribute reminiscent of the traits Circe cursed the original Sirens with. Lisa Blackwell, a young African American, has attracted a violent stalker/serial killer's attentions, and shows how some Sirens must become

deadly Wild Women, not because they want to kill, but because they want to live.

17. "The Merry Widow" (*Mary Higgins Clark Mystery Magazine*, 1996) by Kate Wilhelm. Wilhelm's protagonist, Meg Summer, is a young single mom confronted with Effie Yates, a Femme Fatale favorite, the wealthy black widow. The deft portrait of She Who Could Not Care Less But Will Prevail at All Costs, even if it means leaving multiple murder, presents the symbol with an ironic twist.

18. "Psychofemmes" (1997) by Melissa Mia Hall. This contemporary take on fierce creatures who heed the Siren's call for revenge reflects the ongoing evolution of contemporary Sirens, some of whom become Wild Women and Avenging Angels while others remain unrepentant Femmes Fatales who happily lure men to their deaths. A suburban book club is actually a cover for a killing club for women (housewives, moms, and childless singles as well as career women) who dispatch men or women they perceive as deserving execution. Unfortunately, the leadership of the informal organization is unraveling because of some personal conflicts and dissension among the troubled members.

19. "Hunger" (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, 2001) by Joyce Carol Oates. Oates presents the seductive pull of a mysterious drifter ("Summoned by the long-haired young man. Like a dancer, summoned by music she can't resist" [122]) named Jean-Claude, a dangerous male Siren who wears briny-smelling cologne. He captures the heart of Kristine, a bored married mother of a five-year-old. Their first encounter is appropriately at Rocky Harbor, the seashore. An ex-dancer, she notices his graceful movements and his limp with a rush of love at first sight. As her obsession grows she sinks deeper into

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It's at a distance she first sees him. Not knowing him then.

Yet seeming to recognize him. Shading her eyes as the chill Atlantic surf froths and foams over her bare feet. He's a silhouette crouched amid rocks and sand at the ragged edge of the surf; he seems to be washing his hands, his forearms, splashing water up onto his face. Then he stands, stretches, takes up a backpack, which he slings over his shoulder, and turns to move in her direction. Yet oblivious of her, she thinks. Striding along the beach like a pent-up, now released, young animal. . . .

Kristine thinks, *He's a dancer. A wounded dancer like so many.*

It's one of those swift unexamined thoughts that sometimes fly into Kristine's head when she's in a heightened mood—not alone and not lonely yet alone in her mind—a childish wish (and in this case a lethal wish) that others for whom she feels a mysterious tug of kinship are persons like herself, sharing a secret unspoken bond.

A wounded dancer, an ex-dancer like me.

—Joyce Carol Oates, "Hunger"

a misguided, passionate connection leading to the creation of a nightmarish Couple Fatale with horrific consequences.

THE SIREN CALL OF NOVELS AND NOVELLAS

In literature the landscape populated by today's Sirens and femmes fatales is crammed with the deadly diva, most notably in the genres of suspense, mystery, and horror. She uses her beauty to attain whatever goal she has in sight, but she also has brains and considerable skill in many other departments aside from that of seduction.

But seduce she will, if that is what she must do to survive. What follows is the delectable . . .

Siren watchers are warned that such lists as the following are never conclusive, and the femme fatale in some aspect figures in many novels, whether in leading or supporting roles. Just watch for bad girls, naughty women, dangerous divas, and assorted wild, semi-wild, and very determined women (and men) who will do anything to insure their survival.

1. "Une Nuit de Cléopâtra" (*Presse*, November 29–December 6, 1838) by Théophile Gautier. This French pioneer of the dark fantastic joys found in exploring the Siren and her sibling spirits also wrote a Ghost Siren romance, *Sprite* (1877), about a love affair between a man and beautiful dancer's ghost. It has also been translated as *Spirit Love* and *Stronger Than Death,* which also aptly describes the allure of the Femme Fatale. Brian Stableford observed: "Gautier represents the zenith of Romantic Fantasy . . . Gautier created the modern Femme Fatale by arguing that death might be a small price to pay for the reward such magically attractive sexual partners might have to offer; his gloriously fantasized worldview is that which all neo-Romantics must attempt to transcend and to which they must default whenever their cynicism fails" (Joshi and Dziemianowicz 456).

2. "Carmilla" (*Dark Blue*, December 1871–March 1872) by J. Sheridan Le Fanu. In a class by itself, this novella about vampirism predates the better-known *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker, who was influenced by its mystique. This vintage lesbian femme fatale is very scary in her elegant, relentless pursuit of a young woman. Dracula's Sirens are more toothsome and traditional but wonderfully unrepentant. But Samuel Taylor Coleridge left an unfinished piece, "Christobel" (1816), that features a female vampire as well.

3. *She* (1886) by H. Rider Haggard. Haggard wrote this to be read as juvenile literature, but it still seems more like an adult testament to the power of the Siren. It is a potboiler, but very memorable in its portrayal of a Goddess type who loses her femme fatale edge and immortality because of her love for a mere mortal, but not before a lot of teeth-gnashing and seductive Siren antics. Should Sirens turn into regular women because of men? Nah!

It was She herself!

She was clothed, as I had seen her when she unveiled, in the kirtle of clinging white, cut low upon her bosom, and bound in at the waist with the barbaric double-headed snake, and, as before, her rippling black hair fell in heavy masses down her back. But her face was what caught my eye, and held me as in a vise, not this time by the force of its beauty, but by the power of fascinated terror. The beauty was still there, indeed, but the agony, the blind passion, and the awful vindictiveness displayed upon those quivering features, and in the tortured look of the upturned eyes, were such as surpass my powers of description.

For a moment she stood still, her hands raised high above her head, and as she did so the white robe slipped from her down to her golden girdle, baring the blinding loveliness of her form. She stood there, her fingers clenched, and the awful look of malevolence gathered and deepened on her face.''

—*H. Rider Haggard,* She

4. *Trilby* (1894) by George du Maurier. Du Maurier wrote and illustrated a Victorian masterpiece about how a Siren can be created not just by a Greek sorceress of myth, but by a modern man who uses mesmerism to give a lovely woman extraordinary singing ability.

5. *The Sea Demons* (*All-Story*, January 1–22, 1916) by H. M. Egbert. This hard-to-find early science fiction tale was actually written by a well-known American journalist who wrote under Victor Rousseau and often featured Femmes Fatales in his work. A gorgeous sea queen and her army of misty creatures decide to become Earth's dominant species. The tale shows what can happen when a Siren takes on a Circe-like thirst for domination.

6. *Gone with the Wind* (1936) by Margaret Mitchell. Scarlett O'Hara, Mitchell's unforgettable Southern belle, remains one of the most famous Sirens. Although she has no supernatural powers, Scarlett's vixen persona fits the requirements of the Femme Fatale. Watching Scarlett (Vivien Leigh) in the 1939 film begin to self-destruct after surviving the Civil War is tragic and horrific even as it also inspires viewers, confirming that at the core of the Siren is a delightful paradox—sometimes one must be bad to be good in order to get what one wants. That the reader must decide if Scarlett gets Rhett back is the cherry on the banana split in this sprawling and beguilingly romantic Civil War epic.

7. *Rebecca* (1938) by Daphne du Maurier. Du Maurier created an unforgettable femme fatale in this story about the power a dead first wife exerts over her husband's new wife. The ill Rebecca de Winter stages her own suicide to look like murder by her husband's hands. Made into an Alfred Hitchcock blockbuster in 1940, the novel also spawned two sequels: Susan Hill's *Mrs. De Winter* (1993) and Sally Beauman's *Rebecca's Tale* (2001).

8. *The G-String Murders* (1941) by Gypsy Rose Lee. Lee, a famous stripper, wrote two novels with the help of ghost collaborator, Craig Rice (Georgiana Randolph). Lee's burlesque background enlivened a potboiler that also served as the source material for the film *Lady of Burlesque* (1943), starring Barbara Stanwyck as the stripper crimesolver of multiple murders set against the vivid burlesque backstage world Lee knew so well. Who needs C.S.I. when you've got a stripper on the case? James Gunn wrote the film adaptation.

9. *Laura* (1944) by Vera Caspary. Caspary is not a familiar name to many romantic suspense readers but it should be. She wrote the source material for the more famous film of the same name about the murder of a beautiful woman who captivated many men, including the man investigating her murder. He is struck by a very Siren-like question: Can a man be seduced by a dead woman?

10. *Bedelia* (1945) by Vera Caspary. Caspary also wrote this chilling Black Widow novel. A "kitten with claws of steel," Bedelia uses her seductive Siren powers to produce a string of dead husbands dispatched with cool efficiency, without regrets.

11. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) by Angela Carter. Carter's critically acclaimed short story collection is so cohesive that her retelling of fairy tales reflects an aspect of the Siren as enchantress, but on her own terms. The supernatural blends with magical realism and classic fantasy motifs that are turned upside down with particular flair. The darkly comic "The Lady of the House of Love" in particular should attract fans of the vampire Siren, as a young countess attracts a male virgin to her house only to find him singularly unappetizing. Carter influenced a new generation of adult fantasy enthusiasts that created an audience for anthologies filled with this new take on fairy tales typified by a series of anthologies beginning with *Snow White, Blood Red* (1993), edited by Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow.

12. *Earthbound* (1982; rev. ed. 1989) by Richard Matheson. This is a unique twist on the ghost femme fatale who seduces a man in order to siphon off his ectoplasm so she can achieve physical substance.

13. *Neptune Rising: Songs & Tales of the Undersea Folk* (1982) by Jane Yolen. Yolen is an award-winning author of both adult and children's literature. This collection of magical stories, beautifully illustrated by David Weisner, is suitable for readers of all ages.

14. *The Woman in Black* (1983) by Susan Hill. Hill's British tale of the supernatural not only has a great title reminiscent of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), but includes a Ghost Siren out for revenge. It is narrated by a young lawyer who first sees the woman in black at a funeral. The novel is a good example of a Ghost Siren who doesn't have to look like Pamela Anderson, but she endures and usually gets what she wants, no matter what. Set in moody old England's nineteenth century, it was adapted by Stephen Mallatratt into a stage play in 1988.

15. *The Queen of the Damned* (1988) by Anne Rice. Rice's ability to portray vampires and witches as femmes fatales is well known. She has influenced many authors of erotic vampire fiction, including Laurell K. Hamilton of the popular Anita Blake series, Nancy Collins, Nancy Kilpatrick, Charlaine Harris, L. A. Banks, and many others. But the mother of all vampires in this particular book, who wishes to bend Lestat to do her bidding, is an exceptionally striking blend of femme fatale, Siren, and She Who Must Be Obeyed.

16. *Witch* (Little Brown, 1993) by Ian Rankin. The clever and very deadly protagonist in Rankin's thriller is dubbed ''Witch,'' and her powers to elude capture verge on the supernatural. Witch is a wanted outlaw, an assassin who is beautiful, intelligent, a master of disguise and revenge. She is finally captured only after killing the only man she has ever hated, for good reason—her father. Is letting revenge rule her fatal flaw? Can a true Siren go beyond revenge as long as Circe's curse is upon her? Must she become a witch, a modern-day Morgan Le Fey, in order to survive?

17. *The Robber Bride* (1993) by Margaret Atwood. Atwood's satirical take on Zena, a sexy femme fatale, and her devastating impact on three friends. Learning how to deal with the destructive cyclone and the ruins left in the wake of Zena's wrath (or chicanery) in their lives, they also ponder on one of the most salient aspects of the femme fatale—she doesn't have to have a reason to destroy lives.

18. *On Blue's Water* (1999) by Gene Wolfe. Wolfe's first book of The Short Sun, a fantasy series—it takes place after Wolfe's four-volume Book of the Long Sun—features the beguiling Seawrack, a good Siren who becomes Horn's guide and beloved helpmate on an Odyssey-like seafaring search for Patera Silk, a wise leader who is much needed on Planet Blue. Seawrack is one Siren who has shaken off the bad curse karma but still has a bittersweet parting with the narrator who laments losing her.

19. *Femme Fatale* (2003) by Carole Nelson Douglas. Douglas has written a series of mystery novels expanding on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fringe

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She didn't look out to sea, but she listened to it. The steady clash of waves, the whistling wind. Exhilarating. Her hair, pinned back, was still drying quickly, her scalp chilled by the wind. A sharp salt smell clung to her. Her eyes were closed slightly as she listened. Then in the distance, she heard a loudish pop, there and then not there. Like the meeting o f balloon and pin at a children's party. She knew she had measured the amount of the charge well, and had placed it well, too, down in the bowels of the boat. The hole blown in the hull would be a couple of yard in diameter. The vessel would sink in seconds, seconds of shock and horror for its crew. And if the explosion didn't kill the two men outright . . . well, what chance of their reaching land? No chance for the older man, minimal for the younger.

—Ian Rankin, Witch

character, Irene Adler, the only woman to outsmart Sherlock Holmes. In this installment Adler investigates her own mother's past to uncover the identity of one of the most notorious women of the nineteenth century.

20. *Holy Skirts* (2005) by René Steinke. Steinke delivered a fantastic fictional portrait of a real-life Siren, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who modeled for Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp. Set during the fabled years before and after World War I, it follows the lives and loves of a Wild Woman flamboyantly content with her Siren-like qualities. If longing is at the root of the original Greek Sirens who were punished for attracting the adulation of men that Circe wanted, Steinke expresses what can liberate the Siren from Circe's curse. Is it horrific or joyful? You decide.

21. *The Silver Bough* (2006) by Lisa Tuttle. This contemporary fairy tale is set in fey Scotland and provides an elusive Apple Queen as its heady Siren. One bite of a magical apple will also create a Siren who holds the key to a small town's renewal. Three hopeful American women heed the Siren's call, but this time it's about love's redemption and metaphorically lifts the dark veil of Circe's curse, making this an enchanting antidote to Rossetti's orchard Siren who lures her men to death. In this story the Apple Queen's gift of love seduces but rewards her captives who finally discover how to live.

THE FIERCE FILMS OF THE FEMMES FATALES

There are many films that feature Sirens, although they are not all supernaturally gifted and some are downright funny. All are significant because they chart the Siren's cinematic evolution.

1. *Cleopatra* (1917). Theda Bara was a silent screen Siren who starred in more than fifty movies from 1914 to 1926 with titles like *She Devil*, *Siren of Hell*, and *The Devil's Daughter*, the ultimate vamp of the silent screen era. Two other better-known Cleopatra remakes exist. In 1934, Claudette Colbert played the Egyptian diva in the Cecil B. de Mille classic, and Elizabeth Taylor had the honor in the plodding, unintentionally horrific 1963 version most notable for the love scenes with the man she would later marry, divorce, remarry, and act with again, Richard Burton.

2. *She* (1935). The RKO version of H. Rider Haggard's classic starring Randolph Scott is about an immortal woman and femme fatale who makes the mistake of falling in love. A later Hammerscope remake with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee (1965) is primarily notable for Ursula Andress as Ayesha, She Who Must Be Obeyed.

3. *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935). This film stars Marlene Dietrich playing a Seville Femme Fatale who proudly proclaims "All men are my slaves—and glad to be." John Walker writes that it is "rather splendid in its highly decorative and uncommercial way, a treat for addicts" (233). This was the last Dietrich vehicle to be directed by Josef von Sternberg.

4. *Rebecca* (1940). File this spellbinder under "A dead Siren still has power." Alfred Hitchcock directed his American debut. It is a faithful adaptation of the classic Daphne du Maurier Gothic romance about a dead wife whose Siren call still controls her estate of Manderley, her obsessively devoted housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, and Maxim de Winter's (Laurence Olivier) life. Her deadly influence corrupts the life of the second Mrs. de Winter, his innocent bride played by a luminous Joan Fontaine. In true femme fatale fashion, the demonically exotic Rebecca knew she was dying of cancer and staged a suicide to suggest that Maxim had murdered her. Donald Spoto noted the clever "Siren" reference: "The final solution to the mystery of the wicked and doomed Rebecca is connected with the sea where she was buried, that element of chaos in Hitchcock which finally yields terrible truth" (93).

5. *The Lady Eve* (1941). This Preston Sturges comedy depicts the power of the madcap Siren, a woman (Barbara Stanwyck) who always gets her man, in this case, Henry Fonda. Stanwyck plays a card sharp who preys on wealthy travelers; in short, a gold digger and a wild seductress (so bad, she's good). This represents the Siren as playful, possibly deadly, but never dull. Not horrific or supernatural, but it certainly represents the femme fatale's power of seduction.

6. *Double Indemnity* (1944). Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray star in this Billy Wilder classic that was film noir at its early sharp-edged best. "No, I never loved, you, Walter—not you, or anybody else. I'm rotten to the heart. I used you, just as you said. That's all you ever meant to me. Until a minute ago, when I couldn't fire that second shot"—from the screenplay by Billy Wilder adapted from a 1930s story by James M. Cain. Roger Ebert wrote: "*Double Indemnity* has one of the most familiar noir themes: The hero is not a criminal, but a weak man who is tempted and succumbs. In this 'double' story the woman and man tempt one another; neither would have acted alone. Both are attracted not so much by the crime as by the thrill of committing it with the other person" (*The Great Movies* 147). Ebert also noted, "The puzzle of Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity*, the enigma that keeps it new, is what these two people really think of one another."

7. *Laura* (1944). Film noir doesn't get better than Otto Preminger's film of the Vera Caspary novel, adapted by Jay Dratler, Samuel Hoffenstein, and Betty Reinhardt. Solving Laura's murder is the mission of Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb), but the deeper the investigation goes, the more he discovers the Siren at the core of her persona. Gene Tierney played the Siren. Vincent Price, her fiancé.

8. *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945). Love drives a woman crazy, or at least this femme fatale who causes her own miscarriage, watches her brother drown, and poisons herself to implicate her sister. Does any self-respecting Siren kill herself for a man? Only if she is also insanely selfish and jealous. Gene Tierney chews the scenery with Cornell Wilde in a foot-stomping melodrama. Cycle forward a forty-six years to *Thelma and Louise* (1991), written by Callie Khouri and directed by Ridley Scott, where two feminist

femmes fatales played by Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis drive off a cliff to avoid capture.

9. *All About Eve* (1950). Bette Davis stars as the witty thespian and intelligent diva, Margo Channing, faced with a deceitful little actress named Eve Harrington who will stop at nothing to get what she wants (a suitable Siren trait) to usurp Margo's leading role in an upcoming play. Required for all serious drama students, this classic was written and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Davis is also notable for her role in *Jezebel* (1938), about a Civil War–era femme fatale who alas, becomes reformed.

10. *Carmen* (1954). Dorothy Dandridge plays the leading role in Oscar Hammerstein's updated, African American version of the famous opera. Carmen's sultry seduction of a man who is already spoken for has dangerous consequences for Harry Belafonte, who plays the jilted soldier she runs off with, only to discard for a prizefighter.

11. *Lolita* (1961). Vladimir Nabokov adapted his novel in this treasure directed by a young Stanley Kubrik. James Mason plays Humbert Humbert, a foolish European professor who moves to America and becomes obsessed with Lolita, his landlord's daughter, played by Sue Lyons. Lyons rocked the film world with her nubile femme fatale charm. Near the end, Humbert kills off a wildly unrepentant seducer Clare Quilty (played by Peter Sellers), despoiler of virgins, the playwright who seduced the willing Lolita. The now pregnant Lo' (by yet another man) breaks Humbert's heart after she discloses a past indiscretion and refuses to run off with him again. She then confesses glibly with true femme fatale self-absorption, "I'm sorry I cheated so much … I'll call you when we get to Alaska" while she gloats over the money he has just given her.

12. *Sisters* (1973). Brian de Palma's scary tale stars Margot Kidder and focuses on the plight of a woman having separation issues from a Siren, her dead and deeply disturbed Siamese twin. In the same year, *Coffy* stars Pam Grier as a femme fatale out to avenge the destruction of her eleven-year-old sister. See also *Cleopatra Jones* (1973) and *Foxy Brown* (1974), all often described as blaxploitation but enhanced by Grier's bravura acting skills.

13. *Splash!* (1974). This Tom Hanks comedy directed by Ron Howard is about the rewards of falling in love with a Siren who doesn't want to lose her man, a mermaid played by Darryl Hannah. An Americanized puff piece that is still a delight, much like the British film *Miranda* (1947) that predates it, set in Cornwall and written by Peter Blackmore, about a doctor in Cornwall on a holiday who also falls for a mermaid and takes her (played by Glynis Johns) to London. A cute modern film about a teen mermaid, *Aquamarine* (2006), based on an Alice Hoffman book for middle school readers, focuses, as *Splash!* did so well, on the joyful aspect of the good Siren sea creature, who means no harm but just wants to be loved and have friends.

14. *Annie Hall* (1977). Another comedic handling of a femme fatale who is not deadly nor evil, this Woody Allen gem won an Oscar in 1978 over *Star*

Check Out These B-Movies for Outrageous Femmes:

1. *Housewife* (1934). Bette Davis plays a babe (one of the original Desperate Housewives?) who knew it was her way or the highway.
2. *Cobra Woman* (1944). Maria Montez plays the dual role of sexy twin sisters from hell or, in this case, an island queendom.
3. *The Magic Carpet* (1951). Lucille Ball plays a had girl. That's right, LUCY as an evil femme fatale, the Princess Narah!
4. *Inferno* (1953). Rhonda Fleming plays an evil wife who plots to dump her rich hubby in the desert to die.
5. *Devil Girl from Mars* (1954). Patricia Laffan plays a Martian Siren who arrives on Earth to get men for breeding purposes.
6. *Queen of Outer Space* (1958). Zsa Zsa Gabor rules as the Queen Venusian Siren in this spaced-out epic. ''Men caused the ruin of this world'' is one of Gabor's best lines.
7. *Brides of Dracula* (1960). Marita Hunt and other alluring cuties lure a naughty disciple of Dracula to go on a blood-sucking rampage in an all girls' school.
8. *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* (1966). Tura Satana, Haji, and Lori Williams star as three exotic dancers on a wild girl-gang rampage proving that sweet femmes fatales are kittens with very sharp claws.
9. *Crazy Mama* (1975). Nobody gets in the way of Cloris Leachman, Linda Purl, and Ann Southern as they rip through the country on a crime spree.
10. *Species* (1995) and *Species II* (1998). Natasha Henstridge plays a hot half-human, half-alien who, of course, will do or eat anything to survive in an actually pretty entertaining modern sci-fi B movie, but this half-breed Siren gets a little too good by the time the sequel arrives—too bad!

Wars for the best picture. It features the Siren in a lighter vein, but its poignant message is ruefully horrific. Diane Keaton was Allen's muse before Mia Farrow and provided some of the best comedic work of her career as Annie, Alvy Singer's greatest love. Annie's elusive quality represents the Siren as the unattainable ideal, the one who got away because he couldn't accept her as she was.

15. *Fatal Attraction* (1987). Glenn Close turns in a stellar performance as the wronged Siren in a scary film that summed up the 1980s fear of the single career woman as much as it played on the fears of marital infidelity and the crumbling façade of the American family.
16. *La Femme Nikita* (1990). As mentioned earlier, this is a not so subtle reminder that this French seductress is a Siren and a femme fatale. The cable TV show spin-off is a pale imitation but entertaining and influenced other popular TV shows like ''Alias 6.''

17. *Basic Instinct* (1991). The original nightmarish thriller, with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone in a lurid but intense game of cat and mouse, in a film written by Joe Eszterhaz, pulled no punches in its depiction of a deadly diva who could outsmart any man anytime. The long awaited sequel, *Basic Instinct 2* (2006), was a total disaster, making the Siren into a two-bit slut, horrific but not in a good way.

18. *Sirens* (1994). This Australian treasure starring Hugh Grant and Sam Neill is about a scandalous artist and his Siren models during the Victorian age. It echoes the Pre-Raphaelite preoccupation with the idea of extreme beauty that gives the women possessing it supernatural seductive powers. Sam Neill plays an artist making waves with his erotic nudes. His models include his wife and some sexy Sirens who help a young wife discover her sexual self and reignite her marriage to a minister, played by Hugh Grant. Elle MacPherson and Portia de Rossi play two of the enchanting Sirens.

19. *Practical Magic* (1998). Modern-day Sirens Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman star in this adaptation of the Alice Hoffman novel about bewitching sisters who must find a way to reverse a nasty curse, a dilemma those original Greek Sirens may have struggled with.

20. *American Beauty* (1999). Alan Ball wrote and directed this Academy Award–winning dark comedy starring Kevin Spacey, who also won a statuette for his portrayal of a suburban middle-aged married man tempted by a young Siren eerily unaware of her own power. It echoes the Lolita theme while exposing the tender flesh of the pale underbelly of modern suburban life.

21. *Chicago* (2002). In this multiple Academy Award–winning musical directed by Rob Marshal, based on a play by Bob Fosse and Fred Ebb, two showgirls battle it out on who is the best ''celebrity'' and femme fatale in the eyes of their true audience, the fickle public. Hilarious, poignant, and rambunctious, this ''horrific'' delight answers the question about what can happen when some good girls go bad but also shows how much fun can be had while doing it. It stars Catherine Zeta-Jones as Vilma Kelly and René Zellwegger as the rival bad girls and Richard Gere, who appeared as an homme fatale, a male prostitute framed for murder in *American Gigolo* (1980).

22. *O Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000). Inspired by the *Odyssey* of Homer and their own warped, hilarious vision, Joel and Ethan Coen wrote the script and Joel directed. Three chain-gang prisoners led by George Clooney (playing Everett Ulysses McGill) break free to search for treasure, encountering sexy Sirens, a one-eyed bad guy, the Klu Klux Klan, sweaty politicians, and all sorts of weird stuff.

23. *Frida* (2002). Frida Kahlo, directed by Julie Taymor, captures the Siren in all her glory as an art icon who was also a femme fatale. Frida was a brilliant, visionary Mexican artist and Diego Rivera's favorite muse; she seduced the world with her art and was a real-life Siren in many ways. This biopic starring the luminous Salma Hayek captures the seduction.

24. *He Loves Me…He Loves Me Not* (*À la Folie…pas du tout*) (2002). A French film written and directed by Laetitia Colombani about obsession, it features Audrey Tatou as Angelique, a young art student who becomes enamored of Loic, a married cardiologist played by Samuel Le Bihan, told from both viewpoints. Tatou's winsome performance heightens the shocking effect of the last reel. An underrated stylish thriller that examines the erotomania, an obsessive condition that might easily infect a modern Siren.

25. *Femme Fatale* (2002). Rebecca Romijn, in an erotic thriller directed by Brian de Palma, personifies the mixture of beauty and danger Nikita emanated. Through vivid cinematography in the later part of the film, it also suggests the femme fatale's origin in the Siren myth when he shows the character's death/rebirth through water. The dangerous trajectory of the empowered Siren suggests calamity in this film, and her salvation is through the watery rebirth that returns the Siren into making a choice to prevent a suicide, which then leads to her own miraculous redemption. The femme fatale then becomes the woman of life, of rebirth and hope.

26. *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (2003), *Kill Bill Vol. 2* (2004). Uma Thurman plays The Bride/Black Mamba in these Quentin Tarantino films that follow the cool assassin who wakes up after a four-year coma and decides it is time to get even. A too-long blood-drenched action epic, but with moments of sultry femme fatale glory, mainly due to Thurman's grace under pressure. *My Super Ex-Girlfriend* (2006) also features Thurman as a Siren in an Ivan Retiman-directed comedy. The mighty Uma plays G-Girl (a.k.a. Jenny Johnson) who decides to teach her ex, Matt Saunders (Luke Wilson), a serious lessonm about the perils of dumping a vixen with superpowers.

27. *Lady in the Water* (2006). In M. Night Shyamalan's uneven Gothic fantasy film, a sea "narf" (played by Bryce Dallas Howard) surfaces in the pool of a seedy apartment complex on a mission to find a writer who will inspire a future world leader. While the "narf" fits all the romantic physical criteria for a brilliant siren, she is not luring men to their deaths; instead, she is trying to save them.

THE SMALL SCREEN

In television the best-known examples of the femmes fatales can be found among the stellar cast of "Desperate Housewives" (2004–). They have all had their femme fatale moments, most notably Gabrielle Solis (Eva Longoria), the Latino spitfire and former model who has an affair with her yard boy, and the wickedly funny blonde realtor, Edie Britt, played by Nicollette Sheridan, who played a young Siren-in-the-making on "Knot's Landing."

"Alias" (2001–2006), created by J. J. Abrams, featured Jennifer Garner as Sydney Bristow, a strong empowered Wild Woman double agent for the CIA who has to deal with a femme fatale mother played by Lena Olin.

"Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1997–2003). Sarah Michelle Gellar flirted with becoming a ferocious teen femme fatale in her popular role of Buffy. She

certainly had some major Sirens surrounding her, including: Cordelia, played by Charisma Carpenter (who moved on to ''Angel'' [1999–2004], a spin-off series); Faith Lehane, a Vampire Slayer with issues; and a creepy vamp chick named Drusilla.

Classic nighttime soap operas like ''Dynasty'' (1981–1989) featured Joan Collins as a major femme fatale/Siren; just check out her character's name for a clue to this vixen's erotic charm: Alexis Morell Carrington Colby Dexter Rowan. Another soapy vehicle for a great Siren was ''Knot's Landing'' (1979–1993). The second longest running prime time soap featured Donna Mills as the evil temptress of the cul-de-sac, Abby Cunningham. The first longest running prime time soap was ''Dallas,'' and if there was a true Siren on that show, it had to be the ornery homme fatale played by Larry Hagman: J. R. Ewing.

Daytime TV can report many divas among their casts, but Susan Lucci's Erica Kane of ''All My Children''—which began in the 1960s and is still going strong—has no equal. Played by Emmy Award–winning (1999) Lucci, Erica is in a class by herself. Not only has she married and dumped more men than Alexis, Erica will stop at nothing to get what she wants, especially when it comes to protecting her husbands, jobs, or her children, even if it means committing a crime or two, including murder.

''Ally McBeal'' (1997–2002), as played by the ever-insecure Calista Flockhart, does not qualify as a Siren, but Ling as played by Lucy Liu does. Cast as a supporting character, the fabulous Ling often stole the show as an insatiable Siren and femme fatale. Ling was difficult to please and an absolutely ruthless diva lawyer. Liu's bravura performance helped her land a role as a Charlie's Angel in the successful but wildly over-the-top film remakes, *Charlie's Angels* (2000) and *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* (2003), which also starred Drew Barrymore and Cameron Diaz. The classic TV version of ''Charlie's Angels'' (1976–1981) also had crime-fighting ''angel'' babes

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Ten Films That Feature Notorious Femmes Fatales:

1. *Les Vampires* (1915) Musidora
2. *A Fool There Was* (1915) Theda Bara
3. *The Blue Angel* (1930) Marlene Dietrich
4. *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935) Barbara Stanwyck
5. *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945) Gene Tierney
6. *Gilda* (1946) Rita Hayworth
7. *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948) Rita Hayworth
8. *Body Heat* (1981) Kathleen Turner
9. *Basic Instinct* (1992) Sharon Stone
10. *Femme Fatale* (2002) Rebecca Romijn

(Farrah Fawcett, Jaclyn Smith, Kate Jackson, and Cheryl Ladd) kicking butt while looking luscious at the same time. But were they true femmes fatales? The jury is still out.

"Dark Angel" (2000–2002). Jessica Alba starred as a good femme fatale that showed kinship with *La Femme Nikita* as she was genetically enhanced to become a killing machine manipulated by a government agency in the future. Created by James Cameron.

Catwoman enlivened the "Batman" TV series (1966–1968) that starred Adam West and featured three actresses in the pivotal feline role: Julie Newmar, Lee Meriwether, and Eartha Kitt. All three had their glam pussycat moments, as did Michele Pfeiffer in the film *Batman Returns* (1991), with Michael Keaton as the masked superhero. Halle Berry took a turn at the role in *Catwoman* (2004) on the big screen, but the production featured a badly written script and no soul. Probably the best Catwoman can be found in comic book form. *Catwoman: Nine Lives of a Feline Fatale* (DC, 2004) showcases some vintage and newer scripts that capture the allure of this enduring pop icon.

A FINAL FEMME FATALE THOUGHT

The myth of Lilith, Adam's spurned "wife," is of course also at the root of the Siren mystique—or does that honor belong to Eve of biblical fame? The image of Eve offering the apple to Adam is at the very core of the deliciously dark side of temptation. Did Eve's beauty convince Adam to eat that apple, or was it his own hunger? Can a Siren succeed in her dark art of seduction if a man or a woman is not hungry? If her song is heard when no hunger exists, can the sweet notes induce hunger pains? Maybe, but a song can only be heard if someone is willing to be seduced. And if an apple is offered, there is always a choice to take it or to ignore it. One wonders if the account of Adam's first taste of Eve's apple is just as important as Homer's tales in the *Odyssey* in appreciating the evolution of the Siren femme fatale. And one wonders if this dangerous sea creature escaped Circe's curse to become the spurned Lilith who rejected Adam's rib in order to become the femme fatale . . . ?

Did she then become the Siren in Rossetti's "The Orchard" or Marilyn Monroe, some hungry-eyed model staring down from a billboard or from a burlesque stage, a porno queen's video, a dancer on the street, an artist's model, a curse, a blessing, a wishing star . . . a pulp noir temptress, a mermaid, a girlfriend, a wife, a mother, or even a teen Lolita, a Siren's sigh?

Rossetti's lovesick, doomed narrator chooses to take the apple his lover offers, even though she warns him, " 'Do not eat, it is the fruit of the Siren's dell.' And I laughed and ate: And at the heart of the apple was the stain like a woman's mouth; and as I bit it I could feel a kiss on my lips" (Weeks 29).

What about Marilyn?

Norma Jean became a Hollywood Icon and Legendary Siren as Marilyn Monroe. She has inspired many authors, photographers, artists, and filmmakers to study her femme fatale qualities. But was she a true-life Siren? It doesn't appear that she was a Siren in her own mind, but only became one in the minds of those captivated by her beauty, humor, and childlike quality. At the core of the Siren who is cursed in the envied beauty. Remember Circe? One wonders if Marilyn was cursed by a jealous witch or just by her own fragility.
   Check out:

Marilyn (Henry Holt, 1986) by Gloria Steinem

Marilyn: A Biography (Alskog, 1973) by Norman Mailer

Blonde (HarperCollins, 2000) Joyce Carol Oates (a novel)

Marilyn: Shades of Blonde (Tor/Forge, 1997), ed. Carole Nelson Douglas, an intriguing fiction anthology

   And check out the film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), in which Marilyn plays Lorelei, a stunner of a showgirl who has this memorable line: ''I always say a kiss on the hand might feel very good, but a diamond tiara lasts forever.''

The femme fatale might have told him ''A kiss is just a kiss, get over it!'' but a Siren or Wild Woman who has shaken off the curse of Circe might have just kissed him again harder and then flew back to the orchard to pick some more apples.

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The Small-Town Horror

by John Langan

Since the mid- to late 1970s, the small town as a setting for horror narratives has become so common as to constitute one of the genre's hallmarks, an icon of the supernatural narrative. We find small towns in horror stories, horror novels, and horror films, and their prevalence makes them worth investigating. While there is a remarkable diversity in small-town horror narratives, they are also bound together by common concerns with authenticity, an anxiety about the difference between what we seem to be and what we in fact are.

In no small part, the ascendancy of small-town horror has been due to the tremendous success of Stephen King's stories and novels, a substantial number of which have been set in small towns—most of them in King's native

Maine—and which have employed their settings to considerable effect. More so than any horror writer before him, King has demonstrated the potential of the small town to serve as the stage for the writer's drama; in turn, his example has exerted considerable influence over other writers in the genre, both those of King's own generation (such as Peter Straub, Ramsey Campbell, and David Morrell) and those subsequent (such as Stewart O'Nan, Bentley Little, and Dale Bailey). A study of small-town horror fiction could do worse than focus on King's work, especially the novels *'Salem's Lot* (1975) and *Needful Things* (1991), whose settings are especially significant.

Profound as King's contribution to the development of this icon has been, however, it has not occurred in a vacuum. A number of important horror stories and novels to precede his have made use of the small town, and we will find it useful to give them our attention, since they establish many of the parameters for employing a small-town setting. In the process, we will have occasion to turn to several canonical works of American literature, which help in rounding off our understanding of the development of small-town horror. Neither works of horror or mainstream literature will prove much help in sorting out the place of small-town horror in the larger category of horror film, which has made infrequent and idiosyncratic use of the icon; although the written examples of small-town horror do contribute to our understanding of its cinematic appearances thus far. Though not a great deal of critical material has been written about small-town horror, Hank Wagner's recent essay on the subject in *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia* (2005) provides useful talking points.

While we can find strange towns as far back as Petronius's *Satyricon* (c. 61 C.E.), we might begin our discussion in the relatively recent past, with Nathaniel Hawthorne's story ''Young Goodman Brown'' (*New-England Magazine*,

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Ten Leading Stories of Small-Town Horror

Nathaniel Hawthorne, ''Young Goodman Brown'' (1835)

Algernon Blackwood, ''Ancient Sorceries'' (1908)

William Faulkner, ''A Rose for Emily'' (1930)

H. P. Lovecraft, ''The Shadow over Innsmouth'' (1936)

Shirley Jackson, ''The Lottery'' (1948)

Jack Finney, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955)

Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962)

Thomas Tryon, *Harvest Home* (1973)

Stephen King, *'Salem's Lot* (1975)

Peter Straub, ''The Ghost Village'' (1993)

April 1835). It is one of a half-dozen or so stories that help to stake out the boundaries of the small-town horror narrative; others include Algernon Blackwood's ''Ancient Sorceries'' (1908), H. P. Lovecraft's ''The Shadow over Innsmouth'' (1936), William Faulkner's ''A Rose for Emily'' (*Forum*, April 1930), Shirley Jackson's ''The Lottery'' (*New Yorker*, June 26, 1948), and Peter Straub's ''The Ghost Village'' (1993).

Hawthorne's story is a perennial favorite of high school and college English courses, in no small part because it is thick with symbols. The eponymous Goodman Brown, a Puritan colonial, leaves his wife, Faith, and the safety of their small town in order to walk the more dangerous woods with an old man who bears a striking resemblance to his grandfather. This man, who carries a walking stick in the shape of a snake, is a sinister, even satanic figure; what Goodman Brown thinks he is doing walking with him is something of a mystery. Brown has assured Faith that he intends to be away from her for only one night, but he has no idea of what lies in wait for him. As they journey together, Brown and the old man encounter a variety of the town's most respected figures, all of whom recognize and are familiar with Brown's sinister companion. It becomes clear that the old man is in fact the Devil, and that the pillars of the community are secretly his acolytes. The story reaches its climax in a forest clearing in which a Witches' Sabbath is being held; Brown finds the entire town in attendance, including his wife, and more people besides: political luminaries from far and wide, Native Americans. Brown calls out for his wife to resist the Devil, then swoons. When he awakes, he is alone in the forest, and Hawthorne asks if all he saw was a dream. Dream or not, Brown's experience leaves his disposition permanently altered, and for the worse: he becomes a gloomy figure whose dour demeanor keeps the rest of the community, even Faith, at arm's length. His dying hour, the story tells us, is gloom.

The tale effectively dramatizes the Puritan worldview, its Calvinist obsession with human depravity and damnation. Young Goodman Brown leaves the safety of the town and its structured community—and, most importantly,

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Presently his eyes became glued to the windows of the opposite wall where the moonlight fell in a soft blaze. The roof overhead, and behind him, was reflected clearly in the glass, and he saw the outlines of dark bodies moving with long footsteps over the tiles and along the coping. They passed swiftly and silently, shaped like immense cats, in an endless procession across the pictured glass, and then appeared to leap down to a lower level where he lost sight of them. He just caught the soft thudding of their leaps. Sometimes their shadows fell on the white wall opposite, and the he could not make out whether they were the shadows of human beings or cats. They seemed to change swiftly from one to the other.

—*Algernon Blackwood, ''Ancient Sorceries''*

his allegorically named wife—in order to flirt with his evil impulses, to lead himself, if not all the way into temptation, then close enough to its edge to have a good look. That the figure he meets in the forest assumes the shape of his grandfather indicates Brown's connection to a heritage of sin; when he realizes this relation, the knowledge destroys him. Encountering his individual link to evil provokes Brown to a vision of universal corruption. In a very real sense, in thinking he could walk with the Devil without consequences, Brown is lost before the story begins. His experience does not lead him to wisdom, to a greater tolerance for the imperfections of poor humanity; rather, it causes him to project his hyper-awareness of his fallen nature onto the world around him. If he is sinful, then so is everyone else, all of them hopelessly damned. The story's climactic scene is an index of how traumatic the recognition of his sinfulness is to Goodman Brown—and, by extension, to the Puritans in general.

So this first portrait of small-town horror uses the picture of an entire town given over to satanic practices to dramatize the protagonist's psychological processes. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that most of the stories, novels, and films to follow Hawthorne have concerned themselves with taking his symbol and making it literal, with portraying actually sinister communities of one kind or another. One of the most interesting examples of these is Algernon Blackwood's "Ancient Sorceries." Although this story features John Silence, the "psychic doctor" who occasionally comes into direct conflict with the forces of darkness, Silence's role here is chiefly that of audience and interpreter. The story's true protagonist is Arthur Vezin, a nondescript Englishman who comes to Silence to relate a most extraordinary tale. While recently on vacation in France, Vezin was seized by the compulsion to abandon the train on which he was traveling for a small town not on his itinerary. Despite a cryptic warning from one of the other passengers about the sleep and the cats, Vezin plunged ahead. He took a room at an inn whose proprietress, he tells Silence, reminded him of a huge tabby cat, one that might leap across the room and pounce on him as if he were a mouse. In fact, all the town's population behaved in ways that reminded Vezin of cats. He had the sensation that he was under constant, if oblique, surveillance, but despite his growing unease about his decision to stop in the town, he found himself too lethargic to leave.

His desire to flee was moderated considerably by the appearance of the innkeeper's daughter, Ilsé, who was young, beautiful, and apparently drawn to the middle-aged Vezin. Their attraction progressed until Ilsé at last revealed the secret of Vezin's compulsion to visit the town and his inability to depart it: in a previous life, he had been one of its inhabitants; more importantly, he and Ilsé had been lovers. That past had returned him to the town, and the question before him now was whether he would stay and reclaim his former existence— a matter more complicated than renewing his affair with Ilsé. The entire town, it turned out, were witches, able to transform themselves into panthers

through the application of a special salve. In his narrative's climax, Vezin was faced with the choice of joining Ilsé and the rest of the town in shedding his human form and taking part in the Witches' Sabbath, or fleeing. Though severely tempted, he chose flight. Vezin's conversation with John Silence concludes with another revelation: although, by his best estimates, Vezin was certain he had been in the town for more than a week, the calendar revealed that he had spent no more than a couple of days there. His last act is to show Silence marks on his shoulder and upper back, the places where Ilsé had embraced him.

"Ancient Sorceries" ends with a coda in which Silence discusses Vezin's story with an unnamed friend. Silence has verified Vezin's tale, both the specifics of his brief stay in the town and the more general facts of the town's historical connection to witchcraft. Vezin's experience, Silence proceeds, was essentially internal, not a dream or hallucination but a kind of psychic encounter with the manifestations of a persistent past. The story finishes with Silence brooding over the question of Vezin's returning to the town, which Silence doubts he will be able to resist doing.

It is tempting to read Blackwood's story as an expression of English Francophobia, but there is more to it than that. A comparison with "Young Goodman Brown" is helpful, in no small part for the direction in which it shows us the use of the small-town icon heading. The similarities between the stories are intriguing: both feature a protagonist who learns that the inhabitants of a town are not as they seem, and specifically, that they are all witches. Both narratives include vividly described Witches' Sabbaths, complete with infernal guests, which the protagonists attempt to resist and which they swoon away from. Brown and Vezin learn about their individual heritages, which make their discoveries about the towns, discoveries about themselves. Furthermore, the experiences of both men are largely internal. Viewed in this light, the stories appear varieties of psychodrama, using the figures of the small town given over to witchcraft to probe some aspect of their protagonists' psyche.

The divergences between the stories, however, are even more interesting. That Brown walks into the forest and Vezin into the French town is not so much a contrast as might first appear: in both cases, the men are entering foreign environments. What is more significant is the way in which Blackwood's story takes those points of convergence with "Young Goodman Brown" from the realm of the symbolic and pulls them towards the literal. Brown discovers his fellow townspeople to be witches, and we take it as a trope for his recognition of their sinfulness; Vezin discovers the inhabitants of the French town are witches, and we take his finding more literally. Hawthorne's Witches' Sabbath is the climax of Brown's vision of universal depravity; Blackwood's is an actual event that Vezin witnesses. Brown understands his own sinfulness, which he projects outwards onto the rest of the town; Vezin learns the nature of the French town's inhabitants, and that knowledge projects

> At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth then disappeared into shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.
> —*Nathaniel Hawthorne, ''Young Goodman Brown''*

itself into him. Brown's self-recognition is of his part in universal human fallenness; Vezin's connects him to a more restricted group. What Young Goodman Brown undergoes in the forest is a dream-journey; what Vezin undergoes in the French town, while largely intangible, is more externally real, a kind of interaction between his consciousness and an active past.

Perhaps the most striking difference is in the role the erotic plays in each story. In ''Young Goodman Brown,'' the principle female character, Faith, is chastely married to the protagonist. In ''Ancient Sorceries,'' the principle female character, Ilsé, is the protagonist's (former) highly sensual lover. There is little indication that the erotic is involved in Goodman Brown's experience—indeed, he largely abandons any such relationship in favor of his excursion into the forest—while sexual desire is very much part of Vezin's temptation.

The trend we find at work in ''Ancient Sorceries,'' the move toward making the symbolic literal, is even more dramatic in H. P. Lovecraft's ''The Shadow over Innsmouth,'' which takes Blackwood's psychic events and makes them material. Lovecraft's story presents us yet another out-of-the-way town visited by a wandering man, in this case, an unnamed, first-person narrator who recounts his adventure in the decayed seaport of Innsmouth, Massachusetts. Drawn to the town by the chance mention of it while on a tour to celebrate his coming of age, the narrator spends a good deal of the story wandering Innsmouth's streets and hearing the history of its decline from Zadok Allen, an old local. Allen's history begins with the loss of a good portion of the town's sailors and ships to a combination of causes, including the War of 1812 and several disasters at sea. One captain, Obed Marsh, attempted to maintain the town's connection with the East India/Pacific trade, in the course of which he came into contact with a group of South Sea islanders who had relations with a race of undersea creatures. Those relations included breeding with the creatures to produce hybrids manifesting varying degrees of their inhuman heritage—all of whom would, as they aged, grow steadily less human, until at last they took to the sea. Obed set up trade with the islanders and the creatures, as a result of which Innsmouth prospered, and also set

about learning what he could about the creatures and how to summon them from their deep-sea homes. Eventually, he returned to the islands to find them wiped clean of inhabitants, presumably by neighboring people, but by that time he knew enough to bring the creatures up from the ocean near Innsmouth. Aided by his monstrous allies, Obed gradually took control of the town, instituting a new religious center, the Order of Dagon, and allowing and encouraging the interbreeding of the town's inhabitants with the creatures of the deep. As a result, the greater part of Innsmouth's remaining population is, to one degree or another, not fully human. What is more, Zadok Allen indicates that the creatures and townspeople have been working toward more sinister ends, using the houses at one end of the town to conceal things they have been raising form the ocean depths, some of which are more monstrous than the creatures themselves.

The town's less pleasant inhabitants spy Allen telling its secrets to the narrator, and after dark they strike, attempting to break into the narrator's hotel room. He escapes them, catching distant glimpses of his pursuers, and calls on the civil authorities, who raid the town, carry off a majority of its citizens to points unknown, and send a submarine to torpedo the creatures' undersea dwelling. Perhaps disaster has been averted.

Or perhaps not: the story does not end there, but continues to recount the narrator's horrified discovery that his grandmother was originally from Innsmouth, and that he has inherited her looks. As he feels his ancestry beginning to assert itself, he contemplates suicide, the choice of an uncle who had looked into the family's genealogy years before, but by the closing paragraphs the narrator has decided to embrace his transformation, swim out to the sea, and dwell in his new undersea world.

Just as it is tempting to read "Ancient Sorceries" as arising from English animosity toward the French, so does the temptation exist to read "The Shadow over Innsmouth" as springing out of American anti-immigrant xenophobia. As was the case with the previous story, though, there is more to the story than the simple expression of prejudice. A comparison between Lovecraft and Blackwood helps us see the path down which Lovecraft leads the small-town horror icon. Their stories resemble one another at several points. Each story comes to us from a man who, apparently by chance, stops in an old town with an ominous history to which he learns he is personally connected. The inhabitants of these towns transform themselves from human into some other shape and try to coerce the protagonist into joining them. Both men escape, but only temporarily; in the end, each will return to his ancestral home. The geographies of each town symbolize the protagonists' inner states: in "Ancient Sorceries," Vezin pictures the French town as an enormous cat, brooding over its inhabitants, the spires of its decayed cathedral forming the cat's ears—the scene a trope for Vezin's spiritual connection to the corrupt religious practices of the townspeople, especially their practice of abandoning their human identity in favor of a feline one—while Innsmouth's identity as a

seaport, a place on the border between land and ocean, represents the narrator's interstitial identity.

Where the stories part ways is in the actuality of the events they relate. As Blackwood's story did vis-à-vis Hawthorne's, so does Lovecraft's story with Blackwood's, taking its concerns and bringing them even more fully into the realm of the physical. It is a change that is signaled by the difference in the stories' presentation of their narratives. Though Vezin tells his story to John Silence, we read that story largely in the third person, mediated to us by Silence's unnamed friend, who serves as Dr. Watson to Silence's Sherlock Holmes. In contrast, Lovecraft's protagonist speaks to us directly, and, aside from a brief, ominous opening that hints at Innsmouth's character, we learn about the town, and his connection to it, as the narrator does. As a consequence of that shift, Innsmouth's history is part of the protagonist's narration in a way that the French town's past isn't in Vezin's story. Vezin's link to his town's inhabitants is spiritual, determined by reincarnation, while Lovecraft's narrator's relation is physical, determined by genetics. Likewise, the witches of the French town consciously forsake their humanity for magical transformation into animal form, while the hybrid residents of Innsmouth are overtaken by a change analogous to the progression of a genetic disorder. The role of the erotic in each story is radically different: in Blackwood, the lure of his past is figured for Vezin by the promise of Ilsé; whereas in Lovecraft, the erotic is the very source of monstrousness, the origin of Innsmouth's, and the narrator's, troubles. He is drawn to Innsmouth by dreams of his grandmother transformed, by the appeal of family. Vezin's fate remains in just enough doubt for us to wonder at it, whereas the final lines of "The Shadow over Innsmouth" leave us certain of his future.

In all three of the stories we have been considering, knowledge serves as an integral—and horrifying—function. For each protagonist to learn the secret of his town is for him to learn the secret of himself. In their experiences of their respective towns, the protagonists discover what was already the case with themselves. Having acquired that information, there is no way for them to escape its implications. As is true in so much horror fiction, to know is to be damned; to become aware of your connection to the monstrous is to be drawn inexorably into its embrace. From this standpoint, this is what makes the ending of "The Shadow over Innsmouth" the most chilling of the three, its protagonist's acceptance, even embrace, of his fate. Obviously, all these stories incorporate a heavy dose of paranoia, but it is a paranoia that ultimately turns inward, to an anxiety over the protagonist's identity. In addition, atavism, another central concern of horror writ large, is a significant part of each narrative, the implication being that the primitive, whether savage rituals or genetic monstrousness, survives and even thrives within the boundaries of the small town.

Strictly speaking, neither William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" nor Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" are stories of supernatural small-town horror, but

both make contributions to the icon too important to be overlooked. Faulkner's story is significant for its use of the town's collective voice to relate the history of Miss Emily Grierson, in an apparent character study that winds up highlighting how little it is possible to know another person, as Miss Emily is revealed to have poisoned a lover who had jilted her and then slept beside his moldering corpse for decades. It is a story that is indebted to Sherwood Anderson's short story cycle *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), which employs the grotesque as one of its central conceits. Anderson uses the term to refer to people who have become obsessed with a particular truth at the expense of a more complex and compound view of Truth; their monomanias warp their characters, causing them to twist and contort around their various truths. Of course, this provides the writer a wealth of material to explore. Anderson's and Faulkner's small towns are frequently unpleasant places. It is not just that their towns are remote from larger cities; the inhabitants of those towns are personally, even spiritually, remote from one another. It is as if the limited confines and circle of acquaintances of small-town life evoke a corresponding need for privacy, even secrecy; the smaller the town, the greater the need. We can trace links backwards from Anderson and Faulkner to Thomas Hardy and Honoré de Balzac, and forward to Gabriel García Márquez (whose short novel, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* [1981], reads like an oblique response to ''A Rose for Emily'') and Stephen King. Faulkner's work bears mentioning in more general terms due to his setting the vast majority of his stories and novels in and around the invented town of Jefferson, Mississippi, the seat of the equally invented Yoknapatawpha County. Not the first to employ an imagined locale for his work, Faulkner is among the most successful, and his example, consciously or not, informs much of the small-town fiction, and small-town horror fiction, to follow him.

''The Lottery'' reads like the culmination of a number of threads we have been discussing thus far. It moves back and forth among the perspectives of the members of a small town gathered to perform a spring ritual with an ease

There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up—of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the post-master, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse.

—*Shirley Jackson, ''The Lottery''*

that recalls Faulkner; while its conceit, that the town is engaged in a ceremony whose origins have been forgotten but which entails human sacrifice as a means to insure a favorable harvest, takes the atavistic rites we find in Hawthorne and Blackwood—and which are alluded to in Lovecraft—and naturalizes them, treating them with an almost anthropological detachment. Unlike Hawthorne, Blackwood, and Lovecraft, Jackson does not provide us the perspective of a narrator whose encounter with the town is a vehicle for his own voyage of horrified self-discovery. Instead, she opts to focus more on the town as a whole. If there is a protagonist in the story—or, at least, a character who receives slightly more attention—it is the woman whose fate it will be to serve as the town's sacrifice. Her role brings her no enlightenment; all it provokes from her is a protest at the unfairness of her fate, before the town descends on her. Jackson pays meticulous attention to the details of the eponymous lottery, which until its violent conclusion appears quaint, even banal. Without a strong protagonist, the story directs our attention to the small town as the source of horror through its blind perpetuation of terrible practices. It is a savage, damning portrait.

Although small towns have featured in many other horror stories—enough for their discussion alone to fill a book—the five stories we have considered give us the icon distilled. In its concentrated form, the small-town horror story represents the site of collective secrecy, of monstrousness metaphysical or physical, and of atavism ritual and/or genetic. The small town functions as a kind of composite monster, one whose monstrosity arises from its ability to harbor the past, preserve tradition, resist change. The stories of small-town horror we have looked at make paranoia an integral part of their narration, often complementing it with xenophobia.

As a coda to our survey of small-town horror in short fiction, we might consider Peter Straub's "The Ghost Village," which, although incorporated into his 1993 novel, *The Throat,* was first published and can stand on its own. It is a narrative that shows us some of the additional directions in which the small-town horror icon can be taken. Set during the American war in Vietnam, the story centers on an American patrol that comes across a deserted Vietnamese village. During their investigation of it, the soldiers discover a hut with a trap door that leads to a subterranean chamber whose walls are covered in paper filled with Vietnamese writing and spotted with dried blood. A pair of upright supports, also bloodstained, anchor a pair of chains sets about four feet high, their links rusted with blood. Though the lieutenant insists that the soldiers have uncovered a secret Viet Cong interrogation room, the story's narrator, Tim Underhill, understands that this is not the case; what the men have found has nothing to do with the war that has brought them here. Underhill sees a young boy he realizes is a ghost, but it will not be until his patrol has returned to its base that he will learn the village's story. A Green Beret, an old acquaintance of Underhill's, tells it to him in a bar. The hut under which the chamber was located, Ransom says, belonged to the village's chief, who

used the secret space to abuse and murder children, his own first, then several from the village. Eventually, the chief's crimes grew so grievous that ghosts started appearing in and around the village—not the specters of the dead children, but others of the town's previous inhabitants, summoned back to it by the horror and shame of the chief's actions. When the villagers pieced together what was happening, they bound the chief in his own torture chamber and turned him over to the Viet Cong, who first wrote the names of the children the chief had murdered on the room's walls, then tortured the chief to death. Following this, the villagers abandoned the village, unable to live any longer in the place that had become such a site of profound shame for them—shame because they had failed their children to the very man who was supposed to lead them; shame because perhaps they had known, after a certain point, that all was not right with the chief.

The story's title thus works on several levels. The Ghost Village is the deserted village; it is also the village filled with the ghosts drawn by the chief's crime. Most importantly, it is the village haunted by the catastrophic failure of its residents in one of their most fundamental responsibilities. We can draw a line between Straub's story and those of Jackson, Lovecraft, Blackwood, and Hawthorne in their concern with communities bound together in secret sin; we can also connect the story to Faulkner's in their representation of populations aware that something is wrong with one of their inhabitants, but failing to act on their knowledge until it is much, much too late. None of the previous stories we have considered give us communities especially conflicted about their particular secret; if anyone, it is the protagonists who rebel—for a time, anyway—against them. Straub's story gives us a town shattered by its collective shame, a shame so intense it continues to permeate the place they lived. It is the story in which the physical town, as opposed to its inhabitants, features most strikingly.

The small town comes into its own in horror novels in a trio of books published from 1955 to 1962: Jack Finney's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955), John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), and Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962). Both Finney and Wyndham present small towns as the starting points for alien invasions of the Earth. In Finney's novel, the inhabitants of Santa Mira, California—an idealized American small town—are being replaced by exact physical copies of themselves produced by alien pods, a kind of organic technology that arrives quietly and begins growing duplicates of the town's populace. While these ''pod

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I saw an empty room shaped like a giant grave. The walls were covered by some kid of thick paper held in place by wooden struts sunk into the earth. Both the thick brown paper and two of the struts showed old bloodstains.
                                                    —*Peter Straub, ''The Ghost Village''*

people'' dispose of their originals, they are not so much hyperbolically evil as they are frighteningly bland. They appear interested in little more than their plan of replacing the residents of Santa Mira, a plan they seem to be following as much because of their programming, as it were, as anything. Finney's novel brilliantly exploits those elements of paranoia we have seen in our survey of small-town horror short stories; indeed, the novel resembles a paranoid schizophrenic's delusion of a world of exact yet somehow different copies writ large. Enough ink has been spilled over the novel's possible implications as a dramatization of 1950s anti-communist hysteria for the subject to be considered addressed; what is of more interest is the way the book picks up the plot device we have encountered from Hawthorne to Jackson, that of a population whose normal appearance belies a collective otherness. Finney's novel helps us to see that otherness and the paranoia to which it gives rise as expressing a fundamental concern with authenticity, with what we are under the surface. Had we world enough and time, we could follow this concern's links to Protestant Christian theology based in an emphasis on a personal and genuine experience of salvation, which grows in turn from a more general Christian concern with hypocrisy and avoiding it; as well, we might examine the more historically recent conception of the small town as the site of genuine, untainted experience (a notion the British Marxist literary critic Raymond Williams analyses superbly in his study, *The Country and the City* [1973]); finally, we could address the anxiety over authenticity's relation to Freudian psychology (and its model of a psyche almost inherently inauthentic), Marxism (with its discussion of capitalism as a system of substitutions, of workers disconnected from their work), and Existentialism (especially Jean-Paul Sartre's interest in self-formation and -delusion). Given that our world and time are limited, we will have to settle for nodding in the direction of those many connections and noting that the anxiety over authenticity we find screaming beneath the surface of most small-town horror narratives is tied up with Modernity, broadly defined.

John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* has much in common with *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Wyndham's novel also involves a small town, Midwich, which is threatened by aliens who look exactly like the inhabitants. Once again, we have a plot built around a quiet invasion. In Wyndham's novel, however, the invasion is being carried out through the agency of the town's children, the cuckoos of the title. They are the result of an event called the "Dayout," during which anyone within the bounds of Midwich is rendered unconscious; nine months later, a group of women give birth to children with golden eyes. These children grow at an accelerated rate, so that by the time their calendar age is eight, their physical development places them at approximately sixteen. They manifest paranormal abilities, including the capacity to communicate with one another telepathically and the power to control the actions of others. They use their advantages to remove anyone they

consider a threat, a group that grows larger as the townspeople become more and more frightened by the children.

Like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Midwich Cuckoos* has been discussed as a dramatization of anti-communist paranoia, which may be true so far as it goes, but which misses the book's more interesting aspects. It displays the same paranoia rooted in concerns over authenticity we have seen emerge as a common thread tying together small-town horror narratives, but it locates the source of that paranoia in the young. In this way, it is the opposite of much horror fiction, in which the horror has its source in the past, functioning as that past's embodiment; instead, the horror here is one of the future. It is difficult not to think of Wyndham's novel in conjunction with another novel published in 1955, a British one: William Golding's *The Inheritors*, which relates the story of a group of Neanderthals encountering *Homo sapiens* for the first time; both novels treat the horror of the new. We can relate this fear to a specific historical anxiety on the part of a Britain witnessing its imperial power fading and its position being taken over by other, younger countries, especially the United States, but we are not wrong in viewing the novel as expressing a more fundamental fear: that of the parent confronted with the child whose destiny it is to assume his or her place in the world.

Children are also at the center of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, albeit as the novel's protagonists. Ray Bradbury's Green Town, Illinois, is his version of the idealized American small town we encounter in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, but where Jack Finney's Santa Mera—like John Wyndham's Midwich—is threatened by alien invasion, Bradbury's is menaced by something else: Cooger and Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show, a sinister carnival. The Pandemonium Shadow Show arrives on the outskirts of town after carnival season has ended, its entertainments a mask for its true purpose. The carnival comes offering the adult population of Green Town a chance to escape the failures and frustrations of their lives, to transform those lives literally. It is the symbolic promise of any carnival made real, a kind of massive Faustian bargain. As is the case for Faust, the price the deal demands is frighteningly high, the carnival acting as a great vampire, draining the lives with which the town's inhabitants have become so dissatisfied. So changed by the fulfillment of their wishes, the townspeople become the same as the carnival's freaks, all of them the literalization of Sherwood Anderson's grotesques. The Pandemonium Shadow Show's ultimate goal is Jim Nightshade, one of the novel's pair of boy heroes, whose youthful rebelliousness the carnival desires to exploit and corrupt. Jim's only hope is his best friend, Will Holloway, and Will's father, Charles, the town librarian and the only one of the town's adults able to face the disappointments of his maturity and accept them. More spectacularly than Finney or Wyndham, Bradbury gives us the small town menaced by outside forces, yet those forces are drawn to Green Town and threaten it because of its most intimate secrets. As much as in any of

the other narratives we have considered, the inhabitants of the town are joined in a common bond, one that is as universal as the sin that Goodman Brown encounters: it is the condition of maturity, of diminished expectations, and it draws the Pandemonium Shadow Show like a mosquito to blood. In a more basic way than in either Finney or Wyndham's works, the small town in Bradbury's novel is complicit in the threat to it.

This notion of the small town's complicity in the forces menacing it is at the core of Stephen King's novels; before we discuss them, however, we should mention a pair of other books, both of them set, interestingly, in small towns in Connecticut. Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972) features a married couple, Joanne and Walter Eberhart, who leave Manhattan with their two children in favor of the idyllic town of Stepford. Once there, they discover that the women of the town fall into two groups: those, like Joanna, who embrace feminism to some degree or another, and the wives of the book's title, who are stereotypically, even comically traditional in their activities. When women from the first group start becoming women from the second group, Joanna grows suspicious, and her unease is well founded. The men of Stepford, alarmed at the implications feminism has for them and their comfort, have banded together to replace the women they married with much more com-pliant androids. Levin's novel adroitly dramatizes the anxieties generated by the women's movement of the 1960s, showing us the lengths to which half the inhabitants of the ideal small town will go to insure that the other half stay in their place. The novel is a thematic sequel to Fritz Leiber's *Conjure Wife* (1943/1953), which embodies gender conflict through the equally dramatic vehicle of witchcraft. Like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Levin's novel presents a scenario in which the residents of a small town are being replaced by (almost) exact physical copies. The cause of this substitution, however, is much less grandiose than an extraterrestrial scheme; it is a jealous desire by the town's men to maintain the status quo. In this regard, the true secret of Stepford is not its women but its men, who act from motives more crass than any we have encountered thus far.

Thomas Tryon's *Harvest Home* (1973) also involves a small town whose quaint surface conceals a rotten core, but where Levin's terrors are high-tech, Tryon's are distinctly atavistic. Like *The Stepford Wives*, *Harvest Home* tells

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Come, you slumberers, you lumps, arise from your legion of sleep and fly over the wild woods. Come, all you dreamers, all you zombies, all you monsters. What are you doing anyway, paying the bills, washing the dishes, waiting for the doorbell? Come on, take your keys, leave the bowl of candy on the porch, put on the suffocating mask of someone else and breathe. Be someone you don't love so much, for once. Listen: like the children, we only have one night.

—*Stewart O'Nan,* The Night Country

the story of a family who abandons Manhattan for the advantages of a small Connecticut town, in this case, Cornwall Coombe. Ned Constantine, his wife, and his daughter gradually learn that the town continues to practice violent fertility rites whose origins lie in the distant past; the residents of the town are the thematic cousins of the townspeople in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery." Neither Ned nor his family escapes this knowledge; indeed, all three of them suffer terrible fates. It is possible to read Tryon and Levin's novels as responses to the flight from big cities in favor of suburban and rural homes that occurred in the United States during the decades following the Second World War. Levin employs his small-town setting as a microcosm in which he can play out gender tensions with greater focus, while Tryon's small town treats more general stereotypes of small towns as maintaining older customs with a vengeance.

Although *Carrie* (1974), Stephen King's first published novel, occurs in the small town of Chamberlain, Maine, it wasn't until his second book, *'Salem's Lot*, that the small town assumed the central place it would continue to occupy in his fiction. The novel's plot requires a single sentence to summarize: vampires overrun the small Maine community of Jerusalem's Lot. King has admitted the novel's debt to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), describing the manner in which he structured his novel as a self-conscious echo and response to Stoker's, and we can find numerous moments at which elements of the later book repeat those of the earlier. For the purposes of our discussion, though, what is more significant is the other influence on *'Salem's Lot* to which King has admitted: Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938). Among the most famous of American dramas—taught, it seems, in every high school in the country; performed at small theaters across the nation; televised every few years—Wilder's experimental play follows the lives of two generations of the inhabitants of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, crossing over at the very end into the world of the dead, juxtaposing the limited perspective of the living with the expanded view of the dead. The play moves from the picturesque to the nostalgic to the severe, and we can read *'Salem's Lot* as a kind of parody of it, as we also proceed from the perspective of the living to that of the (un)dead, which is nostalgic in the root sense of the word as the pain of return; reborn as thirsty vampires, the inhabitants of the Lot make a very painful return, indeed.

But the novel is about more than the simple corruption of the town. While the population of 'Salem's Lot either will be killed or transformed into monsters, this small town is not the idealized community we have encountered in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. In a series of scenes early in the narrative, King shifts viewpoints among the town's residents, peeling back the surfaces of their lives to reveal what lies squirming beneath—the lust, the greed, the anger, the resentment. King has always been a Naturalistic writer, admittedly indebted to Theodore Dreiser—which is to say, the majority of his characters are driven by their basest animal urges, their most primitive impulses. In this regard, he has inherited the concern with human depravity that runs back to the beginnings of American literature and that Hawthorne addresses in

"Young Goodman Brown." There is an interesting exchange later in *'Salem's Lot*, when Ben Mears, the protagonist, is talking to Susan Norton, his love interest. In response to Susan's complaint that the town is being overrun by the undead, Ben exclaims that the entire country is going to hell. Given the more immediate danger to life and limb posed by the vampires, Ben's response is, to say the least, curious; surely, we think, the state of the rest of the world can wait until the last vampire has been staked. The purpose of Ben's remarks, however, is to connect the particular monster with a global sense of a decayed culture, which King already has shown us, in miniature, in the town. There's an important sense in which 'Salem's Lot is doomed before the first vampire shows its bloodless face, in which the inhabitants' various failings make the vampires not so much a menace from outside as an embodiment of the corruption festering in the town's hearts. King picks from where Bradbury leaves off in *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, with an apparently external threat serving as an index of the community's shortcomings. The novel's title thus takes on an added meaning: it is not only the town's name, but a description of its lot, its fate, which is analogous to the earlier Salem, also torn apart from the inside out. To invoke the well-worn cliché, we have met the enemy, and he is us.

This pattern repeats itself in King's subsequent work, especially *The Tommyknockers* (1987) and *Needful Things*. In the former novel, the community of Haven, Maine, is transformed as a result of the unearthing of an enormous flying saucer, which gives the town's inhabitants wildly advanced technological abilities. The residents use their new-found knowledge not to cure cancer or end world hunger, but to seek revenge on one another for years of injuries and insults. The symbolism of uncovering the buried saucer is clear enough: what had been concealed is being brought to light, with dire consequences. When poet Jim Gardener, the novel's protagonist, who is immune to the saucer's depredations because of a metal plate in his head, enters the alien ship, he discovers the dried husks of its crew, long dead after a savage brawl in which most of them killed each other with their bare hands. He also learns the source of the ship's power: cables driven directly into the brains of the crew, who served as living batteries. Advanced technology does not guarantee advanced morality; in fact, the novel strongly suggests that the more sophisticated our tools, the greater our temptation to employ them in the service of our basest aims. It is too simple to refer to *The Tommyknockers* as *'Salem's Lot* with aliens, but the congruities between the two books are striking.

"It's just small-town life, though—call it Peyton Place or Grover's Corners or Castle Rock, it's just folks eatin pie and drinkin coffee and talkin about each other behind their hands."

—*Stephen King,* Needful Things

Needful Things takes the vision of the depravity lurking just under the skin of small-town life to its limit. It is set in Castle Rock, the fictitious Maine town that had served King as the stage for a number of stories and novels, including *The Dead Zone* (1978) and *Cujo* (1981). Though neither *The Dead Zone* or *Cujo* can be classified as a small-town horror novel in the sense in which we have been discussing the icon, both make effective use of the location. *Needful Things* announces the importance of the town to its story in its opening pages, in which a first-person voice meant to be a generic representative of the community—and perhaps a stand-in for Stephen King as narrator—gives us all the latest gossip about the town. The picture that emerges of Castle Rock from this introduction is of a community riddled with strife, from interpersonal tension to interfaith rivalry. It would not take much, we suspect, to push those conflicts over the line from verbal to physical, and the ensuing narrative confirms our suspicions. Castle Rock is visited by Leland Gaunt, an apparently charming and sympathetic dealer in antiquities who opens a store on Main Street called Needful Things. The store seems to hold each customer's heart's desire, which Gaunt is willing to sell at bargain-basement prices. Of course, there's a catch: in order to obtain the price, the customer must agree to perform a service for Gaunt, to which he gives the innocuous name of joke or prank. The actual tasks his customers undertake are far from innocent: they are designed to heighten the assorted tensions in the town to the point that they erupt into violence. Gaunt spends the first half of the novel setting up his dominoes; when he tips the first one over, they fall with ever-increasing speed, until we are riding breakneck through a town in flames, its inhabitants literally at one another's throats.

There is a scene fairly late in the novel where Ace Verrill—the villain from King's earlier novella, ''The Body'' (1982), whom King has brought back for one final hurrah and who has become Gaunt's henchman—takes his boss's car to a neighborhood in Boston that isn't on any map. In a garage there, Ace picks up lethal cargo, crates full of blasting caps, automatic handguns, and ammunition, all of it intended for Gaunt's grand finale. Scrawled on the wall of the garage, Ace reads the graffiti, ''Yog-Sothoth Rules,'' an allusion to one of H. P. Lovecraft's invented monsters (409). The reference escapes Ace, who nonetheless is disturbed by the words, but it shouldn't escape us; in fact, it is shorthand for what is happening in the book. Yog-Sothoth is dealt with most directly in Lovecraft's 1929 novella, ''The Dunwich Horror,'' which describes the entity as a gateway. Lovecraft leaves the precise meaning of such a statement open, but King picks up on it here. *Needful Things* is fundamentally concerned with passing through the gateway, that is, moving from internal anger toward another to external violence against others. The majority of its characters enact their roles under this sign.

> Obviously, Leland Gaunt is a demonic, if not satanic, figure, and it is no
> surprise to learn that he has come for his customers' souls. Yet King rings a

small but significant change to the deal-with-the-devil tradition. In this novel, it is not enough to barter away your soul verbally; in order to lose it, you must commit some act of depravity. The residents of Castle Rock are thus truly complicit in their own damnation. In all fairness, we should note that King does not present these people as being necessarily worse than the inhabitants of other small towns; rather, their doom arrives because of their common human fallibility. When, in the closing pages, their souls are saved from Gaunt by the intervention of the town's sheriff, whom Gaunt has succeeded in distracting for much of the novel, it is in no way because the townspeople deserve salvation; we might be watching the enactment of a Protestant Christian vision of salvation through Divine grace alone.

We find in King's novel an echo of Mark Twain's story, "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1900); certainly, in keeping with Twain's example, *Needful Things* is King's most satiric work (though *The Tommyknockers* is not too far behind). In terms of small-town horror, the work to which this novel and the others by him we have considered owe the most apparent debt is Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, especially for the way in which external evil is linked to the town's secret lives. In his study of the horror genre, *Danse Macabre* (1979), King distinguished between stories of exterior and interior evil, and without a doubt, at the level of narrated events, the distinction is valid and helpful. As we have found, however, in story after story, novel after novel, and as King's novels themselves have demonstrated, when we peer under the hoods of these narratives at the engines that drive them, we find that inner and outer evil are welded and wired together at a dozen places. Clearly, Leland Gaunt comes from outside Castle Rock, as the flying saucer does from Haven, as the vampires do from 'Salem's Lot; equally clearly, had the towns been less rent by secret angers, jealousies, resentments, lusts, they might have stood more of a chance against their invaders. We are back to the picture of humanity as hopelessly fallen that Goodman Brown embraces at the end of Hawthorne's story; the difference is that, whereas Hawthorne maintains sufficient distance from such a view to suggest it is being treated ironically, King appears to adhere more closely to a vision of what Mark Twain called "the damned human race." The title of *Needful Things* could stand for King's perspective on general humanity, we are all radically incomplete, insufficient creatures, driven and riven by desire.

As we noted at the beginning of this discussion, Stephen King's tremendous success has exerted a powerful influence on both his contemporaries and his successors in horror fiction. In some cases, this has meant stories and novels whose small-town settings (sometimes in Maine) have less to do with any necessity of plot or theme and more with blind adherence to a pre-established model. That said, the resultant upsurge in small-town horror narratives has yielded a number of impressive and innovative works of fiction and continues to do so, to the extent that it would require a second book—companion to our unwritten volume on the small town in horror short stories—to address them

> The goods which had so attracted the residents of Castle Rock—the black pearls, the holy relics, the carnival glass, the pipes, the old comic books, the baseball cards, the antique kaleidoscopes—were all gone. Mr. Gaunt had gotten down to his *real* business, and at the end of things, the real business was always the same. The ultimate item had changed with the years, just like everything else, but such changes were surface things, frosting of different flavors on the same dark and bitter cake.
>
> At the end, Mr. Gaunt always sold them weapons...and they always bought.
>
> —*Stephen King,* Needful Things

all adequately. A few, however, require our attention. Peter Straub's *Ghost Story* (1979) and *Floating Dragon* (1983) were among the first and best novels to follow King's lead. In the former book, the upstate New York town of Milburn is the site of a struggle between the four old men who comprise the Chowder Society, a conversation group, and a supernatural shapeshifter; in the latter book, the Connecticut town of Hempstead is under siege by either a deadly hallucinogenic gas, or an ancient evil linked to the town's history, or some combination of the two. *Ghost Story* is the more successful of the two novels; although *Floating Dragon*'s premise is bolder and more original, it fails to develop what may be its most interesting notion, the town's longstanding connection to the threat menacing it, in sufficient detail. Where both novels succeed is in their use and management of a large cast of characters, so that, by the conclusion of each story, we have gained a real sense of Milburn and Hempstead, to the extent that we feel we could walk their streets and stop into their diners for a plate of the daily special. Straub has acknowledged that King's work, especially *'Salem's Lot*, showed him the way forward with his fiction, and this is evident in these novels. While his view of humanity is, on the whole, more forgiving than King's, it mirrors real and figural feature prominently in both *Ghost Story* and *Floating Dragon*, pointing to a connection between the forces that menace his communities and those communities' residents.

Ramsey Campbell's novel *The Hungry Moon* (1986) presents the small English town of Moonwell as menaced on several fronts: first, by the attentions of the American fundamentalist preacher, Godwin Mann, who comes to the town to decry its festival practices, vestiges of ancient pagan ritual; then by the entity he awakens and which possesses him; and finally by the town's inhabitants, who fall under the entity's sway. Generally speaking, Campbell has preferred to set his fiction either in cities or in even more remote and isolated locations; *The Hungry Moon* demonstrates his ability to exploit the narrative benefits of a small town. In its presentation of the small town as the site of a pre-existing menace—in this case, something far older than humanity—it is

reminiscent of *Floating Dragon*. Like the inhabitants of some of the towns we have passed through, the inhabitants of Moonwell perform atavistic rituals, but where the other rites we have witnessed tend to express their town's corruption, these practices are intended to placate the ancient monster and maintain its prison in a well outside the town. Though Campbell's townspeople are no better able to handle the threat to them than are King's, the overwhelming sense we have from his novel is not so much of human depravity as of human fragility; there is simply no way for these men and women to resist what assaults them. Even Godwin Mann, responsible for releasing the evil from its cage, is more ignorant than malevolent—which does not make the consequence of his ignorance any less devastating.

Without in any way slighting their individual accomplishments, we can say that Straub and Campbell's novels together consolidate the gains Stephen King has made for the small-town horror novel, particularly the use of the panoramic, multi-viewpoint narrative. It is a model that continues to be used to great affect. Subsequent novels have suggested further possibilities for the small-town horror novel. In terms of presentation, Jack Cady's *The Off Season* (1995) and Stewart O'Nan's *A Prayer for the Dying* (1999) and *The Night Country* (2003) all merit mention. Cady's novel employs a collective narrative voice composed of five residents of the small town of Point Vestal, Washington, who are trying to make sense of recent strange and terrible events in their community. The tone is conversational, even sardonic, as Cady's narrators recount not only their story, but their continuing reactions to and interpretations of it. It is among the most sustained inventive responses to the example Faulkner sets in "A Rose for Emily." Point Vestal's location is a major contributing factor to the narrative; it has been built on cursed ground, which permits the spirits of its past inhabitants to remain visible, and which has done wonders for the town's tourist trade. When one of its most notorious inhabitants escapes his ectoplasmic cage, however, the town finds itself divided between those who welcome their predecessor's return for the further prosperity he promises them, an ever-increasing majority, and those who recoil

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It was then that the most horrible impression of all was borne in upon me—the impression which destroyed my last vestige of self-control and set me running frantically southward past the yawning black doorways and fishily staring windows of that deserted nightmare street. For at a closer glance I saw that the moonlit waters between the reef and shore were far from empty. They were alive with a teeming horde of shapes swimming inward toward the town; and even at my vast distance and in my single moment of perception I could tell that the bobbing heads and flailing arms were alien and aberrant in a way scarcely to be expressed or consciously formulated.

—H. P. Lovecraft, "The Shadow over Innsmouth"

from his corruption, an ever-diminishing minority. The intervention of an itinerant, eccentric preacher saves Point Vestal from an apocalyptic fate, in return for which the residents stone the man to death. The novel closes on a dark note, as the townspeople bring a new curse down upon themselves: that of eternal life, so that they may dwell with their crime forever.

The voices of Stewart O'Nan's novels are equally diverse. In *A Prayer for the Dying*, a second-person narration gives us the combined sheriff, undertaker, and pastor of Friendship, Wisconsin, as his town succumbs with frightening speed to a diphtheria epidemic. *The Night Country* is told by the dead, one of a trio of teenagers killed in a car accident the previous Halloween; as the first anniversary of their deaths approaches, the ghosts of the teens are drawn back to the small town of Avon, Connecticut, by the memories of their families and friends. Although their insights into the psyches of those left behind are trenchant and penetrating, the ghosts are almost pathetically powerless, jolted from location to location by the anguish of those who knew them, unable to effect events in all but the most intangible of ways. These ghosts function more as Greek chorus than supernatural threat. Instead, the novel concerns itself with the town as a community bound together by grieving and guilt, the two forces that speed it toward a devastating conclusion.

Like *'Salem's Lot* and *Ghost Story* before it (and like ''Ancient Sorceries'' and ''The Shadow over Innsmouth'' before them), Dale Bailey's *The Fallen* (2002), the last novel for our consideration, features a protagonist who returns to a town with which he has a connection—in this case, Henry Sleep revisits his boyhood home of Sauls Run in the West Virginia mountains—in order to deal with the apparent suicide of his minister father. Once there, Henry begins to investigate the circumstances of his father's death, which in turn leads him in the direction of the town's great secret. Sauls Run is a kind of blue-collar cousin to those idealized towns we found in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*; it is not a perfect place, but it is an unusually peaceful one whose inhabitants enjoy better health than statistics would seem to allow. That peace and health are becoming increasingly disrupted, however, and we understand that what Bailey is writing is not the story of a small town jeopardized by supernatural evil, but a small town whose idyllic character owes itself to supernatural agency. In this way, Bailey neatly folds the security of the town and the supernatural together. As the underlying force that has provided the town's stability falters, various members of Sauls Run register it, none more dramatically than the town's sheriff, formerly a corrupt Los Angeles cop who fled his crimes and was able to reinvent himself

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This December Milburn looked less like a village on a Christmas card than a village under siege.

—*Peter Straub,* Ghost Story

under the town's benevolent influence. Now, his control is slipping, the new life he has built crumbling as his darker impulses reassert themselves. The novel climaxes under the mountains on which the town is built, in a confrontation with the entity responsible for the town's prosperity, a benefit that appears to be so much dumb luck. Bailey's characters are as at the mercy of forces beyond their control—internal and external—as those of any of the narratives we have considered thus far, but they do not cease trying to understand their situation, seeking what comfort they can in their continuing effort at comprehension. It as a different attitude towards knowledge than we have seen expressed in most of the stories and novels we have looked at.

Given the number of stories and novels we have examined, and the even greater number to which we have alluded, it would seem a foregone conclusion that the small-town horror icon must have had its place in a plethora of films and TV shows. Strangely, this is not the case. In fact, only a handful of films have made effective use of small towns, two of them adaptations of books we have already discussed: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, filmed by Don Siegel in 1956, and *Village of the Damned*, Wolf Rilla's 1960 version of *The Midwich Cuckoos*. Both films are remarkably faithful to their source material, which leaves us little more to say about them. Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963), though, is another story. This is literally true of the film: while nominally an adaptation of a short story by Daphne du Maurier, it jettisons all the story's elements except its central premise, that birds all over the world have become actively hostile to humanity. Hitchcock—and his screenwriter, Evan Hunter—relocate to the northern California town of Bodega Bay, and they provide a subtle rationale for the birds' attacks that bears out the observations we have made about small-town horror, particularly the way in which apparently external threats are the index of internal corruption. The film takes as its protagonists Mitch Bremmer and Melanie Daniels, played by Rod Taylor and Tippi Hedren, respectively. Mitch, the film implies, is a ladies' man who has left broken hearts scattered in his wake; Melanie is the glamorous new woman on whom he has set his sights. This provokes the animosity of Mitch's former lovers; Hitchcock takes care to show us the looks of resentment and hatred that cross their faces when they see Melanie. Those looks anticipate the initial bird attacks, and we realize that the birds are receiving the animosity of Mitch's old flames and acting on it. It is hard to say whether these women are conscious of what they are doing; the film doesn't dwell on the link between them and the birds, and more than one critic has described the movie as a study in random, inexplicable terror. Before long, the birds appear to have exceeded the women's intentions, visiting general destruction upon the town. It seems more likely that the initial behavior projected onto the birds alters their actions at a fundamental level. That said, the movie's ending, with Mitch, Melanie, and a few others leaving Bodega Bay while the gathered birds look on, suggests that the birds, if not acting under the

direct control of Mitch's old flames, at least retain their basic motivation. Given the movie's more spectacular scenes—Melanie trapped in a phone booth as birds hurl themselves into it; Melanie struggling against a hurricane of birds in an attic—it is possible to miss the line Hitchcock draws between the birds' acts and the emotions of Mitch's former loves, but an attentive viewing of *The Birds* reveals it to be another case in which the threat to a small town has its roots in the community's secret life.

The Wicker Man (1973) is perhaps the greatest of small-town horror films; although, for much of its length, it plays more like a campy musical comedy than a tale of horror. It follows a Scottish police officer, Sergeant Howie, played by Edward Woodward, a rigid, humorless Christian, to the Hebridean island of Summerisle in order to investigate a possible missing persons case. Once on the island, Howie learns that the inhabitants, under the leadership of Lord Summerisle (Christopher Lee), have renounced Christianity in favor of a return to pagan practices. Mostly, this appears to involve a great deal of bawdy singing and female nudity, and the movie seems to be poking fun at some of the more hedonistic tendencies of the 1960s counter culture; although it is punctuated by moments of unease, even menace. Howie is certain that the islanders know more than they are letting on about the girl whose disappearance he is investigating, and we suspect he is right. Eventually, he dons a costume in order to go undercover at one of the island's festivals, and the islanders see right through his ploy. Howie is imprisoned in an enormous wicker figure shaped like a man, and Lord Summerisle reveals that Howie's mission to the island has been a fraud. There was no missing girl, only a ruse to draw Howie to the island so that its inhabitants might sacrifice him in order to restore fertility to their failing crops. This they do, setting the wicker man alight as the movie plunges us into outright horror. The film was released the same year Tryon's *Harvest Home* appeared, and it is hard not to be struck by the coincidence of their plots: outsiders coming to small communities practicing savage fertility rituals (with Shirley Jackson's ''The Lottery'' presiding over both). It is important to distinguish, however, that Summerisle has returned to its pagan ways only recently; unlike the residents of Cornwall Coombe, they lack the excuse of tradition for their actions. Their enthusiastic embrace of human sacrifice offers a view of human nature as dark as any we have seen. We might note, too, that here is a narrative of small-town horror in which the outsider remains an outsider until the bitter end; there is no moment when Howie discovers his connection to Summerisle's populace. He is different, and he dies for it; the film makes brilliant use of paranoia: everyone really is out to get Sergeant Howie.

In many ways, *The Fog* (1980), director John Carpenter's most successful foray into the small-town horror film (though his other efforts, *Halloween* [1978] and *In the Mouth of Madness* [1995], bear watching), is the most traditional of the films under discussion. The small town of Antonio Bay, California, which is celebrating the centenary of its founding, is blanketed by a

> And so, at twenty-nine years old, a narrow-framed man with the delicate features of a mother he barely remembered, Henry Sleep came home. He came on a frost-heaved ribbon of state road that twisted northwest through chinks in the barren January hills, and as the Appalachians drew up around him, as mute and hostile as a convocation of petrified giants, he felt the old midnight terror sweep over him, an icy tide shot through with currents of fresh anxiety, the bone-stark chill of his father's death—
>
> —*Dale Bailey,* The Fallen

heavy fog whose origin is mysterious and which conceals murderous spirits. After a certain amount of suspense and bloodshed, we learn that these are no accidental intruders; rather, their bloody antics are directly related to the town's origin. One hundred years before, a ship full of lepers had attempted to purchase coastal land on which to settle; lured by the promise of the lepers' gold, six locals agreed to sell them a stretch of coast, then provided them false directions to it, causing their ship to splinter on hidden rocks and all of the lepers to drown. The six men responsible used the money they had swindled to found their own town: Antonio Bay. Now the men the town fathers betrayed have returned to exact revenge on the current residents. As is the case with *The Birds*, confronted with the film's spectacle, it is easy to overlook that what is motivating the undead lepers is a wrong done to them; they are the embodiment of the town founders' crime, returned to bear awful witness to it. Granted, the vast majority of the town knows nothing of this history; their complicity in it is more diffuse than what we have seen in stories such as ''Ancient Sorceries'' and ''The Shadow over Innsmouth.'' But it is clear that we are confronted, once again, by an invading menace whose roots are tangled with those of the community they threaten. Yet again, things are not what they seem, and even in so unlikely a place as a film about homicidal zombie lepers, we run into small-town horror's concern with authenticity.

Before we bring our discussion to a close, we might spare a mention for two television shows. The first, ''Twin Peaks'' (1990–1991), was the brainchild of the brilliant and eccentric director, David Lynch, and if the series occasionally stumbled in the course of its two seasons, it did a better job than perhaps any other movie or TV program at representing the varied lives of the inhabitants of the small town of Twin Peaks, Washington, showing us a community rife with secrets. The second, *Storm of the Century* (1999), was a four-part, made-for-TV movie based on a screenplay by Stephen King. It is another island story, set on Little Tall Island, off the coast of Maine, which is besieged by a sorcerer who may be demonic, and to appease whom the inhabitants agree to a terrible price. Both programs suggest the possibilities for small-town horror on the small screen; indeed, because of television's format, it may be better suited to exploring the ins and outs of small-town life than the big screen.

To conclude, then: in his essay on small-town horror in *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia*, critic Hank Wagner lists three categories we might use to classify small-town horror narratives. The first is that of the small town menaced by a stranger; the second that of the small town exposed to danger; the third that of the small town that is itself evil (Wagner 1037). These are helpful distinctions, particularly in trying to establish the principle plots in which small-town horror narratives tend to manifest themselves. We could arrange the works we have discussed according to it: *Needful Things* fits the first category, *'Salem's Lot* the second, *Harvest Home* the third. Underlying these three divisions, however, is, as we have seen time and time again, a common concern with authenticity that tends to compromise, if not collapse, the distinctions between the town's inhabitants and whatever is threatening them. Fundamentally, small-town horror narratives are interested in the tension between what we appear to be and what we really are, an interest that expresses a profound anxiety about our identity, about the subterranean forces that compel us. Small towns are microcosms, yes, but they are more than that: they are what Raymond Williams has called "knowable communities," and what we hope to learn from them is, when all is said and done, ourselves (Williams 165). The small-town horror story tells us that we won't like what that knowledge has to tell us, that any nostalgia we might feel for small-town life is a ruse designed to distract us from its less than pleasant realities. You can't go home again, not unless you're prepared for the monsters you'll find there, the vampires and the zombies and the demons who will look at you approvingly and say, "Welcome."

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The Sorcerer

by K. A. Laity

> " 'Tis magic, magic hath ravished me—"
> Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*

Conjuring up the image of the sorcerer, inevitably we see many of the same things: a robe, a staff, an assortment of curious symbols drawn within a circle, and a mysterious attendant spirit. At the center of the scene stands a figure with wild eyes and a determined look. From antiquity to the present, this idea

has changed little. The sorcerer treads a thin line between power and opprobrium, never quite inside nor outside of society. Unlike the closely related figure of the witch, it is usually "he" for the sorcerer must have access to education—a boon long denied too many women until very nearly the present. While early modern sorcerers like Faustus and Prospero may be most familiar to us, the roots of this icon lie in the distant past.

We can perhaps see the sorcerer as the offspring of the shaman. Like the shaman, the sorcerer traffics between worlds, however, he comes not directly from the natural world that births the shaman, but from the world of learning.

CLASSICAL

In the classical world, we find the double-edged perception of sorcerers. They were reputed to have wisdom, but also feared to be charlatans. The *magos*, as the Greek called him, could be a trusted philosopher who spoke to the gods or a con-artist who fleeced the gullible with the tricks of stage magic. From this time dates the art that comes to be most associated with the sorcerer over the centuries: *necromancy*, the use of the dead to offer prognostications. In part, the tradition of sorcery flowers in the ancient world because the Greek and Roman empires were melting pots of cultural collisions, assimilating the knowledge and practices of the civilizations they absorbed into their empires, from the Egyptians and Persians to the Sumerians, Hittites, and Jews. Curious philosophers who sought out the roots of knowledge delved into the same secrets purloined by swindlers in search of a quick coin or two. The borderline between philosophy and scientific inquiry was as blurred as that between magic and miracles. But even in this early period becoming a sorcerer required training, whether with the gods and their priests or with another master magician.

One of the earliest of the celebrated sorcerers was Apollonius of Tyana, who retained his fame even into Anglo-Saxon England centuries later. We know the details of his life from a defensive biography written by his admirer Philostratus. Apollonius traveled the world, visiting Brahmins in India and facing vampiric creatures like a Lamia and an Empusa in Corinth. He spoke with the dead, including the spirit of Achilles. While he made true predictions and healed mysterious maladies, Apollonius concentrated on the knowledge he gained from the experiences. He saw himself not as a magician, but as a philosopher like Pythagoras attempting to understand the natural world; it simply happened that the natural world was far more complex than the common people knew.

Apuleius of Madura presents a more complex case. His *Metamorphoses* (also known as *The Golden Ass*) provided an autobiographical account of a life of magical swindling that was eventually eclipsed by a religious awakening when he at last succumbs to the calls of Isis. Art imitated life, for

Apuleius also had to defend himself against charges that he had used magic to improve his life unfairly, particularly by his marriage to a wealthy widow. His neighbors found her infatuation inexplicable, and they were concerned about the magical accoutrements around his home. His novel suggested a rather more straightforward embracing of magic, for his hapless main character Lucius becomes transformed into an ass when he ignorantly steals a transformative ointment. While his conversion to Isis worship at the end of the novel suggests that he thought it wise to abandon magic, the charges levied against him and the detailed accounts of magical practices within the narrative suggest that he may not have been ready to part with this particular kind of learning.

One of the most notorious sorcerers of the ancient world was the pseudo-prophet Alexander. The second-century scholar Lucian offered a scathing account of this con artist that still serves as a monument both to sheer audacity and to public gullibility. Alexander was a student of a student of Apollonoius who had decided that chicanery paid better than genuine healing. His pupil decided to go further, and created his own god and oracle. He presented himself as a new prophet and trumpeted the powers of his oracle, Glycon the snake who contains the god Asclepius. With much smoke and mirrors—not to mention both a marionette dragon head and a well-trained pet snake—Alexander easily amazed the locals and persuaded them to make much of the insightful oracle, who offered healing remedies and insightful prognostications. To the cynical Lucian, only rubes could be taken in by such ploys and elaborate rituals, but taken in they were to the great benefit of Alexander and his staff of assistants.

With the spread of Christianity, the work of sorcerers and magicians whose work fell outside the church became suspect. While *theurgy*, the commanding of gods, had initially been part of the sorcerer's trade, the rise of Christian monotheism brought that practice into the realm of blasphemy, so the magician resorted instead to trafficking with lesser spirits (usually demons) and ghosts from the past. Since only priests of the church were allowed direct access to the divine, the sorcerer had to settle for lesser beings. Miracles were the province of the saints—sorcerers had to settle for magic.

MEDIEVAL

The sorcerers of the Middle Ages may be the most famous, but for much of the early part of the period they were the outlaws who needed to be eliminated. With the consolidation of the Western church, "magic" came under the province of the clerics, and the only acceptable form was miracles. Not that the difference was always clear, particularly to the audience. They were as willing to accept the sleight-of-hand of Simon the Magus as the authorized marvels of Jesus. The miracles of the early saints helped create the power of

the orthodoxy; magicians were seen as a threat to that established order, to be outlawed and punished. Thus the laws of King Alfred the Great in the ninth century called for the death of those women who received enchanters, magicians, and witches. While there seemed to be an echo of Apollonius of Tyana in the early English proto-novel *Apollonius of Tyre* (MS, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge), the story of the itinerant sorcerer/philosopher has been turned into a romance of redemption and love. Apollonius uncovers the incestuous love of a king for his daughter and undergoes many trials and travels before miraculously (or magically) being reunited with his family.

Perhaps the first true sorcerer to emerge from the Middle Ages in Britain was the now world-famous Merlin. The irony is that this Welsh druid arose within the framework of the French-speaking Norman rule of Anglo-Saxon Britain in the twelfth century. In his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain), Geoffrey of Monmouth not only forged Britain's link to a glorious past in Troy with the glorious Brutus, but more famously built up the legendary King Arthur, defender of the Celtic Britons against the unruly Saxon invaders after the fall of Rome. This Welsh cleric at Oxford also created the sorcerer *par excellence*, Merlin. Primarily based on the Welsh figure known as Myrddin, Geoffrey reshaped the sorcerer into a much more grandiose figure. Although adapted by most later writers in the Arthurian realm as a protean magical individual, Geoffrey's Merlin was a no-nonsense man of learning who treated the kings who consult him with scorn for their appalling ignorance. In this way, Geoffrey connected his druid priest with the ancient past of learning and the emphasis on knowledge rather than simply magic. Nonetheless, many of his deeds were recognizably magic.

Perhaps one of the most notable of Merlin's accomplishments was the movement of the Giant's Ring from Ireland to England. Clearly this circle of colossal stones was none other than the monument we know today as Stonehenge, which Geoffrey sought to explain in terms of Merlin's powers. When King Aurelius wished to erect a monument to his soldiers fallen in the fight against the heathen Saxons, he summoned Merlin to him to foretell the future. The sorcerer refused, saying "Mysteries of that sort cannot be revealed except where there is the most urgent need for them. If I were to utter them as an entertainment, or where there was no need at all, then the spirit which controls me would forsake me in the moment of need" (196). However, he grudgingly suggested that a fitting monument could be made from the Giant's Ring. When Aurelius laughed, thinking the task impossible, Merlin coolly admonished him, "Try not to laugh in a foolish way, your majesty," then proceeded to tout the medicinal value of the stones, which were known by those who practice "certain secret religious rites." While Aurelius and his men made a game effort to budge the stones, they were quickly discouraged. Merlin laughed at their efforts, then got the necessary equipment together, dismantled the ring, and set them on board ships. Geoffrey emphasizes throughout the special knowledge to which Merlin had access, yet also maintains the

connection to the secret rites of his order. As Geoffrey notes, "his artistry was worth more than any brute strength" (198).

Likewise, when called upon to facilitate Arthur's conception, Merlin seemed to show both prescience and a distaste for flashy magic. Utherpendragon developed an insatiable lust for Ygerna, the wife of Gorlois, the Duke of Cornwall. He consulted one of his closest friends, who declared that the only possibility of success would be to consult Merlin. When the sorcerer arrived, he declared the only solution was that "you must make use of methods which are quite new and until now unheard-of in your day. By my drugs I know how to give you the precise appearance of Gorlois . . . in this way you will be able to go safely to Ygerna in her castle and be admitted" (206–7). Geoffrey praised Merlin for his knowledge and skill, but also for his audacity. In the midst of the *Historia* he inserted the Prophecies of Merlin, originally intended to be part of a separate volume. These pronouncements, offered to King Vortigern, amazed listeners and predicted the coming ages (easy perhaps for Geoffrey to do, living as he was in the "future" world) and the success of Arthur.

As the character was adapted by later writers, Merlin became the instructor of Arthur himself and the heart of Britain. The twelfth-century French poem by Robert de Boron provided the matter for the fifteenth-century Prose Merlin, which also adapts material from France. It may seem ironic that the stories that form the chief mythological past of Britain became perhaps even more popular in France, but the frequent commerce between the two nations—particularly under Norman rule of England—led to a great deal of literary exchange. The last real flowering of the Merlin stories in the Middle Ages was Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (c. 1469). While Merlin plays a role in only the beginning of Arthur's story, his presence is key to all that happens to Arthur and his knights afterward. However, Malory also popularized a romantically tragic end for the sorcerer, who was undone by a woman of magic. Merlin meets Nimue, the Lady of the Lake, and is immediately smitten. While they pool their resources for a time, she eventually tires of him and tricks the old magician into his doom—sealed for all eternity in a cave beneath the earth.

The tragic love of the sorcerer propelled the Romantics visions of him in the nineteenth century, as in Sallie Bridges's poem that declared: "Mighty wizard was old Merlin, the wisest of his age; / But Love all living men subdues, and Love spared not the sage." The best-known of this vintage remains Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *The Idylls of the King* (1859). His poem "Merlin and Vivien" (Nimue) popularized the image of his lover as *la belle dame sans merci*, "born from death" as her mother died upon the corpse of her father on the battlefield. She sowed dissent in Camelot and finally, snakelike, charmed the deadly spell from the befuddled old magician until he lay as one dead, "lost to life and use and name and fame." This was the tragic ending that inspired so many of the contemporary painters, including Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Rackham, and pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones's *The Beguiling of Merlin*.

Some Movies about Merlin

A Connecticut Yankee (1949)

The Sword in the Stone (1963)

7 Faces of Dr. Lao (1964)

Camelot (1967)

Excalibur (1981)

The Mists of Avalon (1991)

Merlin [mini-series] (1998)

But this romanticized view of the sorcerer moved him further away from the prototype. He became more wizardlike, his magic mystical and unknowable rather than learned. Gone was the practical know-how of Geoffrey's Merlin. Mark Twain seized upon the opportunity offered by this trivializing and made his Merlin in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) the scheming villain, or in Hank Morgan's words, "That cheap old humbug, that maundering old ass" (977). Twain returned to Merlin as the sorcerer—in fact, he himself took up the role of Lucian, shaking a magical cloak to find science and logic beneath it. Morgan triumphs because of his New England resourcefulness and savvy can-do attitude and his recognition of Merlin's tricks. Twentieth-century narratives like T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* (1958) or Mary Stewart's *The Crystal Cave* (1970) often focused on the fantastic magic, making Merlin a wizard rather than a true sorcerer; White, in fact, imagined his Merlin almost as a kind of shaman, turning the young Arthur into different animals to learn the wisdom they could teach him, while Stewart returns him to his druid past. Marion Zimmer Bradley's epic feminist retelling of the Camelot legends, *The Mists of Avalon* (1982), necessarily reduced the impact of Merlin, making "the merlin" a position held by druid-poet bards rather than a sorcerer in his own right.

Eventually the work of the sorcerer crept back into the realm of the clerics. Not content to leave supernatural powers entirely to God or to the saints, medieval clerics began to become concerned with particular heresy that dealt with diabolical sorcery. While traffic with demons was seen as a normal danger of everyday life, to be guarded against in a variety of ways from the voicing of prayers to the carrying of blessed amulets, the sophisticated knowledge obtained by those scholars studying the problems of these particular heresies proved sometimes too tempting to resist. In particular, the rise of Hermeticism and its closely related art, alchemy, produced a new interest in the arts of sorcery within the Christian tradition in the West. Texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus—himself a blending of Greek and Egyptian gods and traditions—became the core of new flowering of sorcery that continued in

popularity through the Renaissance and, to a lesser form, right up to the present.

The return of learned magic grew first from Muslim Spain, then in part from the inadvertent commerce of the successive Crusades which began at the end of the eleventh century. While the primary aim of the incursions was to restore Western Christian control of the Holy Lands (an effort that overall created more misery than anything else), one influential effect of the cultural contact (both voluntary trading as well as looting and pillaging) was to restore Classical texts and knowledge to the West. While a combination of philosophical studies including alchemy, astrology, and theurgy motivated these scholars, many soon stepped beyond the bounds allowed by the church and sought forbidden knowledge.

Perhaps the most famous of these is alchemy. While the broad umbrella of Hermeticism in the Middle Ages and beyond moved away from its roots in the ancient Mystery religions, it contained a number of practices objectionable to the orthodoxy of the church. Alchemy itself, often seen as a precursor to the scientific method (Sir Isaac Newton was at first an alchemist), was chief among these practices. The principles guiding alchemy came from the Hermetic tradition: that all things derive from the one divine source; that the material reflects in all important ways the ethereal; that the small (microcosm) affected the whole (macrocosm); that all materials was made from varying combinations of the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water; and that the unity of opposing forces (male/female, light/dark, etc.) could prove enlightening.

While early alchemists were regarded as philosophers in pursuit of better understanding of the divine order, by the thirteenth century their work had become suspect. Clergy like Roger Bacon followed the trail of the divine in the natural world, but also attempted to aspire closer to divinity itself by searching for the legendary Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life it created, the *aqua vitae* that could heal any illness and prolong one's life. As the backlash against reason and practical pursuits grew, the experimentation of the alchemists began to take on a more objectionable air. By the early fourteenth century, Pope John XXII expressly forbade clergy to practice alchemy. It is unlikely that all church personnel gave up this particular art of sorcery. However, this ban did have the unintended effect of opening the field to non-clerical alchemists, many of whom more nakedly pursued the devising of the Philosopher's Stone and the attendant power it might bring. Among these more business-oriented alchemists was Nicolas Flamel, made popular by the first *Harry Potter* book as the creator of the titular Philosopher's Stone. Although there was no evidence to suggest that Flamel succeeded in producing the stone, he did find monetary success sufficient to assure his fame, perhaps in part because he shared the wealth with his community, funding both hospitals and churches.

Perhaps one of the best-known of the alchemists of the late Middle Ages was Cornelius Agrippa, who combined alchemy with other magical practices (including theurgy, astrology, and divination) in a return to more recognizable

sorcery. While Agrippa often fled persecution during his time, his works have proved to maintain a lasting fascination for students of the occult, particularly his *Libri tres de occulta philosophia* (Three Books of Occult Philosophy), still in print today. Agrippa was ahead of his time in many ways, writing a book on the essential equality of women with men and devising elaborate handbooks for those who would follow in his footsteps. While he often suffered persecution from those who either feared his magic or condemned his heretical views, Agrippa also maintained for a time influential positions within the German nobility, entertaining people with his prognostications and knowledge.

EARLY MODERN

The most influential sorcerer of the early modern period actually has his roots in the late Middle Ages. Faustus remains the model of the black magic sorcerer even in the modern era. The convention of selling one's soul to the devil emerged from the concerns of heresy and witchcraft that grew out of clerical musings upon the power and nature of devils. While devils in the early Middle Ages were tempters whispering in the ears of otherwise innocent folk, the clerical development of demonology created a body of knowledge that, ironically, led to theugistic attempts to use and control those supernatural figures. The experiments of alchemy and the influence of Hermetic thought—seeing Christianity in terms of symbolism rather than dogmatic literalism—influenced scholars who desired to go beyond the approved systems of study. This zeal became embodied in Faustus.

The historical Faustus turned up in sixteenth-century chapbooks that popularized the story of the scholar turned diabolist. Johann Georg Faust is said to have lived about 1480–1540, to have received a degree in theology from Heidelberg University, and to have practiced everything from alchemy to necromancy. Fiction and folklore have removed any chance of truly understanding the historical figure, in large part because he became attached to ideas already in circulation. The motif of selling one's soul to the devil had already been part of folkloric traditions. This arose out of medieval legends of demons and saints. The usual practice of devils was to work unseen in the material world, whispering in human ears to goad them into sinful behavior or frustrating their attempts to live a virtuous life. These teachings came from both the lives of saints and from moralistic writings varying from explications of biblical lessons to the lively morality plays of the late Middle Ages. The play *Mankind*, for instance, shows the titular character able to withstand the direct assaults of evil with the regurgitation of pious teachings offered by the character Mercy; however, when the unseen devil Titivillus continually frustrates his efforts to plow a field, Mankind at last gives into despair and is very nearly hung by the evil demons. Saints' lives, however, demonstrated that with the

right powers it was possible to control these demons and force them to do as one commanded. Even demure virgin saints like Margaret and Juliana were able to subdue recalcitrant demons like the ever-popular Belial and force them to both reveal their secrets and become humble servants.

The Faust story grows out of this popular history as well as the learned disciplines of theology, alchemy, and necromancy. Necromancy, the art of raising spirits of the dead for divinatory purposes, had continued since ancient times despite prohibitions of the church and secular law. Just as numerous church reforms attempted to put a stop to various folk traditions of prognostication (often tied to seasonal festivals like midsummer), within the scholarly community of the church and then the universities, various efforts to outlaw or curtail the practice failed to have any lasting success. While the witchcraft prosecutions growing in the wake of the Reformation began to fasten on the misunderstood folk practices of common people, the learned traditions of magic that required knowledge of Greek and Latin (and, with the growing commerce in Near Eastern texts, Hebrew and Arabic) presented a quandary for the church hierarchy. While earlier efforts to weed out heresy provided a clear means for prosecution, the long acceptance of arts like alchemy provided a grey area of confusion. Where to draw the line between scholarly scientific inquiry and magic? The line was contested and often unclear. If saints could safely traffic with demons, could necromancy be wrong?

As the Faustus legend developed, it clearly became a question of agency. Who was really in control, the magician or the demon? If the demon was in control, then the soul was in peril of sin. One of the earliest Faustian narratives demonstrates that point unambiguously. The late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century Dutch play *Mary of Nijmeghen*, attributed to Anna Bijns, presents a young woman whom others misuse until she finds a sympathetic ear in One-Eyed Moenen. He is, of course, a devil, and claims that he is a Master of Arts who never fails at what he undertakes. Eager to have access to knowledge of the seven liberal arts, Mary accepts his offer of teaching, even though he balks at teaching her necromancy, the art her uncle has such proficiency in that "he can make the devil crawl through a needle's eye, whether he likes it or not" (359). The devil hastily warns her of the dangers of that art: "If you were beginning to recite a spell with your pretty red lips, and you were to forget a word or a letter, so that you could not at once say the right thing to the spirit whom you had conjured, he would break your neck straight away." Mary shrinks from learning an art that could kill her, but does not immediately worry about the peril of her soul. Unlike her later reflection, Mary does eventually see the errors of her ways (fittingly enough, her revelation comes as she watched a morality play), and after true contrition and a very long penance her sins are forgiven and she ascends to heaven. While the play emphasizes the need for contrition and repentance (whatever the scope of one's sins), it also highlights the utility of necromancy. Moenen fears not only that Mary will be able to control him, but if she were to become proficient in the art she might

indeed imperil all hell's inhabitants. It was not without dangers, but necromancy could definitely be a power for good.

This was less clear by the time of Elizabeth. In the context of religious divisiveness in England in particular (after Henry VIII's split from the Roman church and with the growing emphasis on Protestant reform across Western Europe), necromancy's dangers were far more apparent than any good it might have been able to achieve. This was particularly so when it came to the dramatic version written by Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593). It certainly did not help that Marlowe himself proved to be a figure of controversy for much of his life, especially given his sudden and violent death at the hands of a possible assassin. He was repeatedly charged with atheism—at this time, a very serious crime, tantamount to treason, for the English monarch was still newly become the head of the church—and associated with people like Sir Walter Raleigh who were associated with explorations of atheism, philosophy, and religion in a loose discussion group known as the School of Night. Marlowe's plays feature larger-than-life figures who dare far beyond the safe compass of Christian morality in philosophical, religious, and even sexual matters (many scholars have suggested that Marlowe's liaisons were primarily homosexual, although it is difficult to divide accusations from truth given the paucity of factual evidence). Marlowe's Faustus, like his Tamburlaine and his Barabas, is a character who refuses to be reigned in by convention or morality. While their hubris in the end leads to their downfall, the audience could vicariously enjoy their audacity throughout the bulk of the performance. This ambiguity created both his controversy and his popularity—and continues to do so today. His was the fame to which Shakespeare aspired, which Ben Jonson trumpeted.

While he undoubtedly had been inspired by the widely disseminated chapbook of Faust's life and downfall, Marlowe's Faustus is a scholar who tires of the traditional disciplines. One by one he examines the fields of his education: logic, medicine, law, and theology. Each only affords "external trash," and after his dismissal of the accepted arts, he turns to necromancy:

Notable Faust Films

Faustus (F. W. Murnau, 1926)

The Band Wagon (1953)

Bedazzled (1967)

Mephisto (1981)

Hellraiser (1986)

Faust (Jan Svankmajer, 1994)

The Devil's Advocate (1997)

"These necromantic books are heavenly / lines, circles, schemes, letters, and characters" (1.52–53). Marlowe brings the necromancer to the popular imagination in a vivid way that has since become the icon. Faustus's magic explicitly refers back to Bacon and Agrippa. He is conscious of the tradition he is joining, confident of the powers ("a sound magician is a mighty god": 1.64) he will be able to employ. Marlowe made indelible the image of the conjuring sorcerer, hidden away in a "solitary grove" and surrounded by books that, on their own, would offer a seemingly innocent library, but combined would show the way to magic and peril: Bacon, Albanus, the Hebrew Psalter, and the New Testament. While his friends Valdes and Cornelius claim to have the knowledge to attain the great powers that Faustus dreams of, it is he alone who appears in the grove with his books open and the circle drawn, ready to conjure a pliant spirit to his commands. His working requires writing Jehovah's name forward and backward, specifying the appropriate astrological symbols to find the appropriate conjuncts, then summoning forth the appropriate spirit with a poetic Latin directive.

Knowledge was the key to access. The necromantic sorcerer needed to know Latin, astrology, mathematics, and chemistry. As Cornelius noted, "he that is grounded in astrology, / Enriched with tongues, well seen in minerals, / Hath all the principles magic doth require" (1.140–42). Marlowe made much of the academic setting of Faustus's life, beginning and ending within the university's sphere, surrounding the scholar with other students who worried about his extracurricular activities, yet enjoyed the spectacle of Helen of Troy parading before them. Marlowe, the Cambridge graduate (just barely—the Privy Council had to intercede on behalf of the somewhat negligent student), sprinkled his play not only with Latin phrases and nuggets of elevated discourse on everything from astrology to cosmology, but also with serious questions about the nature of sin and damnation. Mephistopheles's existential despair ("this is hell, nor am I out of it": 4.78) reveals a sophisticated concept of hell quite different from the medieval focus on physical punishment. The world was opening up. When Faustus imagines how the pliant spirits will serve him, he takes into consideration all the lands in the new world trade: "I'll have them fly to India for gold, / Ransack the ocean for orient pearl, / and search all the corners of the new-found world / for pleasant fruits and princely delicates" (1.84–87). Necromancy will give him power of commerce not just between the material world and the spiritual, but across the vast riches of both.

That was also the primary objection against necromancy: not simply that it perverted the altruistic aim of learning (the universities, grown from medieval monasteries, were still chiefly designed to produce new generations of clergy), but that it did so for mere filthy lucre. While theurgy may have begun with the aim of commerce with the gods, within the monotheism of Christianity, magicians had access only to lesser spirits who were generally understood to be of infernal origins. Faustus is conscious of this. Within his circle of anagrams and astrological calculations, he calls directly to Hell, "Sint mihi dei Acherontis

propitii!'' (May the gods of Acheron be propitious to me, 3.16), using not the English name of hell, but the Greek river that leads to Hades, and referring to the devils as ''gods.'' In keeping with alchemical traditions, he also beckons the spirits of air, fire, and water (leaving out earth seems a significant omission that spells already the future failure of the magician). But even his summons to *inferni* is spiced with the props of the church (the name of Jehovah, holy water, and the sign of the cross), keeping his work within the learned Christian context too.

What Marlowe made key to the legend of Faustus's overreaching was not the inevitable punishment required by Christian morality, but the questioning of that morality's veracity. It may have been less of a surprise from an author himself accused of atheism, but Faustus repeatedly suggested that he had little trust in the tenets of the faith he had been taught to follow. ''Come, I think hell's a fable,'' he tells Mephistopheles. ''This word 'damnation' terrifies not him, / For he confounds Hell in Elysium'' (5.129, 3.60–61). Even when admonished by the Good Angel or the pious Old Man, Faustus wavers only momentarily before returning to his thoughts of pleasure and riches. Like the alchemists who succumbed to the desire for the Philosopher's Stone and its promise of unlimited wealth—and a long life in which to enjoy that bounty— Faustus thinks only of his own appetites.

The comic scenes inserted between the more tense dramatic scenes highlight this folly (although their authorship remains less certain). The parodic repetition of Faustus's contract-signing scene, played by his servant Wagner and the ever-present stock character the Clown, contrasts sharply with Faustus's knowing acceptance of the contract his very skin and blood object to signing. When the wily servant scornfully assumes that the fool would sell his soul for a bit of raw mutton, the clown surprises him with a clear understanding of the cost, declaring ''By'r Lady, I had need have it well roasted, and good sauce to it, if I pay so dear'' (4.11–13). While Marlowe assumed his audience would enjoy the vicarious thrills of Faustus's dissipation, taunting the pope, performing for royalty, and conjuring illustrious figures from history, he also gave them the required damnation with the increasingly frenzied fear of his ultimately unrepentant sorcerer, who counts down the final hours, then minutes of his life, grasping for scapegoats. The magician blames the demons who tempted him, the parents who engendered him, the books from which he learned both useful and infernal knowledge, but only briefly himself. With a few notable exceptions, later versions of the story focus on the horrors of the demonic tempter and the inevitable damnation of the deal rather than the sorcery of the protagonist. Necessarily, the devil became the central figure.

The Faust legend has had a lasting impact upon the Western imagination. He has not only appeared in the works of writers as diverse as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Thomas Mann, Gertrude Stein, and Clive Barker, but also inspired works in other media including operas by Charles Gounod and Konrad Boehmer as well as popular music by artists like Frank Zappa, Randy

Newman, and a litany of death metal bands. While this success might seem to reflect the triumph of Christian morality, it also point the way toward the success of the growing influence of scientific inquiry. Much that had been the realm of the sorcerer would soon become the part of the province of the scientist dispelling magic with careful observation and experimental repetition. For a while it appeared that the sorcerer would have to be resigned to the distant past.

Marlowe's contemporary, Shakespeare, decided to do just that with his sorcerer, Prospero. While equally influenced by the historical magicians infusing Elizabethan culture, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* takes place in a less definite time period, one that allows traffic in sorcery without immediate peril to one's soul. Nonetheless, the parallels between Prospero and Faustus are numerous. Each has his familiar spirit, though sprightly Ariel lacks the menace of Mephistopheles's infernal realm. Each requires the background of learning, purchased with hard toil. Each makes his elaborate preparations with circle and staff, Prospero with his cloak, Faustus with his girdle of invisibility. Each, too, realizes that his magical workings come with a cost. Faustus simply denies the reality of his, while initially Prospero seethes for revenge on behalf of his losses. But Shakespeare's play lacks the tragedy of Marlowe's vision. While the audience's introduction to Prospero offers a bitter man lusting for revenge, by degrees he grows more pliant, empathetic, and eventually forgiving. Many scholars have considered this play to have been Shakespeare's last, a meditation on the magical art of writing and its illusions and realities as much as on his magician character. Not that the writer ever shrank from comparing life to a stage (or vice versa), but this play in particular tests the effects of the writer as creator and his people as helpless puppets on their strings. But more recent scholarship has also pointed out the debt owed to the rapidly expanding colonial role of the British Empire, reflected in Prospero's immediate assumption of control over the inhabitants of his tiny island nation.

While the overarching memory of Prospero remains the kindly master of beautiful spirits, at the beginning of the play he is less charming. The action starts *in media res*, without the typical scene-setting of most plays of the period. The titular tempest rages while sailors shout orders and curses and the nobles on board interfere. A calm Prospero watches all this from shore while his more empathic daughter, Miranda, anxiously "suffered / with those I saw suffer" and begs "if by your art, my dearest father, you have / Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them" (1.2.5–6, 1–2). As the seas rage and the ships pitch, Prospero relates to his daughter the truth about his brother's betrayal and usurpation, as well as the unexpected kindness of old Gonzalo, who made sure that the pair had both food and more esoteric sustenance: "Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me / From mine own library with volumes that / I prize above my dukedom" (1.2.166–68). Fortune and "a most auspicious star" have combined to bring his enemies within reach of his magic, and the former Duke intends to make the most of the opportunity.

It is not only the lust for revenge that renders Prospero forbidding at the outset. Faustus is more friendly to his sometime tormentor Mephistopheles than Prospero is to Ariel, when the spirit dares mention the promised freedom. The magician at once reminds Ariel of the debt owed for releasing him from his prison within "a cloven pine" after a dozen fruitless years (ignoring his equal length of servitude for the sorcerer), repeating to him, "It was mine art…that made gape / The pine and let thee out" and threatening him, "If thou murmur'st, I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters" (1.2.291–93, 294–96). Similarly, Prospero uses his powers to torment the creature Caliban with cramps and aches, although the source of his malice is revealed to date from Caliban's attempt to rape Miranda and people the island with little Calibans. Shakespeare went to great pains to make the monstrous Caliban both humorous and ultimately impotently dangerous. He pairs him with the drunkards Stephano and Trinculo, who accentuate the droll side of the hideous creature, of whom even Trinculo declares, "I shall laugh myself to death at this puppy / headed monster!" (2.2.154–55). Clearly, the audience was meant to share the universal revulsion for the strange creature (much as it may alarm audiences viewing the play from a post-colonial perspective), although they might still have some sympathy for Caliban at the end of the play, presumably alone once more on his island and king.

Despite these attempts to render his magic charming and even humorous, through much of the play the sorcerer chafes to enact his revenge upon his enemies, eager to see them suffer. In the third act, Prospero charges Ariel to appear to the conspirators as a harpy and accuse them as "three men of sin" who are "unfit to live" and set for a "ling'ring perdition worse than any death." Prospero looks upon his work with grim satisfaction, declaring "my high charms work, / and these, mine enemies, are all knit up / in their distractions. They are now in my pow'r" (3.3.53, 58, 77, 88–90). Yet at this moment of tragic fulfillment, the humor and generosity of spirit catch up with Prospero. In this way, the underlying Christian morality triumphs over the apparent setting in the past. Trained by Miranda's compassion and touched by old Ganzalo's tears, Ariel dares to speak his mind to his fractious master:

> From the twelfth century on, the alchemists declared that for their transmutations an agent was necessary. This agent they called by many names—the philosopher's stone, the philosopher's powder, the great elixir, the quintessence, etc. When touching the liquid metals, the philosopher's stone was thought to change them into gold…Besides its power to transmute metals, the philosopher's stone had other marvelous virtues: it could cure all diseases and prolong life beyond its natural limits.
>
> *Kurt Seligman,* The History of Magic and the Occult

> *Ariel:* Your charm so strongly works 'em
> That if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender.
> *Prospero:* Dost thou think so, spirit?
> *Ariel:* Mine would, sir, were I human.
> *Prospero:* And mine shall. (5.1.17–20)

The sorcerer finds that like the scientist (or the penitent) his "nobler reason" strives against his desire for revenge. Virtue, while rarer than vengeance, wins the day. Thus by the end, Prospero denounces his magical arts, breaks his staff, and "deeper than did ever plummet sound" drowns his book of magic (5.1.56).

While Christian charity may have led to the final shape of Shakespeare's fantasy, the deliberate location in a vaguely ancient time sidestepped the need to address the deliberate heresy of Faustus's magical workings. While the sorcerer of the Early Modern period might have risked charges of both atheism and heresy, the past was out of the compass of the ongoing debates and hard-fought religious battles of the time. Prospero does not conjure in Latin and Greek, but calls upon "ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves" (5.1.33). He does not summon devils and demons forth, but the goddesses Ceres and Juno—and then only to bless the wedding of Ferdinand and Miranda. Further, he relates to the dazzled young couple, they are in fact "all spirits" rather than the true gods, and once the show is over "these, our actors / are melted into air, into thin air," and "this insubstantial pageant faded" (4.1.148–55). Even as he stands within the magic circle, casting his final spell, Prospero declares: "this rough magic / I here abjure" (5.1.50–51), as if salvation for him also requires relinquishing "that damned art" as the Good Angel declared it to Faustus. Even removed from the concerns of the present, Shakespeare could not allow his magician to imperil his soul for long.

Prospero became the model for the more fantastical sorcerer in the centuries to follow. Not the tragic overreacher of Marlowe's Faustus, but the creator of delights and illusions, Shakespeare's magician provided a more benign figure who dwelt in the safety of the past, "such stuff / as dreams are made on" (5.1.156–57). Like the figure of the witch, he was closer to the natural world, though he yet required the special training and conduit spirits that were always part of the sorcerer's world.

However, there continued to be real figures who took up the mantle of sorcerer despite the often perilous nature of that pursuit. One of the most famous of these was the magician and astrologer to Queen Elizabeth, John Dee (1527–1609). Dee stood on the growing fault line between scientific inquiry and the magics of the past like alchemy. His close ties to both royalty and theater provided much of the allure that continues to cling to him. He was a founding fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, but also invited to take a

position at Oxford (which he declined). His penchant for astrology got him into trouble when he cast horoscopes for Queen Mary and (then) Princess Elizabeth. He had to appear at the dreaded Star Chamber and defend himself, but through these contacts made his way into the upper echelons of society. By the time Elizabeth took the throne in 1558, Dee was so securely established that he chose the most auspicious day for her coronation and became her close confidant and advisor. He wrote extensively on the Hermetic arts, navigation, and mathematics, but as time went on he focused his efforts on more esoteric arts. Using a scryer, he would attempt to contact angels to gain access to important information. These exercises in theurgy went better once he teamed up with the medium Edward Kelly (1555–1597), and together they developed a body of writings in the Enochian language of the angels. Kelly, however, had a much more slippery reputation than the Queen's astrologer. He was reputed to be an alchemist more interested in turning lower metals into gold (or, as some later writers have suggested, turning his credulous partner and other wealthy folk into paupers) than in the words of angels. For a time Dee and Kelly lived as itinerants in Central Europe, seeking the patronage of nobles. Apparently, when Kelly tired of the partnership—preferring the more materials gains of his alchemy to the esoteric correspondence Dee craved—he declared that the angels had indicated that the two should share all their possessions equally. Among the "possessions" to be shared were their wives. Many have assumed this was simply Kelly's way of dispensing with the partnership, although Dee did initially comply with the angelic order. However, he was unable to continue for long and departed with his wife for England once more. Kelly eventually died after being imprisoned repeatedly for his failure to produce the expected gold. Dee, protected during Elizabeth's reign, was abandoned during her successor's. James, who feared that supernatural powers surrounded him (he had claimed that witches were angling to assassinate him), had no interest in the man by then popularly believed to be an evil magician. Dee died disconsolate and alone. Many of his records of angelic conversations were published in the seventeenth century with a preface by the scholar Méric Casaubon, who argued that Dee was an unwitting tool of infernal spirits rather than the angels he believed. Only in the twentieth century did his accomplishments in fields like mathematics and navigation begin to receive acclaim. However, the damage was already done; in fictional works, Dee has become a figure of wild fantasy and often outright horror.

MODERN

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the growing appreciation of the scientific method separated magic from philosophy and alchemy from chemistry and natural science. Even in the late Middle Ages these beliefs had their roots. The alchemist Paracelsus, with his emphasis on practicality and medical

efficacy, pointed the way toward the future even if he still relied on astrology and prognostication to fund his work. The work of the sorcerer became increasingly displaced by the inquiry of the scientist, while the philosophical questions central to alchemy and Hermeticism continued. As the tools to measure various phenomena improved, the immeasurable and incalculable lost its allure. There was so much to discover in the natural world that scholars became disenchanted with the immaterial, which began to take second place. Many kinds of magical practice, however, continued to be considered suspect. As the witch hunts continued into the nineteenth century, the practitioners of any kind of magical art faced possible punishments.

Of course, the focus on Cartesian rationality did not dispel the desire for magic and sorcery for long—if at all. As scholar Anthony Aveni writes, "So maybe the characterization of the dimming of the lights of magic in phase with the illumination of the rational view of the world is a little too simple, too elitist, too progressive a model" (146). It is human nature to desire shortcuts—and often the sorcerer seemed to offer them. And despite the Protestant revolution, many people still found themselves stymied in their attempts to touch the divine. A skilled intermediary would be called for, one who could guarantee answers beyond the reach of science. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the figure of the sorcerer seemed to flower in different ways. The fictional sorcerer usually resided in the past, where matters of magic would be assumed to be both active and believed. In the real world, the sorcerer appealed to those who either rejected the exclusive focus on the material or hoped to reach beyond its claim.

The sorcerer appeared in Gothic stories, usually as the voice of doom sealing the fate of the hero or heroine based on a strange prognostication. Most of the magical work, however, was carried out by monks or nuns—as in Matthew Gregory Lewis's classic novel *The Monk* (1796)—in keeping with the anti-Catholicism of the genre. These were the type of stories that a young Mary Shelley had read (in addition to her copious studies in Latin, Greek, and German), although it was a collection of ghost stories that precipitated her writing of the timeless classic *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). While Shelley's novel has often been counted as the first example of what was to be known as science fiction, its roots come much closer to sorcery—as her accusers no doubt believed. As a teen, Victor Frankenstein read the works of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. Arriving at the university in Ingolstadt shortly after the death of his mother, he greets his new studies in natural science with some disenchantment, particularly after being ridiculed by his natural philosophy instructor M. Krempe, who echoes the "sad trash" comment of his father regarding the work of the alchemists. But his eventual project of galvanizing life into a collection of bones and charnel house offal could be easily categorized as sorcery rather than science, particularly when readers consider his reluctance to divulge the details to his patient audience, Robert Walton. His methods remain in the realm of magic—or madness.

The roughly contemporary German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe not only provided a key text in Shelley's creature's education (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*) but continued the Faustian tradition with his own development of the character. Ironically, Goethe devoted much of his life to the pursuits of science, including what he considered his magnum opus, *Theory of Colors*. His interests in philosophy and culture colored his approach to the tale of *Faust* (part 1 published first in 1808, part 2 posthumously in 1832). Goethe's Faust is a scholar but no longer a necromancer (although his father was an alchemist who saved many lives with his cures). There is a section in part two where a homunculus is created by an alchemical process, but the magic has been transferred completely to Mephistopheles, taking on the cast of supernatural rather than the province of the sorcerer. This was in keeping with the other changes Goethe made to the tale—adding a tragic love story, examining the process of nation building and political maneuvering—but moves it outside the subject of the sorcerer. However, Goethe did produce another work on sorcery that, slight as it may be, has had surprising influence. This was of course the ballad ''The Sorcerer's Apprentice'' (''Der Zauberlehrling,'' 1797). This comic tale of magic run amok was based on a story from Lucian and itself inspired both the symphonic poem *L'Apprenti sorcier* by Paul Dukas and, perhaps more popularly, the Mickey Mouse section of the Disney film *Fantasia* (1940), which used Dukas's piece as the soundtrack.

A similarly humorous turn on the subject of sorcery drove the plot of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer* (1877). Gilbert's book of the operetta centered upon the workings of the sorcerer John Wellington Wells of J. W. Wells & Co., Family Sorcerers. As Wells assures the young man who summons him, ''we practice Necromancy in all its branches.'' However, the efficacy of his ''amulets, charms, and counter-charms'' seems somewhat questionable after his opening song, which celebrates his mercantile success more than his magical.

> My name is John Wellington Wells,
> I'm a dealer in magic and spells,
> In blessings and curses
> And ever-filled purses,
> In prophecies, witches, and knells.

The young lover Alexis had summoned Wells because he needed to purchase a quantity of the ''Patent Oxy-Hydrogen Love-at-first-sight Philtre'' in order to stir up the libidos of the nobility who had shied from professions of love. His plan, predictably, goes awry, however, when the love potion kicks in and completely unsuitable couples fall into spontaneous love. When even the young lovers find themselves inextricably parted, all call for a solution, which Wells informs them can only come from the sacrifice of either Alexis or himself to ''Ahrimanes.'' Urged on by the crowd (and unwelcome attentions from Lady Sangazure), Wells consigns himself to the fire, and the restored couples

depart for a feast at Sir Marmaduke's mansion, singing of eggs, ham, and strawberry jam.

Much of the nineteenth-century interest in sorcery, however, proved far more serious. In keeping with the rise in spiritualism promoted by people like Madame Blavatsky and Eliphas Lévi, the return of interest in Hermetic traditions led to the formation of groups like the Golden Dawn. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn grew out of the Rosicrucian and Masonic traditions in England, which required members to affirm their Christianity, even as they "gathered for the purpose of studying the cabbala [*sic*], the hermetic texts, and other arcane wisdom of the ancient and medieval world" (Hutton 72–73). The Golden Dawn, unlike many of its precursors, actively promoted the role of women (perhaps influenced by Blavatsky's indefatigable work) and included a female image as the Key of the Universe incorporating Isis, the Bride of the Apocalypse, the Cabbalistic Queen of Canticles and the "Great Feminine Kerubic Angel" (Hutton 79). The group maintained a Christian identity while pursuing increasingly complex rituals of magic. Among the more famous members of the Golden Dawn were Maude Gonne, William Butler Yeats, Arthur Machen, and Aleister Crowley. Crowley, however, is probably the only one who really pursued the ideal of the sorcerer, developing his own systems of magic and ritual.

Influenced by a wide study of magic since ancient times and visionary artists like William Blake, Crowley much of the time sought ecstatic experiences from his rituals, often incorporating drugs or sex to achieve them. His flamboyant personality and uncompromising opinions often shocked contemporaries, a reaction Crowley openly cultivated. Many wish to see in Crowley the Faustian prototype, citing his squandered wealth and increasingly caustic relations with companions. Crowley sought to define his *Magick* as a science, famously referring to it as "the art or science of causing change in conformity with will"

He was not wholly hostile to man; but sitting there leaning forward upon a table whereon one taper flared, he was brooding on problems so far from our work-a-day cares, so far beyond even that starry paling which bounds our imaginations, that men and women were not to him that matter of first importance they are to us, but only something to be noted and studied as we might study whatever rumours may come of life upon planets of suns that are other than ours. . . . Only in the rarest moments, perhaps as an organist sleeps, and his hand falls on to the keys playing one bar straight from dreams . . . or eastwards from here, where a player upon a reed in barbarous mountains hits ancestrally on a note that his tribe have known from the days of Pan . . . only at rarest moments comes any guess to us of those songs and splendours that the lonely man drew from the spaces that lie bleak and bare about the turn of the comet.

Lord Dunsany, The Charwoman's Shadow

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or the "Science of understanding oneself and one's condition" (131, 133). Despite his serious—if often ironic—attempts to forge a magical tradition of lasting import, it was the persistent image of him as the scandalous libertine that has continued to hold sway over the public imagination, showing up in modern fictional portrayals of magicians and sorcerers, not too surprising for a man who actively courted the appellation "wickedest man in the world." He lampooned former associates in his own novels and, in return, found himself savaged by novelist W. Somerset Maugham in *The Magician* (1908). Yet his system of ceremonial magic has proved to have continual interest, as has his organization, the Ordo Templi Orientis, which continues to draw wide membership across the world. As his ideas and excesses have become less shocking, it has become possible to read his works without the sensationalist veneer. Crowley's influence can be found in modern witchcraft movements, some of which descend from the OTO: Gerald Gardner, founder of the Wiccan movement, had been an associate of Crowley for a time. Rock groups like Led Zeppelin claimed to be influenced by his works (Jimmy Page even bought Crowley's one-time home), and even the Beatles included him among the portraits adorning the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Crowley remains a charismatic figure that will no doubt continue to influence the modern depiction of the sorcerer.

In the twentieth century, however, the figure of the sorcerer primarily lived in fictional works. A model for the age can be found in Lord Dunsany's lonely magician in *The Charwoman's Shadow* (1926). Set in the distant past, Dunsany's sorcerer owes much to the alchemists and necromancers of the past, including his regular intake of the *elixir vitae* to prolong his life. The young hero, Don Ramon Alonzo, has been sent to learn his arts in the hope that he will be able to contribute gold for his sister's dowry. Ramon Alonzo fears to imperil his soul, but his noble family's impoverishment seems an insurmountable barrier to happiness. Finding at last the hidden house of the magician, the young man stammers out his desire to learn the arts the magician might teach. The sorcerer patiently corrects him: "all those exercises that men call arts, and all wisdom and all knowledge, are but humble branches of that worthy study that is justly named the Art" (12). Dunsany's magician embodies the somewhat distant, distracted, and infinitely knowledgeable icon, with only one foot in this world. Once Ramon Alonzo decides to dedicate himself to rescuing the old woman's shadow (yielded in a Faustian bargain with the magician), he only slowly comes to realize the complexity of the Art that the master has had centuries to apprehend. Dunsany established a figure who was not deliberately evil, but one whose studies so far removed him from human sphere that he found it difficult to reduce his vision to their small world. This melancholy spirit, whose actions may have been inscrutable to mere man, nonetheless formed a sentimental attachment to the related species who might make the leap. The melancholy came, however, from the knowledge that this was a Golden Age that has passed. By the end of the novel, the magician has departed,

taking with him all the magical creatures who were "beyond damnation" to the Country Beyond Moon's Rising. This was the exodus Chaucer's Wife of Bath laments in the fourteenth century, so even their departure fell in the distant past. This sense of nostalgia influenced much fantasy writing until the rise of urban fantasy in the late twentieth century.

One of Dunsany's key descendents was the influential medievalist J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien's wizard Gandalf was more witch than sorcerer, but the same cannot be said of his opponent in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), the evil Sauron. He was referred to even in *The Hobbit* (1937) as a necromancer, and his activities more clearly fall in the area of alchemy (forging of the One Ring) and necromancy (controlling the Nazgul). However, Tolkien was less interested in forging the role of the sorcerer than in portraying his world as an epic landscape of Christian allegory, where the seemingly powerless creatures triumph as much by their righteousness as by the help of Gandalf's natural (as opposed to Sauron's technological) magic. Tolkien's influence has assured that his many imitators often reflect that interest, although some have pursued the character of the sorcerer with more interest.

One of the liveliest arenas for the sorcerer has been in the medium of comics. The arcane knowledge, ethereal events, and otherworldly creatures provide excellent fodder for graphic realization. Among the most influential comics series has been *Doctor Strange*, part of the Marvel Comics Group. "The Sorcerer Supreme of the Earth" was created by artist Steve Ditko and scripter Stan Lee in 1963. Originally a surgeon, Strange was injured in a car crash and lost his lucrative abilities. Devolving into a shambling wreck, he lost his position and wealth, becoming homeless and bitter. However,

> In the Himalayas he sought out a fabled healer called The Ancient One, who ended up repairing Strange's soul instead of his hands. Redeemed from worldliness, the reborn hero also tacitly acknowledged the value of a race and culture other than his own, studying with the old master until he was ready to become a guardian protecting humanity from the intrusion of evil. He encountered wicked wizards, and also abstract entities like Nightmare and Eternity; in each battle his weapon was knowledge rather than force. (Daniels 116)

Strange hearkened back to the heyday of the alchemist and necromancer, while continuing the battle against evil more associated with the sentimentalized version of the sorcerer. Ditko's art blazed across the pages, bringing to life these etheric battles, arcane knowledge systems, and bizarre creatures. His influence extended far beyond the medium. "Dr. Strange was embraced by and influenced the American counter-culture in the mid-late 1960s," where "the Master of the Mystical Arts nevertheless quickly became a sort of touchstone for an American youth eager explore new realms of consciousness" (Kannenberg). His image appeared on concert posters album covers as well as in the pages of underground comics.

Strange's direct descendants illuminated the pages of comics during the British invasion of DC Comics beginning in the late 1980s. Perhaps the most direct inheritor of the mantle is John Constantine of *Hellblazer*, recently rendered as the film *Constantine* (2005). This series was first written by Jamie Delano and drawn by John Ridgway and Alfredo Alcala, with numerous other writers and artists picking up the story since then. However, Constantine originally appeared in the DC series *Swamp Thing*, first because artists Stephen R. Bissette and John Totleben wanted to draw a character who looked like Police lead singer Sting. Later, writer Alan Moore (himself deciding to become a magician on his fortieth birthday and to pursue both arcane knowledge and disseminate it in his comics series *Promethea*, drawn by J. H. Williams III and Mick Gray) breathed life into the image and created Constantine as a magician and investigator. The Liverpudlian sorcerer combined the con-artist image of the magician as charlatan with the genuine study of arcane knowledge. Constantine traffics with demons and elementals. He has something of the loneliness of Dunsany's magician, but rather than producing a sense of nostalgia, Constantine has effected a sense of existential isolation that he only rarely breaks through to engage the world and its inhabitants on a personal level.

Constantine was one of the figures in the ''Trenchcoat Brigade'' who introduced young Timothy Hunter to the magical life in *The Books of Magic*, the comic series written by Neil Gaiman and illustrated by John Bolton, Scott Hampton, Charles Vess, and Paul Johnson. Gaiman's previous series, *The Sandman*, had also begun with a setting in sorcery, with the title character (the personification of dreaming) captured by the arcane plotting of twentieth-century sorcerers who hearken back to the arts of alchemy and necromancy.

Writer Alan Moore, who decided to become a magician on his fortieth birthday, took up worship of the god Glycon, knowing ''he was exposed as a glove-puppet in the second century.'' Moore turned to the fake snake god when his life was ''hijacked'' by the word balloon of one of his characters in the graphic novel *From Hell*. ''A character says something like, 'The one place gods inarguably exist is in the human mind.' After I wrote that, I realised I'd accidentally made a true statement, and now I'd have to rearrange my entire life around it. The only thing that seemed to really be appropriate was to become a magician.'' Moore tells his erstwhile partner Eddie Campbell, ''Lucian's scornful account of Glycon's true origins as a glove puppet struck me as a marvelous way to both, as you say, pre-empt the inevitable ridicule by worshipping a deity that was already established as historically ridiculous and also to illustrate something of my ideas as to the actual nature of gods. It is my belief that all gods are stories … but stories that have become in some way almost alive and aware'' (5).

In the apocalyptic issue "24 Hours" a character who calls himself John Dee holds hostage a diner full of people and drives them insane by means of one of the Dream King's possessions. Dee tells another character in the previous issue, "I'm not a black magician . . . I'm an hermetic philosopher and a scientist, too. Truly" (16). While Gaiman clearly demonstrated an interest in the sorcerer, throughout the series he focused far more on the mythic level and witchcraft. Even in *The Books of Magic*, which had a more explicit connection to the magician's history, much of the emphasis was on the cosmic and mythic strands of the history. The spectacled trainee in magic with an owl perched on his shoulder (an image made world-famous years later in the *Harry Potter* series) was also a kind of magical key, capable of opening worlds and doors—and of being used by others. Like Diana Wynne-Jones's *Chrestomanci* series or J. K. Rowling's wizards school offerings, the connection to the sorcerer figure was usually fairly tenuous.

Perhaps the greatest flowering of the sorcerer figure in recent times has been the writings of Clive Barker. While his earliest work focused more on horror and the Faustian bargain (in his first novel *The Damnation Game*, 1985), he moved on to nostalgic fantasy (albeit in an urban setting) with *Weaveworld* (1987). The figure of the sorcerer took over his imagination for a few years, appearing in some of his best work, including the sprawling epic *Imajica* (1991) and the first and second books of The Art, *The Great and Secret Show* (1989) and *Everville* (1994), with a third book much promised (and delayed so far). *Imajica* presents the story of the swindling painter John Furie Zacharias, a.k.a. Johnny Gentle, who eventually discovers that he has been a great magician involved in a gigantic magical working meant to heal the rift between the Earth and its sister dominions. Recovering his memory is part of the task, but with his assistant, the shapeshifting mystif Pie'oh'Pah, Gentle must once more attempt the reconciliation at the propitious time. Barker used the motif of magic, of course, to comment upon the work of the creator of art, itself an Art for many. He pursued that line of argument even more directly in the Books of The Art, realizing in his seeker characters the desire to shape the world that motivates all artists, whether of the material or the immaterial. The first book began with the sad sack character Randolph Jaffe, who barely maintains the signs of life, merely existing in his dead-end post office job, until he uncovers a secret network of correspondence that seeks to understand the mystical workings of the world. After murdering his boss and covering his crime with a fire, Jaffe begins wandering in search of a suitable teacher. Along the way, he forms a connection with the scientist/alchemist Richard Wesley Fletcher. While the two initially bond over their similar paths to knowledge, their methods and morals ultimately divide them. Once enemies, they fuel the wars of successive generations as they fight for control of the dream sea Quiddity. At the center of all Barker's work has been a growing certainty of the artist's role as shaman and alchemist, reaching into the shared unconscious to work magic of healing and transformation.

While he has come a long way from his roots, the sorcerer rooted in ancient practice and arcane knowledge continues to hold sway even in a world dominated by devotion to logic and reason. Perhaps as Isaac Asimov famously remarked, all technology that cannot be understood will be assumed to be magical, so continuing developments will ironically always lead to magical interpretations.

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The Urban Horror

by Rob Latham

INTRODUCTION

The phrase ''big city life'' conjures a number of positive images—cultural diversity, stimulating entertainment, an exciting array of cosmopolitan experiences—but it also summons more negative associations: the lurking threat of crime, the squalor of crowded slums, the incessant sensory blitz of nameless faces and alien sounds. A deep-rooted fear of the city, with its menacing shadows and sheer looming mass (what Lewis Mumford, in his

classic study *The Culture of Cities*, called its "shapeless giantism" [233]), has always gone hand in hand with its many allures, and world literature is filled with tales of small-town travelers whose hopeful sojourns to the metropolis result in tragedy and dissolution.

The tension between urban and rural life may be the most basic social division, marking a rupture between distinct economies, forms of experience, and systems of value. In the modern period, this rupture has only accelerated with the advent of industrialization, with its ceaseless, revolutionary dynamism. As Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto*: "everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air" (476). Building on this analysis of modernity's pulverizing flux, sociologist Georg Simmel has argued that urban existence threatens the very stability of the self: "because it stimulates the nerves to their utmost reactivity until they can finally no longer produce any reaction at all," the city gives rise in its denizens to an affect-lessness and anomie that Simmel calls the "blasé attitude" (329). The modern metropolis, according to Simmel, represents an unprecedented "hypertrophy of objective culture" (338), a measureless nexus of commerce and power that dwarfs the individual subject: "He becomes a single cog as over against the vast overwhelming organization of things and forces which gradually take out of his hands everything connected with progress, spirituality and value" (337).

The resulting isolation and disorientation produce a characteristic social type that Walter Benjamin, drawing on the essays of French poet Charles Baudelaire, calls the "flaneûr." An aimless browser of random cityscapes, drawn to yet repelled by the clamor of faceless crowds, from whose seething rhythms he derives a strange, lonely pleasure, the flaneûr is at once a member of the restless throng and obscurely detached from it, driven from scene to scene by "the wave motions of dreaming, the shocks of consciousness" (165). According to Benjamin, the flaneûr has a particular fascination for "the uncanny elements" of big-city life, those sites redolent with "[f]ear, revulsion, and horror" (174); indeed, aside from Baudelaire's writings, the touchstone text cited by Benjamin as defining this ambivalent creature is a work of supernatural literature by Edgar Allan Poe. It is thus in nineteenth-century European cities that urban horror in its modern form arises, and the flaneûr—the itinerant connoisseur of milling crowds and creepy milieux—is its first iconic hero.

MEN OF THE CROWD: NINETEENTH-CENTURY URBAN NIGHTMARES

The narrator of Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd" (*Casket*, December 1840) is a nameless urbanite who, recovering from a debilitating fever, sits

idly scanning the passing scene from a London coffeehouse. The anonymous "tides of population"—clerks and pickpockets, gamblers and military men—wash past his window, some moving with "a satisfied business-like demeanor," others jostling and muttering, "as if feeling in solitude the very denseness of the company around" (180). As night draws on, seedier characters begin to emerge, the guttering gas-lamps casting "a fitful and garish lustre" over their stealthy scuttlings (183). Suddenly, amidst this dubious throng, a shabby old man appears whose striking countenance enthralls the narrator, suggesting as it does "ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense—of extreme despair" (183–84). Impelled by this startling vision, the narrator sets out to follow the man as he skulks among the eddying masses with a furtive intensity.

As the surrounding crowd begins to thin, the man grows agitated, darting abruptly down narrow side-streets until he comes to a busy shopping district, where he browses aimlessly, "with a wild and vacant stare" (185). When the shops start to close, the man, once again distressed, sprints "with incredible swiftness through many crooked and people-less lanes" (186), the narrator barely keeping up with him, until he arrives among some posh late-night revelers. This gathering too soon disperses, and the old man, frantic, leads the narrator to the very outskirts of the city, where he blends once more with a milling swarm of humanity, this time a horde of impoverished, drunken louts. This continues until dawn, whereupon he retraces his steps, "with a mad energy" (187), to the center of London, at which point the narrator, exhausted, abandons the chase. As the decrepit wanderer disappears into the morning crowd, the narrator speculates that he has witnessed the very "type and genius of deep crime," a parasitical monster spawned by and drawing sustenance from the endlessly cycling urban mob. *"He is the man of the crowd"* (188; emphasis in original).

While not among Poe's greatest stories, "The Man of the Crowd" is historically significant because it establishes a genre of urban horror that has proven remarkably resilient. The idea of the city's amorphous vices coalescing into an emblematic figure, a living symbol of urban terror and ugliness, would come to exert a powerful influence. While the narrator glimpses a dagger inside the wanderer's grubby coat, the man never overtly threatens anyone or commits any obvious crime; yet his loitering presence suggests a latent threat, a coiled possibility for violence subsequent writers would potently exploit. Moreover, the basic elements of the story would recur throughout nineteenth-century horror fiction: the lurking demon, the startled witness, the enveloping crowd, the dawning revelation, the breathless imminence of supernatural agency in an otherwise starkly secular milieu. From the short fiction of Guy de Maupassant (strongly influenced by Baudelaire's translations of Poe), to late Victorian classics such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), to the

various permutations of the Jack the Ripper legend, early urban horror follows the pattern set down by Poe, obsessively recounting "the hideousness of mysteries which will not *suffer themselves* to be revealed" (179; emphasis in original).

Maupassant's tales show how forcefully Poe's imaginative visions of London and Paris, in stories like "The Man of the Crowd" and "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (*Manuscript*, March 1841), resonated with the actual denizens of those cities. Both authors feature haunted or fanatical narrators, harried by the debilitating complexity of the modern metropolis, surrendering with a bleak ecstasy their consciences and finally their minds to obscure or half-glimpsed agencies. Rootless flaneûrs with delusions of grandeur and an air of seedy absurdity, they wander the city's labyrinth, miserably alone yet cherishing some secret complicity with the vectors of force surrounding them. Quasi-occult energies, mesmeric hallucinations, shimmer vaguely in the gas-light, and pestering phantoms reveal themselves as cryptic doubles, which may be merely the projections of disintegrating minds (as in Maupassant's most famous story, "The Horla" [1886]). It is as if the city itself were a vast subjective space, an externalized mental landscape, peopled with the half-formed apparitions of nightmare.

Maupassant's "La Nuit" (1887; translated as "A Night in Paris"), in fact subtitled "A Nightmare," is the morbid reverie of a decadent flaneûr whose haughty promenade descends abruptly into apocalyptic dissolution. Yet another unnamed Poe-esque narrator regales the reader with his feverish obsessions—this time, for the city at night, with its glittering boulevards and blazing cafés spread out beneath the sky's "black, exhilarating immensity" (192). Lying about in languid boredom during the day, the narrator is galvanized at twilight: seized by "an unexpected and overpowering thrill, a kind of exaltation which seemed like the fringe of madness" (193), he gloats on a fantasy of himself as a nocturnal animal, senses preternaturally alert, silently stalking the city's mazes. Yet this particular evening, something seems strangely awry: the air feels clammy and dense, the streets are deserted, and the gas-lamps have all been turned off. "I felt that I was about to witness something strange, something new" (194). Yet this *frisson* of anticipation soon gives way to panic: distant figures ignore his worried calls; time seems to halt in the absolute stillness. Wandering down to the Seine, he trails his fingers in the water, but it is frigid, unmoving—the world itself has stopped. A terrifying vision of total social abandonment, "La Nuit" is the man of the crowd's cry of anguish at his harrowing solitude, his isolation amidst the city's impersonal, clockwork complexity (the ticking of his watch is the only companion to the narrator's hectic thoughts). The tale is also, perhaps, an allegory for the onset of madness, a fate that would eventually claim Maupassant himself and that seems to lurk on the anxious margins of every flaneûr's experience.

Stevenson's and Stoker's classic novels are discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this volume (under the entries for Doppelgangers and Vampires,

respectively), but they deserve to be analyzed briefly here in terms of how they contributed to the iconic representation of urban horror at the end of the nineteenth century. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is the quintessential tale of an urban double life: well-respected bourgeois surgeon by day, drug-taking feral sensualist by night. As his alter-ego Edward Hyde, Henry Jekyll is free to enjoy a ''vicarious depravity'' (81): adopting the dress and manners of a low-life swell, he gives himself over to ''leaping impulses and secret pleasures'' (84), haunting bohemian Soho like a hedonistic demon. ''He walked fast, hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less frequented thoroughfares. . . . Once a woman spoke to him, offering . . . a light. He smote her in the face, and she fled'' (88). Hyde is Baudelaire's flaneûr with a pronounced sadistic streak, beating a man to death in ''a transport of glee . . ., glorying and trembling, [his] lust of evil gratified'' (85). Jekyll is impotent to contain these savage outbursts, the ''insurgent horror'' of Hyde's lusts and rages (89). Perhaps if Poe's narrator had tracked the man of the crowd to his lair at last, he would have come up short at the door to Dr. Jekyll's laboratory.

Stoker's *Dracula* might seem far removed from the tradition of the lonely urban stroller nostalgically evoked by Benjamin; yet recall the eponymous character's words to Jonathan Harker, as he envisions his new life in the British capital: ''I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is'' (26). As the novel's band of vampire-hunters soon discovers, Dracula's fiendish plans are actually augmented by urban anonymity: he can come and go as he pleases from pseudonymously rented houses, his personal business shielded from prying eyes by discreet solicitors, like any slumming aristocrat. Indeed, once returned to England after his harrowing experience in Transylvania, Harker spots the Count amidst a London crowd, leering hungrily at a young woman yet apparently arousing no particular attention. Like Poe's shabby prowler, like Maupassant's narrator, like Stevenson's Hyde, Dracula becomes a nocturnal predator of the cloaking cityscape, a drifting incarnation of urban crime and violence—an image film versions of the novel have definitively cemented, from Bela Lugosi molesting a flower girl outside an opera house (in Tod Browning's 1931 version) to Gary Oldman vamping Harker's fiancée in a cinematograph theater (in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 treatment). Driven by a compulsive bloodlust from victim to victim, Dracula is Baudelaire's flaneûr as serial killer.

In fact, the figure that serves to link Hyde and Dracula is the world's first—and still most famous—serial murderer, Jack the Ripper. The unknown slayer of at least five London prostitutes during the summer and fall of 1888, Jack got his name from a series of taunting letters boasting of his crimes mailed to the press and various authorities (one containing half a kidney allegedly removed from one of his victims). Like Edward Hyde, Jack was conversant with low-life haunts, a furtive man of the crowd scheming in the solitude of his

disordered mind. (Interestingly, a stage version of Stevenson's novel, which was running during the murders, featured an actor whose performance as Hyde was so authentically bestial that rumors swirled he might be the killer.) Like Stoker's vampire, the Ripper was an invisible peril, striking at night and leaving mutilated bodies in his wake. Yet he was a real-life horror and would thus merit no mention in this entry were it not for the endless train of literary and filmic adaptations his bloody exploits have spawned.

Of course, in legendary cases such as this one, the membrane separating fact from fancy is at best thin, at worst semi-permeable—as the numerous extravagant theories that have cropped up over the past century to explain the string of murders attest. The Whitechapel killings have generated more speculation, in more or less explicitly fictional form, than any other killing spree in history, and the Ripper has had a cultural career to rival that of another Victorian mainstay, Sherlock Holmes (who has often crossed paths with Saucy Jacky, as in the 1965 Hammer film *A Study in Terror*). The Ripper has been featured in an opera, Alban Berg's *Lulu* (1937), based on Fritz Wedekind's play *Pandora's Box* (1904), which also provided a memorable film vehicle for the great screen actress Louise Brooks (1912); a parodic philosophical dialogue by 1920s French surrealist Maurice Heine, in which Jack banters with the Marquis de Sade (1936); and countless novels and films, from Marie Belloc Lowndes's *The Lodger* (1913) and the eerie 1927 Hitchcock thriller based upon it, on down. The chapter "Gaslight Ghouls" in Donald Rumbelow's *Jack the Ripper: The Complete Casebook* (1988) provides a succinct historical overview of the Ripper's cultural legacy; as another chapter, "Beyond the Grave," amply demonstrates, the Ripper's influence extends past the realm of the literary to the literal, and epigones of gore from "Düsseldorf Ripper" Peter Kürten in the 1920s to "Yorkshire Ripper" Peter Sutcliffe in the 1970s have tipped their bloody caps to Springheel Jack.

Grisly as the conclusion might seem, *oeuvres* such as Kürten's and Sutcliffe's were actually more imaginative recollections of the Ripper's career than nearly all the literary treatments, which are generally dreadful. The Lowndes novel, for example, is a creaky bit of Edwardian fustian, and most of the Holmesiana is laughably bad, especially Michael Dibdin's (alas, inaccurately titled) *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* (1978), in which the Ripper turns out to be Holmes himself. Robert Bloch's *The Night of the Ripper* (1986) is a tedious exercise in gratuitous nastiness that makes one wish the author had stood pat with his inventive gem of a story, "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" (*Weird Tales*, July 1943), in which the eponymous bogey turns out to be an immortal magician extending his bloody reign into the twentieth century. That memorable tale and Colin Wilson's 1960 novel *Ritual in the Dark*, a stark portrait of disaffected British youth that peripherally relates a contemporary reenactment of the Ripper slayings, were the only literary treatments worth serious attention before Paul West released his brilliant *The Women of Whitechapel and Jack the Ripper* in 1992.

Chronology of Major Jack the Ripper Stories

Fritz Wedekind*, Pandora's Box* (1904)

Marie Belloc Lowndes, *The Lodger* (1913)

Robert Bloch, ''Your Truly, Jack the Ripper'' (1943)

Colin Wilson, *Ritual in the Dark* (1960)

A Study in Terror (1965, dir. James Hill)

Time After Time (1971, dir. Nicholas Meyer)

Iain Sinclair, *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* (1987)

Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, *From Hell* (1991–1993)

Paul West, *The Women of Whitechapel and Jack the Ripper* (1992)

Richard Calder, *Babylon* (2006)

Like Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's superb graphic novel *From Hell* (1991–1993), West's book draws on the most notorious theory of the Ripper slayings: that they were the work of the royal physician, Sir Edward Gull (along with a small band of conspirators, including Impressionist painter Walter Sickert), that they were designed to cover up a sexual dalliance between Queen Victoria's grandson and a Catholic prostitute, and that they featured an array of distracting smokescreens, from press-baiting letters to Masonic rituals and popular anti-Semitism. Yet this gonzo theory is, for West, merely the vehicle for a darkly ruminative reverie, a bleak meditation on power, sex, violence, and corruption. Structured as a series of overlapping internal monologues, *The Women of Whitechapel and Jack the Ripper* evokes a textured vision of Victorian London that has a gripping, hallucinatory power.

It is also a slyly feminist story, as remarked by its very title, which inverts the usual pattern of emphasis in the case. As Judith Walkowitz has shown in her superb study *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, the ''Whitechapel murders have continued to provide a common vocabulary of male violence against women'' for over a century (228), and West interrogates this vocabulary by exposing its psychological roots. What Sickert shares with Gull, as West depicts it, is a detached, clinical attitude towards women, viewing their bodies as mere clay to be worked upon, surgically reshaped. Both men are obsessed with procreation, each jealously begrudging this female power and aching to usurp it, through art or science—or, failing that, through new frontiers of violence, ''as if he had discovered a new life form that would love him for having coaxed it, fiendish and fragile, out of Creation's night'' (112). The city itself seems a co-conspirator, a sordid labyrinth whose minotaur is unfettered male lust, a fact one of the doomed women subconsciously realizes: ''It was like walking on a

blade, and that was the city'' (4). As Mary Kelly, the Ripper's most brutalized victim, observes of her dismal neighborhood: "there was always somebody screaming, in diabolical pain, and the sound went on in Mary's head for hours" (22–23). Her own cry of "Murder!" would go unheeded because such shouts were a nightly occurrence in the wretched slum where she met her grisly end. *The Women of Whitechapel and Jack the Ripper* distills out of an infamous hell of sexual violence an angry and challenging critical vision, arraigning Poe's man of the crowd for his egotism and festering misogyny. As such, it is worth more than all the leering tales of urban stalkers and slashers that have glutted the horror field for the past century put together.

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: SMOKE GHOSTS IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

One would naturally expect that, as cities grew exponentially in size and population, tales of urban horror would also proliferate, generating new iconic images to match the novel sights and sounds of the burgeoning metropolis. In fact, however, during the first few decades of the twentieth century, as towering skyscrapers blossomed in downtown districts and waves of immigrants packed ethnic ghettos, horror literature turned its sights elsewhere, focusing less on fresh sources of dread than on ancient atavisms. The atmospheric ghost stories of M. R. James and Algernon Blackwood drew their terrors from medieval lore or the natural world rather than from the bristling skylines and teeming tenements of big-city life. When horror fiction did engage the city, it was largely in the form of distanced allegory: William Hope Hodgson's *The Night Land* (1912), a tale of far-future survivors besieged by demons in a massive megalopolis, may in part symbolize the pathologies of urban conglomeration, with its rampant paranoia and sense of perpetual beleaguerment. The *Weird Tales* circle of the 1920s and 1930s often located the supernatural in pre- or post-historic landscapes, such as Robert E. Howard's Cimmeria or Clark Ashton Smith's Zothique; and H. P. Lovecraft, while he did portray terror stalking the streets of modern Providence, generally evoked it in the form of archaic survivals, from looming Old Ones to reincarnated sorcerers like Joseph Curwen (in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* [written 1927, published 1941]).

This depiction was to prove influential, however: the evocation of primordial monstrosities erupting within an otherwise advanced and secular milieu would become one of the most recognizable horror set-ups of the twentieth century. Stoker's novel had pioneered this idea, of course; as senior vampire-hunter Abraham Van Helsing at one point observes, the potency of Dracula's threat derives in large part from the modern Londoner's skepticism about such lurking superstitions. But Lovecraft brought the scenario to a peak of achievement, such that hoary presences accosting startled denizens of the

modern world is largely how the genre of supernatural horror is now understood by the casual reader. Some of Lovecraft's most memorable images trade on the affective charge of this shocking reversal, from misshapen ghouls feeding on trapped subway travelers (in "Pickman's Model" [*Weird Tales*, October 1927]) to the collage of newspaper clippings foreshadowing the imminent return of the Old Ones (in "The Call of Cthulhu" [*Weird Tales*, February 1928]). In *At the Mountains of Madness* (written 1931, published *Astounding Stories*, February–April 1936), he even reverses the reversal, bringing modern men into the heart of a primeval alien city hidden deep in the Antarctic wastes.

Lovecraft's most striking tale of specifically urban terrors is also one of his most controversial. "The Horror at Red Hook" (*Weird Tales*, January 1927) is set in the eponymous ethnic section of Brooklyn, "a maze of hybrid squalor" populated by a host of immigrants, legal and illegal, "swarthy, evil-looking strangers" (250) collectively emitting "a babel of sound and filth" (247). As the language here suggests, a palpably racist fear of otherness underlies the author's vision of "the polyglot abyss of New York's underworld" (246): unassimilated aliens observing their time-honored religious rituals are grimly slandered as devil-worshipping cultists who cannibalize white children, re-enacting "the darkest instinctive patterns of primitive half-ape savagery" (248). The protagonist, an Irish beat cop repulsed by the decline of his neighborhood into "a horror of houses and blocks...leprous and cancerous with evil dragged from elder worlds" (246), barely retains his sanity when confronted with the subterranean abominations lurking behind the tenement's brick facades. The tale's infamous translation of mundane fears of racial hybridization into the clutching phobias of supernatural terror has been satirized in T.E.D. Klein's 1980 story "Children of the Kingdom," where Lovecraft's unapologetic ethnocentrism is softened by liberal guilt: the real threat to the Caucasian narrator and his wife derives not from the loitering young blacks and Latinos he reflexively dreads, but from a race of blind albinos infesting the sewers, super-white grubs eager to mate with human women. Yet for all its satire, Klein's tale echoes Lovecraft's in its evocation of the essential *alienness* of big-city life, the inscrutability of every "menacing stretch of unfamiliar sidewalk down which, at any moment, anything might walk on any errand" (48).

Lovecraft's influence on the tradition of urban horror lay also in his generous mentorship of younger writers, especially Robert Bloch. Bloch, along with Henry Kuttner and Ray Bradbury, emerged during the 1930s and 1940s as creators of a new breed of horror rooted in the institutions and practices of everyday life. All three developed bodies of work that cross-pollinated pulp horror with science fiction and the hard-boiled detective story to produce a unique hybrid, at once eldritch and high-tech, feral-atavistic and *noir*-cosmopolitan. Bloch in particular pioneered not only a set of up-to-date themes (e.g., adapting Jack the Ripper myths into the modern serial killer story), but

also a pervasive tone—wise-cracking, morbidly world-weary—that perfectly captured the psychic attitude of mid-century urban dwellers: suspicious, buffeted by change, clinging to quotidian rituals to fend off a sense of looming entropy. Aside from his path-breaking tales of sex-crazed murderers, culminating in *Psycho* (1959), Bloch's most characteristic stories feature modern Hollywood as a literal or figurative presence, its cinematic spawn infiltrating and shaping consciousness to sinister effect. In "Return to the Sabbath" (*Weird Tales*, July 1938), for example, two slumming studio drones stumble into a downtown burlesque show where they witness a sleazy low-budget horror film that leads them into contact with an underground cult of devil-worshippers. Other titles, such as "The Phantom from the Film" (*Amazing Stories*, November 1943) and "The Dream-Makers" (*Beyond Fantasy Fiction*, September 1953), continue Bloch's exploration of Hollywood's seamier haunts and grislier horrors, paving the way for later writers who would explore similar terrain, such as David J. Schow and Richard Christian Matheson.

The satirical, urban-hip attitude of Bloch's best stories, and their sense that transformative terror lurked behind every movie marquee and shabby storefront, helped forge a fresh post-Lovecraftian identity for urban horror. In March 1939, a new magazine debuted that gave this brand of fiction a brief but memorable home: *Unknown* (later *Unknown Worlds*), helmed by John W. Campbell, Jr., who also edited the premier science fiction pulp, *Astounding Stories*. The third issue, in fact, contained one of Bloch's most innovative early efforts, "The Cloak" (May 1939), in which a threadbare Halloween costume purchased at a corner shop fills its owner with vampiric bloodlust. Through its mere four years of existence, *Unknown* made an indelible mark on the genre, sweeping away a century of Gothic cobwebs and ushering in a skeptical, streamlined depiction of uncanny presences hovering on the margins of contemporary life. As Stefan Dziemianowicz observes in his fine study of the magazine, "Campbell preferred the psychological horror story [to the traditional Gothic] because its focus was on characters and their reactions, and because psychological horror was consistent with the spirit of the unknown—it could happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time" (32). (The first line of Fredric Brown's tale of Satanic incursion, "Armageddon" [August 1941], captures the attitude perfectly: "It happened—of all places—in Cincinnati" [187].) Lovecraft disciples like Bloch, Kuttner, and Frank Belknap Long found their voices in *Unknown*'s pages, as did unclassifiable talents such as Manly Wade Wellman and Jane Rice; but the most significant originator, the one who invoked novel icons that resonated for decades, was Fritz Leiber.

Like Bloch, Leiber had already begun to work this emerging vein in other pulp venues, but *Unknown* gave him the platform to convert these inchoate dabblings into a sharp-edged effort that reads, in retrospect, like a manifesto of modern urban horror. "Smoke Ghost" (October 1941) is, as its title implies, the tale of a ghastly haunting, but the eponymous specter is no conventional revenant; rather, it is the veritable incarnation of big-city squalor and malaise.

A grimy, shambling creature "with the soot of the factories on its face and the pounding of machinery in its soul" (129), it stalks the protagonist relentlessly, first as a series of sooty silhouettes glimpsed from his subway seat and high-rise office building, then as a demonic amalgam of all the psychological trials of urban life ("the hungry anxiety of the unemployed..., the jerky tension of the high-pressure metropolitan worker..., the aggressive whine of the panhandler..., and a thousand other twisted emotional patterns" [130]), and finally as a demonic idol demanding total subservience and devotion. "You rule this city and all the others," the protagonist grovels. "The world is yours to do with as you will, save or tear to pieces" (147). Leiber's smoke ghost is, in short, the embodiment of all of urban modernity's compelling contradictions: its boundless creativity and entropic decay, its brutal dynamism and boring stasis, its exhilaration and despair. The tone of the story—paranoid, borderline hysterical, nervously alert to subtle hints and lurking portents—would exert an enormous influence on future chroniclers of urban anxiety and dread, such as M. John Harrison and Ramsey Campbell.

On the heels of "Smoke Ghost," Leiber published a series of similar efforts, in *Unknown*, *Weird Tales*, and elsewhere, that explored specifically modern forms of horror, usually in an urban milieu; each of them has spawned a small tradition within the field. In "The Hound" (*Weird Tales*, November 1942), the title creature's animal sounds emerge from and merge with "the howls and growls of traffic and industry" (187). Replacing the werewolves of medieval folklore, it is a monster spawned by the "psychological environment" of the city itself (191), feeding on city-dwellers' fears and insecurities; it is also the prototype for Whitley Strieber's *The Wolfen* (1978), with its pack of supernatural predators thinning the human herd in contemporary Manhattan. Leiber's "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" (1949) updates the conventions of the vampiric femme fatale for a world of modern consumerism: its lean, young advertising model, star of urban billboards and high-fashion magazines, is nothing short of the undead embodiment of consumer desire itself, of half-formed cravings that can never be fully satisfied. She is also the forerunner of an entire subgenre of contemporary vampire stories, including S. P. Somtow's *Vampire Junction* (1984) and Anne Billson's *Suckers* (1992), which link feral appetite with communications media and high-tech consumption. Leiber would continue to produce such tales of urban dread intermittently throughout his career, with his brilliant 1977 novel *Our Lady of Darkness* (discussed below) serving as a fitting capstone.

The potent blend of horror, science fiction, and urban *noir* that crystallized in the pages of *Unknown* in the early 1940s also percolated out into other media during the decade. While German émigrés Fritz Lang and Robert Siodmak brought Expressionist techniques and tones to genre crime pictures like *Scarlet Street* (1945) and *Cry of the City* (1948), evoking a brooding landscape of moral ambiguity and random violence, two other European expats, producer Val Lewton and director Jacques Tourneur, were forging a

> Werewolves? He had read up on such things at the library, fingering dusty books in uneasy fascination, but what he had read made them seem innocuous and without significance—dead superstitions—in comparison with this thing that was part and parcel of the great sprawling cities and chaotic peoples of the Twentieth Century, so much a part that he...winced at the endlessly varying howls and growls of traffic and industry—sounds at once animal and mechanical; shrank back with a start from the sight of headlights at night—those dazzling unwinking eyes; trembled uncontrollably if he heard the scuffling of rats in an alley or mongrel dogs looking for food in vacant lots.
>
> —*Fritz Leiber, ''The Hound'' (1942)*

corpus of dark, creepy horror stories laced with subtle shades of paranoia. The first of these, *Cat People* (1942), is a tale that could have come straight from the pages of *Unknown*: a New York architect marries a mysterious Serbian girl who refuses to consummate their love, convinced that, if aroused by passion, she will morph into a savage panther and kill him. Fearful for her sanity, he sends her to a psychiatrist, who unscrupulously attempts to seduce her, only to be mauled by her emergent animal nature. The most powerful moments in the film are obliquely menacing scenes of urban stalking, with characters listening fearfully for the softly treading predator they know haunts their footsteps. As in Bloch and Leiber, the big city seethes with shadowy alien presences, in this case a secret cult of cat-worshipping fanatics, which extends its influence in the 1944 sequel (directed by Robert Wise) *Curse of the Cat People*.

As the pulp magazines began to disappear during the early 1950s, the mélange of genres they had pioneered moved out to seed new arenas of cultural production, such as the pocketbook paperback and, eventually, television. Cheap and readily available, paperback editions of works by Bloch, Leiber, Bradbury, and others served to define the genre of urban horror for postwar readers, moving beyond specialty markets to reach a broad mainstream audience. This audience, attuned to large-scale social transformations such as the explosion of new technologies and the rise of suburban enclaves, found in urban horror a compelling series of metaphors that captured the uneasy essence of contemporary experience. New writers, such as Richard Matheson and Charles Beaumont, were readily assimilated to this tradition, updating its concerns for an era of Cold War threat, middle-class malaise, and technological proliferation.

Matheson's and Beaumont's urban dwellers are young and hip, moving to the rhythms of jazz and the new singles lifestyle. Sometimes brutally overworked, like the accountant in Beaumont's ''The Vanishing American'' (*F&SF*, August 1955) who is so ground down by a routinized job that he literally disappears, they nonetheless know how to enjoy themselves, stomping in a

divey club to a wailing (and possibly supernatural) trumpet that "screams and snarls, like little razors shooting at you, millions of them, cutting, cutting deep" (Beaumont, "Black Country" [*Playboy*, September 1954], 182). Yet they are prone to a lingering paranoia, like the protagonist of Matheson's "Legion of Plotters" (*Detective Story Magazine*, July 1953) who becomes convinced the daily irritations he suffers—a man sniffing loudly on a bus, the vague mutterings and thumpings of his neighbors—are part of a systematic conspiracy to drive him insane. The frustrating oddness of the purely *ordinary* is a major theme of both writers; their fiction vibrates with a sense that quotidian life is merely a screen for invisible and irrational impulses. At the same time, they are alert to the growing influence of mass-produced fantasies, with Matheson's "The Creeping Terror" (1959) giving this theme a comic-apocalyptic twist, as Hollywood literally begins to metastasize, becoming a "meandering metropolis" (144) that colonizes the entire country.

The characteristic world evoked in their fiction would find a perfect name in the television program both wrote for in the early 1960s, "The Twilight Zone." During the five years the show ran on CBS (1959–1964), Beaumont contributed eighteen scripts and Matheson fourteen, an output exceeded only by series creator Rod Serling. What "The Twilight Zone" basically accomplished was to disseminate the ethos of urban horror pioneered in *Unknown* to a broad mainstream audience. A world of hapless losers and scheming conmen, paranoid white-collar workers and lonely suburbanites, the "twilight zone" is the landscape of postwar change and uncertainty writ large, its everyday confusions transformed into cosmic metaphors. As Scott Zicree puts it, "the characters inhabiting *The Twilight Zone* were average, ordinary people: bank clerks, teachers, petty hoods, salesmen, executives on the rise or decline. It took no great leap for us to . . . imagine that perhaps in some flight of fancy, some slight tangent from the reality of the ordinary routine, what happened to these characters might very well happen to us" (1). Several episodes suggest the lurking horror of quotidian technologies, a theme that would strongly influence later horror writers, such as Stephen King: Serling's episode "A Thing About Machines," for example, is a neat little tale of a sophisticated man beset by mundane objects that have grown overtly hostile to him, while "The Fever" (also by Serling) features a Las Vegas gambler who is pursued and killed by a slot machine. Another major theme of the series is the jolting paranoia of discovering your very identity to be a construct or delusion, as in Beaumont's "In His Image," where a harried New Yorker realizes he is actually a robot—a perfect allegory for the growing mechanization and alienation of big-city life. "The Twilight Zone" brings to a potent culmination the strain of urban horror devised by Leiber and Bloch, paving the way not only for later mass-media efforts such as *The Night Stalker* (1972, based on a script by Matheson) and "The X-Files" (1993–2002), but also ambitious literary treatments.

SORCERY AND SPLATTER: URBAN HORROR SINCE THE 1960s

Between the "Twilight Zone" crew and the splatterpunk movement of the 1980s, urban horror did not have a coherent defining center but instead proliferated in a number of provocative directions. Iconic sites of big-city life, such as apartment buildings and subways, became powerful loci of supernatural menace, as will be discussed in the next section. Also, new writers emerged, often associated with specific cities—for example, Anne Rice with New Orleans, Dennis Etchison with Los Angeles, M. John Harrison with London, and Ramsey Campbell with Liverpool. These diverse talents made urban horror uniquely their own, giving it the particular flavor of their favorite—or most dreaded—metropolitan haunts. Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), for example, peoples a richly imagined antebellum Big Easy with dreamily dissolute bloodsuckers, languid, androgynous creatures emblematic of that city's legendary exoticism, decadence, and soulful sensuality. This novel, and its many sequels, have cemented New Orleans as the preferred stalking-ground for the coolest and kinkiest of the undead, as witness Poppy Z. Brite's Goth-girl update of *Interview*, *Lost Souls* (1992).

Etchison, who began publishing short fiction in the early 1960s, has generated a brilliant corpus of work that manages to be at once aesthetically and sociologically distinctive, exploring the ambiguous landscapes of Southern California with a corrosive precision that recalls Raymond Chandler and Nathanael West. The characteristic scenes of his stories—half-empty multiplex cinemas, all-night laundromats and convenience stores, bleak highway rest-stops, neon-lit beachside motels—evoke the aimlessness and ennui of contemporary (sub)urban experience, a spiritual wasteland in which dark and sinister forces incubate. Stylistically, his tales are models of concision, stark montages of hallucinatory details pregnant with psychological nuance. "It Only Comes Out at Night" (1976), for example, captures the accumulating dread of a driver who realizes he is being tracked by a killer, while "The Nighthawk" (1978) offers a more subtle study of a young girl who suspects that her brother may be a shape-shifting monster. Only a few of the tales—such as "The Late Shift" (1980), in which dead-end service jobs are staffed by reanimated corpses—are overtly supernatural, most conveying mere glimpses of the numinous that remain inscrutable, hauntingly elusive. The co-ed murders in "White Moon Rising" (1977), the vanished pets in "The Dog Park" (1993) could be evidence of supernatural agency, or they could simply be the inexorable results of a hollow, decadent modernity. Filled with grim hints and nervous portents, Etchison's stories amount to a collection of cryptic snapshots of the contemporary cityscape and the lost souls that inhabit it.

Harrison's vision of London is similarly bleak, wedding a downbeat portrait of dissipated lives with a tone of stark, moody lyricism. Compelling tales such as "The Incalling" (1978) and "Egnaro" (*Winter's Tales* No. 27, 1981) invoke a blighted city obscurely seething with secret ceremonies, a shabby

magic perceptible only to disintegrating psyches. Harrison's skill at depicting the hallucinatory labyrinth of the contemporary city achieved potent expression in his Viriconium Sequence—a sword-and-sorcery series, set in the eponymous urban dreamland, that skirts the metafictional terrain of Borges and Calvino in its exploration of delirious mindscapes, the shifting maze of a deliquescent far-future. His 1992 novel *The Course of the Heart* combines Harrison's characteristic strength at the delineation of physical and emotional wastelands with a fascination for Crowleyesque "sex magick": a scruffy little warlock named Yaxley oversees a cryptic ritual whose fallout damages the lives of a pair of bookish neurotics, as well as that of the nameless narrator, whose aching mid-life crisis points up the spiritual emptiness and deadened perception of secular modernity. Lured by a vague promise of transcendence, this graying cohort of ex-hippies struggles to realize a mystical vision of "the Coeur," a lost homeland that Yaxley seeks through squalid sorcery and the others through fugitive states of grace—thus suggesting that sordid (urban) horror may ultimately be purged by redemptive (rural) fantasy, with ruined landscapes of stone and steel giving way to an irrepressible natural fecundity. It is a rare moment of hope in an *oeuvre* otherwise chillingly disheartening.

Perhaps the finest of this generation of talents who came of age during the 1960s and 1970s is Ramsey Campbell. Liverpool, the major shipping center of Industrial-Age Britain, was brutally impacted by waves of capital flight and deindustrialization during the 1970s, and Campbell's fiction, which had begun as a pastiche of Lovecraft, evolved to limn the resulting social horrors with a cold intensity. A number of his short stories of the period convey a clutching terror of urban decay, finding in bits of street refuse or other detritus not only a lurking physical threat but also an emblem of cultural and spiritual putrefaction—for example, "Litter" (1974) and "In the Bag" (1977). The city's human castoffs—drifters, vagabonds, skinheads—also appear as icons of horror in Campbell's short fiction: in "The Man in the Underpass" (1975), children imagine a loitering masturbator to be a feral god demanding sacrifice, while in "Midnight Hobo" (1979) a vagrant haunting a railway bridge becomes a figure of shape-shifting loathsomeness. "Mackintosh Willy" (1979), perhaps Campbell's finest effort in this vein, conveys not merely the coarse vileness of the eponymous character—a drunken bum huddling in the darkness of a park shelter, perceptible only as "shapeless movement..., and a snarling" (208)—but also the casual cruelty of the middle-class children for whom he is little more than a subhuman bogey. Campbell's novels of the period—such as *The Face That Must Die* (1979), a masterful study of social isolation and murderous paranoia—also feature Liverpool as a brooding presence, a grim landscape of alienation and nightmare.

This generation of urban horror writers has inspired a fresh cohort. Following in the downbeat footsteps of Etchison and Campbell, younger talents such as Joel Lane and Nicholas Royle have taken their elliptical, hallucinatory, and paranoiac visions to further limits of extremity. Lane's harsh,

> We never saw him until it was growing dark: that was what made him into a monster. Perhaps during the day he joined his cronies elsewhere—on the steps of ruined churches in the center of Liverpool, or lying on the grass in St. John's Gardens, or crowding the benches opposite Edge Hill Public Library, whose clock no doubt helped their draining of time. But if anything of this occurred to us, we dismissed it as irrelevant. He was a creature of the dark.
>
> —*Ramsey Campbell, ''Mackintosh Willy'' (1979)*

fragmentary short stories, gathered in *The Earth Wire* (1994) and *The Lost District* (2006), surreally collapse psychic and physical topographies, evoking a crumbling, dreamlike, post-Thatcher Britain peopled with deracinated losers, drug-addled visionaries, and other noir-esque hard cases. Royle's sharply etched novels, while depicting a more upscale scene, have a similar febrile intensity: *The Director's Cut* (2000) and *Antwerp* (2004) link London's urban-chic film (sub)culture with various manifestations of erotic and criminal mania. More conventional in tone yet ingenious nonetheless, the work of Christopher Fowler—especially his London Quartet of novels: *Roofworld* (1988), *Rune* (1990), *Red Bride* (1992), and *Darkest Day* (1993)—portray a city scene rife with clandestine ritual and cryptic menace, while the short stories gathered in *City Jitters* (1986) and *The Bureau of Lost Souls* (1989) delineate an array of contemporary urban nightmares: malign buildings, shady civil servants, sinister bureaucracies.

For his part, M. John Harrison has also inspired followers; indeed, he is often seen as the godfather of the so-called ''New Weird'' aesthetic, with his shape-shifting Viriconium series inspiring more recent science-fictional urban Gothics by the likes of China Miéville (*Perdido Street Station* [2000]) and Alistair Reynolds (*Chasm City* [2001]). The work of Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair also belongs within this general orbit, though their influences are more diverse, less based in a genre corpus. Still, like Harrison, they are both obsessed with a ceremonial world of violence and delirium lurking behind the bland façades of modern London: Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) connects a secret history of satanic architecture with a series of grisly child murders, while Sinclair's first novel, *White Chappell: Scarlet Tracings* (1987), fuses a mordant portrait of contemporary book collecting with a grim retelling of the Jack the Ripper slayings. An even younger writer, Conrad Williams, has recently produced a novel, *London Revenant* (2004), that seems almost a synthesis of all these overlapping trends, a macabre meditation on a dark, fundamentally unknowable city alive with festering presences.

While these new generations of writers were busily adapting the tradition of urban horror staked out several decades before by *Unknown* magazine, several of the older authors who had pioneered that tradition were still actively publishing. While Robert Bloch seemed content to spin out endless variations on the *Psycho* theme, such as his 1974 novel *American Gothic*, which treated the

career of Chicago serial killer H. H. Holmes, the ever-unpredictable Fritz Leiber produced one of the classics of urban horror of the postwar period: *Our Lady of Darkness* (1977). Set in modern San Francisco, Leiber's adopted home, and featuring as protagonist an aging horror writer and bibliophile who seems clearly an autobiographical projection, the novel is, like Alfred Hitchcock's film *Vertigo* (1958), a subtle evocation of the City by the Bay's buried history of supernatural legend. Deeply connected to a local tradition of the fantastic that goes back to Ambrose Bierce and Jack London, the story centers on a secret book, Thibaut de Castries's *Megapolisomancy: A New Science of Cities*, that elaborates a theory of "paramental entities," hostile emanations of "all that stuff accumulating in big cities, its sheer liquid and solid mass" (13). In an eerie echo of the narrative of "Smoke Ghost," our hero hurries anxiously through a growingly estranged city, "searching the dark sea of roofs" for "a swift pale brown thing stalking him," confident in its mastery of the landscape and "taking advantage of every bit of cover: a chimney and its cap, a cupola, a water tank, a penthouse large or tiny, a thick standpipe, a wind scoop, a ventilator hood, hood of a garbage chute, a skylight, a roof's low walls, the low walls of an airshaft" (85). Every feature of the skyline is a latent menace, every familiar scene transformed into an incipient wasteland of "electro-mephitic city-stuff," the entropic sediment of human conglomeration rife with ghostly predators. It is a brilliant and compelling novel.

But the most influential novel of the 1970s, in terms not only of seeding a new wave of urban dread but also inaugurating a boom in horror publishing that would last for the next two decades, was William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971). This gripping tale gave mainstream readers a taste of the quotidian horrors genre writers such as Leiber and Bloch had been spinning out since the 1940s: in a tasteful suburb of Washington, D.C., in an environment entirely secular and mundane, a pleasant young girl is possessed by a demon. The atmosphere in the household as the possession deepens is chillingly conveyed, and the exorcism itself—with the transformed child raging and the furniture quaking—has a stark, archetypal power. In part through its own best-selling success, in part due to the blockbuster 1973 film based upon it, *The Exorcist* opened a wide new market for horror writers, and soon enough Stephen King and Peter Straub, among many others, would move in to exploit it. While best known as authors of small-town horror and thus falling outside the ambit of this entry, King and Straub had an immediate, skyrocketing success that paved the way for a host of fledgling talents who would explore urban terrors appropriate for an age of high crime, racial tension, and post-industrial decay. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, this fresh upsurge of city horror went by the general name of "splatterpunk."

The term, coined by the movement's shrewdest operator David J. Schow, was geared to evoke the in-your-face aesthetic of low-budget splatter films, with their hyperkinetic rhythms and unapologetic explosions of gore, as well as the streetwise attitudes of contemporary punk subculture. Controversial and

confrontational, splatterpunk authors—especially John Skipp and Craig Spector, who collaborated on a series of novels that delineated the faction's grisly perimeter—stoked fights with proponents of quieter brands of horror, such as Charles L. Grant and William F. Nolan, who castigated the splatter-punks in the fan press as vulgar guttersnipes in thrall to cinematic sleaze. At the same time, the movement drew avid defenders, such as R. S. Hadji, who championed Skipp and Spector's rhetorical overkill against the older gen-eration's complaints, and Philip Nutman, who praised splatterpunk as a "survivalist" literature that "reflects the moral chaos of our times" (24). The polemical noise surrounding the movement has made it difficult for critics to assess its strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, its exploitation of the temper and tactics of grindhouse cinema and music videos introduced a wider range of cultural reference and stylistic possibility to the genre, at least partially legitimating the jaundiced world-view of heavy-metal headbangers and hardcore gorehounds. On the other hand, of the various writers associated at one time or another with the movement, only Schow and Clive Barker are truly major figures, while Skipp and Spector, Richard Christian Matheson (son of Richard Matheson), and Joe R. Lansdale are occasionally arresting second-raters, and Ray Garton and Richard Laymon are fellow travelers of borderline competence.

Not every splatterpunk has engaged with the tradition of urban horror: Lansdale, for instance, tends to work the rural scene, and the pyrotechnic Barker is notoriously difficult to pigeonhole. But Matheson and Schow have followed Bloch in limning the noirish terrors of modern Hollywood, while Garton and Skipp and Spector have inflated Leiber's subtle vision of quintes-sentially city-based forms of monstrosity to truly hysterical proportions. Matheson's short stories, gathered in *Scars and Other Distinguishing Marks* (1987), invite comparison with Etchison in their bleak concision, but they lack

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Significant Tales of Hollywood Horror

Henry Kuttner, ''The Shadow on the Screen'' (1938)

Richard Matheson, ''The Creeping Terror'' (1959)

Robert Bloch, ''The Movie People'' (1969)

Clive Barker, ''Son of Celluloid'' (1984)

Harlan Ellison, ''Laugh Track'' (1984)

Joe R. Lansdale, *The Drive-In* (1988)

David J. Schow, ''Monster Movies'' (1990)

Theodore Roszak, *Flicker* (1991)

Richard Christian Matheson, *Created By* (1993)

Dennis Etchison, *Fine Cuts* (2006)

that author's lyrical bite, tending to dissolve into easy ironies. Schow's tales, by contrast, are genuinely affecting: *Lost Angels* (1990) is perhaps the finest monument to the splatterpunk aesthetic, with its canny array of L.A. low-lifes, its fluent mimicry of trash-film conventions, and its tone of hip ennui. (Schow has also edited a solid collection of celluloid-based nightmares, *Silver Scream* [1988].) Garton's *Live Girls* (1987), though it has a clever premise (female vampires infesting Times Square sex clubs), spends its energy in tepid porn scenarios, while Skipp and Spector's ambitious trilogy of urban nightmares—*The Light at the End* (1986), *The Cleanup* (1987), and *Deadlines* (1989)—is deformed by adolescent posturing and tin-eared prose. Sprawling horrorshows (in more ways than one), these novels proffer incessant, tediously didactic broodings about urban decay rather than the stark, inferential images that make the work of Etchison and Campbell so effective. While Skipp and Spector deserve credit for tackling difficult themes—the simmering frustration of urban outcasts, the raw tensions of class and race, the dubious allure of vigilantism—their rampant stylistic excesses and their inability to maintain command of their plots finally (and fatally) compromise their achievement.

While never officially included in the splatterpunk canon, the films of Abel Ferrara and the fiction of Kathe Koja show peripheral connections with the movement's key themes and are, moreover, considerably more accomplished than the core group's general output. Ferrara's early low-budget films *The Driller Killer* (1979), *Ms. 45* (1981), and *Fear City* (1984) explore splatterpunk terrain in their unflinching vision of a corrupt, soul-destroying New York populated by deranged street people, hard-bitten strippers, and penny-ante mafiosi. His more accomplished later films include *The Bad Lieutenant* (1992) and *The Addiction* (1995), the latter a ferociously downbeat vampire story with a real feel for urban grunge. Koja's short stories and novels traverse a similarly scruffy world of hardened bohemians and social outsiders whose hunt for physical and psychological fulfillment leads them to the shadowy boundaries of big-city life. Written with a slangy energy, and attuned—as titles like *Skin* (1993) and *Kink* (1996) suggest—to depths of sexual darkness the male splatterpunks can only hint at, Koja's fiction moves with a feral grace among a subculture of artistic loners and decadent toughs. Yet for all her hard-boiled cynicism, Koja's main theme is the wounding misery of love, the baffled quest for connection in a chaotic and unfeeling world. With Ferrara and Koja, one potently senses, as one does not with Skipp and Spector, a vibrant heart beneath the world-weary pose and all the surface cruelties. If their work is true splatterpunk, it is the best of the breed.

ICONIC SITES OF URBAN HORROR

Koja's first novel, *The Cipher* (1991), was a tale of bizarre transformation set in an urban apartment building with a secret channel into unguessable

dimensions. While brilliantly original in many ways, it nonetheless built on a recognizable subgenre of urban horror: the haunted apartment house story. Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) is often credited with pioneering this form, but in fact, Levin's novel is merely a mainstream version of Roland Topor's deliriously offbeat *Le Locataire chimerique* (1964), which was published in English translation, as *The Tenant*, in 1966. Aside from the fact that both books were memorably filmed by Roman Polanski, the stories have much in common, centering on isolated, growingly paranoid apartment dwellers who fall prey to shadowy plots hatched by their nosy, conspiring neighbors. Both books powerfully exploit the sense of ersatz community pervading such anonymous dwellings, the prying curiosity regarding others' peccadilloes, the lurking ambiguity in every chance encounter in the hall or on the stairs. But whereas Levin ultimately resolves his mysteries, unveiling the conspirators as a coven of witches devoted to unleashing Satan's spawn, Topor trades in harrowing uncertainty, never unraveling the motives behind the scheme that drives his frazzled protagonist, Trelkovsky, to a grisly death.

This thirtyish schlemiel at first is hounded by fellow residents enraged by his slightest noise, their ''furious thumpings on the ceiling'' (43) causing him to cower in meek silence under the bedclothes; but soon a more sinister pattern of manipulation and coercion emerges. Secretive figures hold silent vigil in the common bath; Trelkovsky's room is ransacked and his belongings stolen, unmooring him from his already tenuous sense of identity; then, in the midst of an hallucinatory fever, he finds himself dressed in the clothes of the apartment's former tenant, a lonely young woman who had committed suicide by throwing herself from the window. Suddenly it dawns on him that his neighbors, by ''a thousand shabby little tricks . . . were altering his whole personality'' (85) in an effort to drive him also to a despairing self-annihilation. ''They were no longer peaceful tenants, but killers in search of a victim'' (54–55). Besieged in his room, Trelkovsky gazes in numb terror at an orgiastic pageant in the courtyard below, knowing he will soon succumb to this ''vision of unutterable horror'' (82) in which he finds himself engulfed. The gradual escalation of bizarre incidents is handled masterfully, creating a clutching mood of claustrophobic menace. The fact that Topor provides no settled conclusion only adds to the uneasy surrealism of the story, effectively conveying a sense of the inscruta-bility and drifting transience of urban life.

Rosemary's Baby is an altogether more conventional affair, narratively speaking. Guy and Rosemary Woodhouse, a seemingly content young couple, move into an uptown New York apartment building with something of an unsavory reputation. Soon, a young girl whom Rosemary had befriended in the laundry room leaps to her death from an upper floor, and shortly thereafter, the elderly couple with whom she had resided, Roman and Minnie Castavet, commence an aggressive friendship with the Woodhouses. Suddenly, Guy's sputtering career as an actor begins to take off, and he and Rosemary decide they can now afford to have a child. As we ultimately discover, however, Guy

has fallen under the sway of the Castavets, the amiable center of a coven in the building, and in return for their sorcerous aid in advancing his professional ambitions, he has volunteered Rosemary to serve as a vessel for the devil's seed (the other girl's suicide having claimed their initial victim). In a scene narrated with a kitschy surrealism that provides a second-rate echo of Topor's technique, conception is effected by means of a drugged rape by Satan himself: imagining herself dreaming, Rosemary "opened her eyes and looked into yellow furnace-eyes, smelled sulphur and tannis root, felt wet breath on her mouth, heard lust-grunts and the breathing of onlookers" (81). As the alien baby burgeons within her, she finds herself being subtly separated from her former friends, drawn into the cozy world of the elderly witches, who ply her with potions and charms and protective advice. Eventually cottoning to their plot, she attempts escape only to be foiled, and the story ends with the young mother coming to accept the demonic child as her legitimate offspring, claws, tail, and all.

While *Rosemary's Baby* has long provided an efficient model for horror writers eager to exploit urban settings for their reserves of the eldritch and uncanny, Topor's work has also exerted its sly influence. Indeed, this contrast between clear-cut narratives of the occult and mutable dreamscapes of dread and desire can be traced through subsequent decades of haunted apartment house stories. On the one hand, novels such as Jeffrey Konvitz's *The Sentinel* (1975), Ken Eulo's *The Brownstone* (1980), and David J. Schow's *The Shaft* (1990) mine the vein Levin tapped in their depiction of city dwellings infested with more or less straightforward supernatural presences (with Stephen Laws's *Darkfall* [1992] adapting the model to evoke an eldritch downtown office complex); on the other hand, works such as J. G. Ballard's *High-Rise* (1975), David Cronenberg's 1975 film *Shivers*, and Hideo Nakata's film *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (2002; remade as *Dark Water*, 2005) explore more ambiguous psychological terrain, with the urban residence becoming a potent symbol of modern-day disconnection and alienation.

Schow's novel is probably the best of the more conventional treatments of this general theme. *The Shaft* is the story of a decaying apartment house in a downscale suburb of Chicago, of its motley assortment of tenants leading lives of quiet desperation, and of the bizarre transformation that, one brutally cold winter night, brings the two—building and occupants—eerily, intimately closer together. The core plot involves a plan to rescue a bag of cocaine that, during a police raid, was tossed down the central air-shaft, a slimy, murky, foul-smelling cavity that leads into the labyrinthine bowels of the tenement, where Something dwells. The characters, an entertaining crew of scuzzy stereotypes (the evil drug dealer, the hooker with a heart of gold, the well-meaning dweeb), are little more than plot-fodder, easy prey for the creatures that infest the eponymous passage. The major strength of the novel lies in its absolute commitment to grossing the reader out: true to his splatterpunk roots, Schow proffers a cornucopia of sleaze, evoking an atmosphere so fetid and

> ...the open tribal conflicts of the previous week had now clearly ceased. With the breakdown of the clan structure, the formal boundary and armistice lines had dissolved, giving way to a series of small enclaves, a cluster of three or four isolated apartments....The residents of the high-rise were like creatures in a darkened zoo lying together in surly quiet, now and then tearing at each other in brief acts of ferocious violence.
>
> —J. G. Ballard, High-Rise *(1975)*

revolting you can almost smell it. The descriptions of the shape-shifting building and its inhuman cellar dwellers are effectively grotesque, and the many scenes of violence are handled with a bracing gusto. Unfortunately, the plot is a structural mess, with too many threads going nowhere, and as a result the supernatural elements pop up cartoonishly, often seeming more risible than terrifying. Schow's renowned style—brutally frank, telegraphically slangy, with an edge of instability that borders of hysteria—comes across as the genuine voice of big-city low-life, but it ultimately cannot carry a narrative so immersed in generic cliché.

Ballard's *High-Rise* could hardly be more different. While it too centers on an apartment building swiftly descending into chaos and ruin, the reason for this transformation is not a siege of neo-Gothic monsters, as in *The Shaft*, but the low-grade tensions and deep-seated rivalries that mark urban existence itself. The setting is a forty-story glass-and-steel skyscraper on the margins of London, inhabited by a range of white-collar functionaries (on the lower floors), bourgeois professionals (in the middle), and elite technocrats (on the upper levels). This blatant recapitulation of prevailing class divisions, coupled with the hedonistic isolation of high-rise living, allows the "thinly veiled antagonisms" (13) between these groups to be expressed without the usual filters of social deference and personal self-control. Soon, the edifice has literally balkanized into clannish factions, enforced by vigilante violence that only escalates as the building's various services—water, electricity, sewer—begin to break down. Regressing to primal savagery, the groups are driven to survivalist extremes, fighting for control of the stairs and elevators, ambushing stragglers who stray beyond their designated spaces, feasting on captured pets and, eventually, one another. An "architecture designed for war, on the unconscious level if no other" (9), the high-rise unleashes psychic tendencies modern culture has long struggled to sublimate, internecine hatreds and territorial aggressions that might otherwise find no outlet. "By its very efficiency, the high-rise took over the task of maintaining the social structure that supported them all. For the first time it removed the need to repress every kind of antisocial behavior, and left them free to explore any deviant or wayward impulses" (48). While not a work of supernatural horror, Ballard's novel, like Cronenberg's *Shivers*, is a disturbingly surreal examination of the tenuousness of civilization, evoking an eruption of the wanton irrationalism barely screened

by the surface pleasantries of everyday life. Along with the author's other novels of the period—*Crash* (1973) and *Concrete Island* (1973)—it sets an unusually high standard for critically pointed interrogations of contemporary urban experience.

It is a standard few works in the subgenre of the haunted apartment house have equaled, though Nakata's film comes close. Indeed, one can glimpse, in the Hollywood remake of this brilliantly unsettling Japanese movie, an example of the containment and mainstreaming of subversive fantasy that is similar to Levin's quasi-revision of Topor's novel. Produced by the writer-director team that released the hugely successful *Ringu* (1998)—also remade in the United States as *The Ring* (2002)—*Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (which roughly translates as ''From the Bottom of the Murky Waters'') tells the story of Yoshimi Matsubara and her six-year-old daughter Ikuko, who are compelled to take up residence in a cheap apartment building on the outskirts of Tokyo while Yoshimi pursues a painful divorce. Though it is ultimately possible to resolve the mysterious incidents that plague the pair (a growing wet patch on the ceiling, a child's purse that keeps appearing on the roof, a shadowy girl in a yellow raincoat who haunts the corridors) into a straightforward tale of ghostly visitation, the overall effect of the film is profoundly disorienting, a moody and dreamlike meditation on the psychic fallout of abandonment and a longing for succor that can never be assuaged. The experience is quintessentially that of the modern urban dweller: deracinated, harassed by money worries, unable to sustain enduring bonds. The powerful set design of the film underlines this message, with its counterpoint between the sterile interiors of professional offices and the dingy, dismal apartment where Yoshimi and Ikuko take refuge. The endlessly falling rain, both outside and inside the building, suggests the absolute impermanence of these flimsy shells that populate the global urban landscape, offering their fragile illusions of domesticity.

While the downtown apartment offers the horror novelist a ready-made self-contained world, its physical borders—dismal roofs, towering walls, and shadowy basements—have also provided fodder for fictional exploration. Christopher Fowler's *Roofworld* (mentioned above) is a case in point, with its strange portrait of warring gangs traversing the bristling skyline, and Larry Cohen's film *Q: The Winged Serpent* (1982) is an entertaining gorefest featuring the eponymous mythic demon preying on unwary sunbathers and hapless window washers. John Shirley's *Cellars* (1982), a schlocky tale of murderous demons lurking beneath Manhattan, is viscerally compelling but lacks the humor of a film like *C.H.U.D.* (1984), whose eponymous Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers turn out to be not occult beasties but mutated bums taking revenge on complacent yuppies. Stories of subterranean urban terrors also include monsters-in-the-subway scenarios like Thomas F. Monteleone's *Night Train* (1984) and Clive Barker's ''The Midnight Meat Train'' (1984), the latter a shrewd fusion of serial killer routines

with Lovecraftian cosmic dread. In these various works, contemporary writers and filmmakers have mapped out the city's manifold possibilities for geographically focused menace, in the process bringing to fruition an iconic exploration of big-city horror that extends from Victorian vampires through Modernist smoke ghosts up to the postmodern atrocities of the splatterpunks.

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Courtesy of Photofest.

The Vampire

by Margaret L. Carter

INTRODUCTION

Ernest Jones in *On the Nightmare* maintains that no superstitious belief is "richer or more over-determined than that in the vampire" and its "psychological meaning is correspondingly complicated" (98). Therefore, it is not surprising that vampirism in some form is found in folklore throughout the world. In his survey of vampire fiction, Brian Frost calls this creature the "monster with a thousand faces," the ultimate shapeshifter. Supernatural entities falling under the general classification of "vampire" include many varieties of blood-drinking demons as well as the animated dead that prey on the living, often feeding on blood but sometimes on other body fluids or simply spreading disease, draining life-force, or frightening victims to death. Some of them must return to their graves at dawn and can be trapped aboveground by scattering seeds they feel compelled to count, while at least one variety is active from midnight to noon. Some undead survive only forty days, while others

maintain their quasi-life indefinitely, and still others (in one European tradition), if they survive the initial, most hazardous period of postmortem existence, eventually develop the ability to pass for human and reenter society in a community distant from their original home. Internationally, vampires range from men who return from the grave to live with and impregnate their widows to grotesque revenants who could not possibly be mistaken for ordinary people, such as the Maylasian penanggalan, a disembodied head trailing its stomach and intestines, and the chiang-shih of China, which may grow a coat of long, white hair. The wider European culture became aware of vampires as we know them in the early eighteenth century, in the aftermath of extended warfare between the Habsburg dynasty and the Ottoman Empire. Dom Augustin Calmet's 1751 "Dissertations on Those Persons Who Return to Earth Bodily" is the best-known and most frequently cited work of this period to explore vampire legends at length and attempt to explain them rationally. In the twentieth century, Dudley Wright's *Vampires and Vampirism* (1914) and two books by Gothic scholar Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (1928) and *The Vampire in Europe* (1929), provide exhaustive surveys of the varieties of vampirism throughout the world's cultures.

Even within the familiar Central and Eastern European context, folk traditions vary widely. Among causes of vampirism, although victims often become transformed into the undead after death, many other events can cause an individual to become a vampire, such as being born on Christmas, with teeth, or illegitimately of illegitimate parents, or committing suicide, practicing sorcery, being cursed by one's parents or excommunicated, or having a cat jump over one's corpse. Prescriptions for destroying vampires also encompass many methods in addition to the best-known remedy of a stake through the heart, for example, beheading, cremation, immersion in running water, firing a blessed bullet into the coffin, and removing the heart and boiling it in oil, wine, or vinegar. To prevent a potential vampire from rising as one of the undead, the corpse might be buried face down so that it could not find its way out of the grave. Means of protection against vampire attacks include the familiar garlic and holy objects, but also thorny plants such as holly or wild roses. Modern theories of the sources of vampire beliefs range from the psychoanalytic, as advanced by Ernest Jones and other Freudian authorities, to the more pragmatic, such as the risks of premature burial in the centuries before modern medicine. Paul Barber's *Vampires, Burial, and Death* (1988) makes a convincing argument that, once belief in the undead became established, observation of phenomena associated with the decomposition of corpses reinforced this belief system. When bodies suspected of vampirism were disinterred, witnesses mistook normal variations in the process of decay for confirmatory symptoms of supernatural preservation and postmortem blood-drinking. Folk belief often associated vampirism with epidemic diseases, such as the bubonic plague. Deaths were blamed on victimization by the first person in the area to fall ill and die, a possible reason why most vampires were thought to prey first

on their own families. Michael E. Bell researches an epidemic of supposed vampirism arising from an outbreak of tuberculosis in colonial Rhode Island in *Food for the Dead* (2001).

EARLY VAMPIRE STORIES

Vampire motifs frequently appeared in poetry from the late eighteenth century through the Romantic period. German poet Heinrich Ossenfelder's ''The Vampire'' (1748) illustrates that as soon as writers of this period began to make artistic use of vampirism, they associated it with erotic seduction. Ossenfelder's vampire attempts to lure an innocent maiden away from her mother's Christian faith. He vows, ''And as softly thou art sleeping To thee I shall come creeping And thy life's blood drain away'' (Moore 12), rather than pursuing a violent, gory attack. Quasi-vampiric creatures appear in Gottfried August Bürger's ''Lenore'' (1773), a ballad of an undead lover returning from the grave to claim the heroine (from which Bram Stoker quotes in an early scene in *Dracula*), and ''The Bride of Corinth'' (1797) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in which a young man is seduced by his fiancée after her untimely death. In prose of the German Romantic period, ''Wake Not the Dead'' (1800), by Johann Ludwig Tieck, similarly mates the living with the dead, but Tieck's Brunhilda, resurrected by a sorcerer at the unwise request of her bereaved husband, appears ravenous and malevolent, in contrast to Goethe's melancholy revenant. The vampire motif appears in English poetry of the early nineteenth century before entering prose fiction. The hero of Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1800) combats a vampire in the shape of his dead beloved. The first known poem in English concerned entirely with vampirism is John Stagg's ''The Vampyre'' (1810), featuring an undead monster in a medieval German setting. The poet prefaces the work with an ''Argument'' that attributes vampire legends to Germany and Hungary. This ballad of a ghastly, bloodstained walking corpse who rises to prey on his best friend adheres closely to the folklore image of the vampire as disgusting and terrifying. The mysterious Geraldine in Coleridge's unfinished ''Christabel'' (1816) prefigures later female vampires. Lord Byron alludes to vampire folklore in *The Giaour* (1813). Keats depicts supernatural female predators in ''La Belle Dame Sans Merci'' (1819) and *Lamia* (1820). The latter, based on Greek myth, presents a sympathetic perspective on the title character, a serpentine shapeshifter who, after taking human form to marry the young hero, is destroyed by a stern philosopher.

The first known prose vampire story in English, *The Vampyre* (1819), by Byron's physician, John Polidori, was inspired by an unfinished tale by Byron and, upon first publication, was mistakenly attributed to the latter. *The Vampyre* is prefaced by an introduction discussing the folklore background. Polidori supposes the superstition to have originated in Arabia and spread

from there into Greece and Eastern Europe. He recounts
the notorious Hungarian case of Arnold Paul, as reported
in the *London Journal* of March, 1732. Polidori also al-
ludes to *Thalaba* and Byron's *Giaour*. Although aware of
the superstition that a victim killed by a vampire becomes
one of the undead, as mentioned in a footnote to the
essay, Polidori gives no indication in his story that either
of the women destroyed by his vampire, Lord Ruthven,
rise after death. Ruthven is based on Byron, even bearing the name Lady
Caroline Lamb assigned to her villain in *Glenarvon* (1816), a *roman à clef*
targeted at the poet, and Ruthven displays the predatory, seductive traits of
Byron's dark heroes. Besides feeding on the blood of maidens, Ruthven preys
on the innocent (both men and women) by luring them into corruption. The
story ends with his attack upon the sister of the ineffectual young hero, Aubrey.
The popularity of *The Vampyre* inspired a number of vampire melodramas on
the early nineteenth-century stage, such as *Le Vampire*, by Charles Nodier, and
The Vampire, or, the Bride of the Isles, by James Robinson Planche, both first
performed in 1820.

The "penny dreadful" *Varney the Vampyre* (1847), sometimes attributed to
Thomas Preskett Prest but now considered likely to have been written by James
Malcolm Rymer, reflects Polidori's influence with such elements as a "dead"
vampire's revival by moonlight and his compulsion to marry innocent maid-
ens. A sensational, incoherent narrative of over 800 pages, which concludes
with the repentant vampire's suicide, *Varney* even contains a minor character
named Polidori. Among other inconsistencies, the story offers several contra-
dictory accounts of how the title character became a vampire. Displaying the
stereotypical traits of the Byronic villain-hero, Varney serves as a transitional
figure between Ruthven and Dracula. The opening chapter, often reprinted,
depicts Varney's violent assault upon the heroine Flora in her bedchamber.
Another memorable scene, the staking of a female vampire in a graveyard,
anticipates the destruction of Lucy in *Dracula*. Later in the novel, Varney
displays softer character traits, begging Flora for aid and eventually showing
remorse for his bloodthirsty deeds. Thus he foreshadows the sympathetic
vampires of late-twentieth-century fiction.

Whereas the male vampire of the nineteenth century has roots in the Gothic
novel and Byron's villain-heroes, the prevailing image of the female vampire
can be traced back to the seductive females in the poetry of Coleridge and
Keats. In American literature, Edgar Allan Poe creates vampirelike women in
"Morella" (1835), "Ligeia" (1838), and "The Fall of the House of Usher"
(1839). Both Morella and Ligeia use occult powers and sheer force of will to
return from death by inhabiting the bodies of others, Morella possessing her
own daughter and Ligeia the narrator's second wife. Madeline Usher returns
from the grave, whether buried alive or literally undead, to precipitate the
downfall of the House of Usher and the death of her twin brother. Théophile

Gautier introduces an early example of the sympathetic vampire in Clarimonde, the lover of a young priest in "La Morte Amoureuse" (1836). Clarimonde feeds on only token drops of blood from her beloved, and after the destruction of her remains by an older cleric, the protagonist's life becomes bleak and colorless. Gautier's narrative frames the young priest's affair with Clarimonde, whose deathbed he attends early in the story, as a nocturnal, dreamlike existence completely separate from his mundane life.

"With a plunge he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth—a gush of blood, and a hideous sucking noise follows. The girl has swooned, and the vampyre is at his hideous repast!" (Rymer, Varney the Vampyre, *4)*

Before *Dracula* (1897), the most distinguished work in this field is J. Sheridan Le Fanu's novella "Carmilla" (1871). The story is framed as a case from the notes of Le Fanu's occult healer, Dr. Hesselius, a probable inspiration for Stoker's Professor Van Helsing, but Dr. Hesselius is not mentioned outside the prologue. Like Geraldine in Coleridge's "Christabel," Carmilla mysteriously threatens a motherless young woman, though Le Fanu's vampire has more success at winning the heroine's trust than Geraldine does with Christabel. Laura, the heroine, an English girl living with her father in the Gothic setting of Styria, narrates the story from a retrospective viewpoint years afterward. The cryptic childhood dream in which a young woman, later identified as Carmilla, appears in Laura's bedroom suggests a mystical connection between the two characters. This scene is never explained, nor is the identity of the old lady who poses as Carmilla's mother to introduce her into Laura's father's household. The heroine finds herself both attracted and repelled by her enigmatic guest, who displays extravagant affection for Laura and enthralls her with a thinly veiled story of her own victimization by the vampire who initiated her into the realm of the undead. Notable for its often-cited subtext of lesbian eroticism, "Carmilla" conveys an ambiguous, partially sympathetic image of its titular vampire, despite her conventional destruction by stake-wielding representatives of the political and scientific establishment.

Among other distinguished pre-*Dracula* stories in the traditional vein, "The Mysterious Stranger" (1860), a German story translated anonymously into English, foreshadows Stoker's novel with its Carpathian setting, a male vampire of noble aspect, the gradual draining of a young woman's blood, and the destruction of the vampire in his coffin. "The Family of the Vourdalak" (1847), by Alexis Tolstoy, is notable in its portrayal of an old peasant returning from death as the repulsive, voracious revenant of folklore rather than the Byronic figure created by English authors such as Polidori and Rymer. Julian Hawthorne presents a seductive female vampire in "Ken's Mystery" (1883). Ken, an artist traveling in a remote part of Ireland, spends a night with a mysterious woman whose embrace drains him; when he wakes, the luxurious house where he slept has transformed into a ruin. More exotic variations on the theme include the invisible monster of Guy de Maupassant's "The Horla" (1886), the blood-draining plant of H. G. Wells's "The Flowering of the

"I live in your warm life, and you shall die—die, sweetly die—into mine." (Le Fanu, "Carmilla," 89)

Strange Orchid" (1894), and the batlike, vaguely humanoid bloodsucking animal in Phil Robinson's "The Last of the Vampires" (1893). A nonsupernatural treatment of life-draining through the theft of blood in "Good Lady Ducayne," by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1896), presents a medical mystery that anticipates elements of *Dracula*. A young doctor discovers that the elderly woman of the title has been preying on her young female hired companions by secretly having their blood transfused into her in order to maintain her vitality. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle explores the theme of psychic vampirism in *The Parasite* (1891).

STOKER AND HIS INFLUENCE

However, it was *Dracula* (1897) that established the stereotypical traits of the vampire for eighty years following its publication, until Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) presented Stoker's Count with a rival for the position of iconic literary vampire. Bram Stoker acknowledges his debt to "Carmilla" in a deleted chapter (later published as "Dracula's Guest") in which Jonathan Harker, on his way to Castle Dracula, visits the grave of a vampire countess from Styria, the setting of Le Fanu's novella. The opening chapters of the novel as published, set in Transylvania, are composed entirely of passages from Jonathan's diary. Leaving the young English solicitor at the almost literally cliff-hanging moment of his attempt to escape from the castle where he believes himself abandoned to the mercies of the Count's vampire brides, the novel then shifts to Mina, Jonathan's fiancée in England. The epistolary structure of the rest of the book, with its multiple viewpoints, professes to offer documentary evidence of the fantastic events narrated therein, yet paradoxically the absence of any authoritative single narrator may also have the effect of casting doubt on the truth of the story. The modern reader who approaches the book without having seen a Dracula film (if such a reader exists) recognizes Mina as Jonathan's fiancée from the mention of her in his diary but otherwise must grope his or her way through a maze of bewildering "facts" along with the characters. Transylvania and England come together in the narrative when Dracula, shipwrecked in the harbor at Whitby, chooses Mina's sleepwalking friend Lucy as his prey, thus setting in motion the sequence of events that lead to his destruction. Count Dracula combines the Byronic villain-hero of Polidori and Rymer with the vampire of Eastern European folklore.

Nina Auerbach in *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995) convincingly argues that Dracula departs from his literary predecessors in his characterization as an alien invader, in contrast to the intimacy she perceives in the relationships of Ruthven, Varney, and Carmilla with their victims. Dracula also displays prominent animal traits, embodying the late Victorian fear of atavism and

degeneration. The vampire's archaic, instinctual behavior contrasts with the values of late-nineteenth-century enlightenment and science, highlighted by Stoker's frequent allusions to modern technology. Van Helsing, leader of the civilized band that repels and destroys the barbarian invader, harnesses this technology in the service of what the novel frames as a religious crusade against evil. The sexual subtext of *Dracula* has, of course, been exhaustively analyzed, with the novel's erotic energy attributed to such diverse themes as infantile oral sadism, the unleashing of repressed female desire, latent homoeroticism, and the sexual threat of the Other. The epistolary narrative structure, with its multiple voices, invites a reading that foregrounds doubt and subjectivity; references to madness pervade the text. As for its plot elements, *Dracula* establishes the traits of the literary vampire for decades to come and contains a number of motifs that have become standard in vampire fiction, for example, garlic, crucifixes, bats, blood transfusions, hypnotism, the habit of sleeping in a coffin, the need for native soil, the gradual seduction and transformation of the victim, and the unearthing and staking of the vampire. Stoker's vampires, however, do not display one weakness that has become synonymous with vampirism in the popular imagination, the inability to survive in sunlight; that trait was adopted from film, beginning with the silent movie *Nosferatu* (1922). Stoker revisits the vampire theme in a later novel, *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909), in which the princess of a tiny Eastern European country disguises herself as one of the undead to hide from her enemies. The fragment posthumously published as "Dracula's Guest" (1914) has been frequently reprinted as a deleted first chapter of *Dracula*, although some commentators point out its inconsistencies with the novel as published and maintain that it was never intended as the opening chapter of *Dracula* in the book's present form.

> *"Individual vampires may die ... but as a species vampires have been our companions for so long that it is hard to imagine living without them." (Auerbach,* Our Vampires, Ourselves, *9)*

The anxiety of influence generated by Stoker seems to have cast an inhibiting shadow over horror writers in subsequent decades, since few memorable vampire novels were produced between *Dracula* and the 1970s. The short story form proved more varied and fruitful in this period. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, numerous authors of horror and science fiction wrote vampire stories that display the influence of Le Fanu and Stoker. " 'For the Blood Is the Life' " (1905), by F. Marion Crawford, concerns a murdered girl who arises from her unmarked grave to seduce and drain the young man she hopelessly loved in her lifetime. "An Episode of Cathedral History" (1914), by M. R. James, features a spectral vampire released from her grave in the course of excavations in an ancient cathedral. "Count Magnus" (1904), also by James, portrays a man who happens upon the grave of the title character and foolishly expresses a wish to meet him. Thereafter, a shadowy figure hounds the protagonist to his death. The undead woman in "Mrs. Amworth" (1923) by E. F. Benson differs from the typical seductive female vampire in her

"I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips." (Dracula, 42)

appearance of relentless normality; before her accidental death and subsequent return, she loves gardening. Benson's "The Room in the Tower" (1912) mediates vampirism through a haunted portrait. Another tale by Benson, *"Negotium Perambulans . . ."* (1923), deals with a repulsive nonhuman entity rather than the classic undead of the *Dracula*-derived tradition. This author creates a patch of land that drains energy in "And No Bird Sings" (1928), somewhat as Algernon Blackwood had done on a smaller scale in "The Transfer" (1912), which features a human energy-vampire as well. Earlier, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman presents a character study of a psychic vampire in "Luella Miller" (1902), about a small-town woman who sucks out the life of everyone who cares for her but may or may not be aware of her own debilitating influence. The conventional symptoms of vampirism became so well known that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle could have Sherlock Holmes solve a vampire hoax in "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire" (1927). Sydney Horler's *The Vampire* (1935) imitates *Dracula* almost to the point of pastiche, though with the variation that Horler's Baron Ziska leads a cult of Satanists.

The pulp magazine fiction of mid-century produced a number of memorable vampire stories. C. L. Moore's "Shambleau" (1933) features an alien predator, a seductive female shapeshifter that transplants the myths of Medusa and the succubus into a science-fictional setting. H. P. Lovecraft's "The Shunned House" (1924) presents a vampire that at first appears to be a traditional revivified corpse but actually results from an unnatural transmutation of a dead body by an alien entity. August Derleth in "Bat's Belfry" (1926) follows the model of *Dracula* in associating an undead lord with a harem of female vampires. Derleth's less traditional story "The Drifting Snow" (1939) features an undead servant girl who returns on snowy nights to drain and transform, one by one, members of the family that caused her death. Southern fantasy writer Manly Wade Wellman treats vampirism from a traditional viewpoint in many stories, including "School for the Unspeakable" (1937), about a vampire coven infesting a boys' boarding school; "When It Was Moonlight" (1940), pitting Edgar Allan Poe against a devious female vampire; and "The Devil Is Not Mocked" (1943), in which Count Dracula exterminates Nazi troops who occupy his castle. In Wellman's "The Last Grave of Lill Warran" (1951), his occult detective John Thunstone uses a silver rapier to slay a traditionally seductive but evil female revenant, who rises from the grave to prey on the man she loved in life. With a blend of humor and sensuality, Robert Bloch portrays a hapless man transformed into a vampire by a magic cape in "The Cloak" (1939). Ray Bradbury's "The Homecoming" (1946), about a "normal" boy who feels like a misfit in a family of vampires, witches, and werewolves, offers an early example of sympathetic treatment of "monsters," an approach that later becomes prominent in the fiction of the 1970s. In "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" (1949) Fritz Leiber explores the figure of the energy-draining

vampire as incarnate in the images of modern mass media. C. M. Kornbluth's "The Mindworm" (1950), a story of a psychic vampire conceived under the shadow of an atomic bomb test but defeated by Eastern European immigrants who remember the old superstitions, reflects mid-century fears of nuclear weapons, as Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954) does. Matheson introduces a boy who yearns to be a vampire in "Drink My Red Blood" (a.k.a. "Blood Son" and "Drink My Blood," 1951) and a little girl vampire in "Dress of White Silk" (1951). The latter, a first-person narrative in the voice of a naïve child who has no inkling of the monstrous heritage she bears, has been acknowledged as an influence by Anne Rice.

It is noteworthy that in the nineteenth century, individual vampires might be portrayed with some sympathy, as in *Varney* and "Carmilla," but the assumption prevailed that vampirism in itself was evil. A vampire partook of "goodness" only in so far as he or she resisted the cursed condition. In the twentieth century, on the other hand, it became possible to regard vampirism as a neutral condition and vampires as capable of being, like other people, either good or evil depending on their individual choices. The vampire in "Share Alike" by Jerome Bixby and Joe E. Dean (1953) belongs to another humanoid species living secretly among us, creatures who wish only to survive and be left alone. Shipwrecked and stranded in a lifeboat with a single human companion, this vampire initiates a symbiotic relationship with his fellow castaway. William Tenn's "She Only Goes Out at Night" (1956) presents a sympathetic view of vampirism by interpreting the condition as a hereditary disease rather than a supernatural curse. Tenn's heroine proves to be a gentle young woman who yearns to lead a normal life, a goal she achieves through medical control of her syndrome, enabling her to live as a typical middle-class housewife. Evelyn E. Smith's story of a wistful, romantic vampire seducing a young career woman away from the cold practicalities of her modern urban milieu, "Softly While You're Sleeping" (1961), adopts its title from Ossenfelder's eighteenth-century poem, quoted above (although the characters attribute the line to an Albanian folk song). Smith's story anticipates the vampire romances popular from the 1980s onward, except that her heroine finally rejects the dreamlike seduction of the vampire to embrace ordinary life.

THE MODERN VAMPIRE

Although memorable book-length fiction in this genre is rare before the 1970s, a few distinguished pre-1970 novels deserve mention. Richard Matheson created the best-known and most meticulously detailed treatment of vampirism as infectious disease in *I Am Legend* (1954), with the apocalyptic story of the last "normal" man on earth facing a horde of vampires engendered by a bacterial plague. The protagonist, Neville, meticulously researches the characteristics of the disease, whose origin is attributed to bomb testing, to

"It is again and again the experience of that loss of my own life, which I experienced when I sucked the blood from Lestat's wrist and felt his heart pound with my heart. . . . for vampires that is the ultimate experience." (Rice, Interview with the Vampire, *32)*

sift fact from superstition. The ultimate victory of a group of survivors who have evolved to live in symbiosis with their infection problematizes the stark good-versus-evil contrast with which the novel begins. Simon Raven's *Doctors Wear Scarlet* (1960), a suspenseful tale of both physical and psychic vampirism, leaves the reader in doubt, almost until the end, whether the vampire's predation is supernatural or psychological. A nonsupernatural novel of blood-drinking, Theodore Sturgeon's *Some of Your Blood* (1961), uses an epistolary narrative structure and the viewpoint of an Army psychologist to reveal the truth about its sociopathic protagonist. Sturgeon evokes echoes of the supernatural vampire by making his troubled young blood-drinker the child of Hungarian immigrants and giving him the name "Bela." Leslie Whitten's absorbingly realistic murder mystery, *Progeny of the Adder* (1965), brings the traditional vampire of folklore, depicted as a repulsive, soulless predator, into a modern urban setting. Colin Wilson creates horrific alien, energy-draining vampires in *The Mind Parasites* (1967) and later, in *The Space Vampires* (1976), develops a complex treatment of the psychic vampire motif, juxtaposing the predation of alien invaders against naturally evolved psychic vampirism by both animal and human energy-drainers within the terrestrial ecosystem.

In the following two decades, vampire novels proliferated in unprecedented numbers. *The Dracula Archives*, by Raymond Rudorff (1972), set in the years just preceding Stoker's tale, shows Dracula telepathically reaching 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. Stephen King, in *'Salem's Lot* (1975), transplants Count Dracula into a contemporary setting in the person of the aristocratic Barlow. 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. While employing the standard components of vampire fiction made familiar by Stoker, including a band of heroes complete with an aging scholar as a Van Helsing figure, King downplays the erotic dimension of vampirism, prominent in "Carmilla" and *Dracula*, in favor of metaphors of power and corruption. *The Dracula Tape* (1975), by Fred Saberhagen, in sharp contrast to King's traditional portrayal of the vampire as demonically evil, provides one of the earliest novelistic treatments of the sympathetic vampire. In one of the first novels 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. While generally adhering to the "facts" as recorded by Stoker, Saberhagen reinterprets them to show Count Dracula as the hero of the tale.

Interview with the Vampire, by Anne Rice (1976), although far from the first piece of fiction to present a story from a vampire's point of view, was the first in

that mode to bring vampires to the notice of the general public. 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, 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?" (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 and fire, they seem to have no vulnerabilities. In *The Vampire Lestat* (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* (1988) abandons first-person narration for multiple points of view, both human and vampire. Lestat's quest for the source of his own existence leads him to the mythic Adam and Eve of the Undead, culminating in a battle between ancient vampires of unimaginable power. 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. Her work, including numerous books in the "Vampire Chronicles" series following the first three, not only stimulated a renewed interest in the vampire archetype but shaped much subsequent fiction, supplementing and, to some extent, displacing Stoker as the most influential author in this subgenre.

Hôtel Transylvania (1978), by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, introduces Count Saint-Germain, based on the enigmatic historical figure of that name. Though less familiar to general readers than Rice, Yarbro has exerted a strong influence on many authors of vampire fiction. 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 Hôtel Transylvania Saint-Germain wields a consecrated Host to repel a coven of Satanists. 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. Hence he becomes the immediate ancestor of numerous sympathetic vampire protagonists who exhibit a ravishing sensuality that particularly appeals to female readers. The Saint-Germain series, set all over the world in centuries from ancient times to the present, exhibits an epic scope as well as meticulous historical research. Yarbro has also written novels

"You are blood of my blood, Madelaine. It would be as impossible for me to leave you as it would for me to cross the Seine barefoot. Even if blood did not bind us, I swear to you that love would." (Yarbro, Hôtel Transylvania, *173*)

focusing on two of Saint-Germain's former lovers, Olivia and Madelaine, now transformed into vampires. Through these women's perspectives, Yarbro explores the social and political status of women in several different historical periods.

While it would be impossible to list all the vampire novels of interest in the past three decades, some of the most noteworthy can be mentioned: More or less traditional supernatural vampires appear in numerous works published in the 1970s and 1980s. In *The Black Castle* (1978), by Les Daniels, the Grand Inquisitor of Spain ironically employs his brother, the vampire Sebastian, as an instrument of terror in the service of the Church. *They Thirst* (1981), by Robert R. McCammon, resembles *'Salem's Lot* on an epic scale, featuring a satanic vampire lord, Prince Vulkan, bent on ruling Los Angeles. *The Delicate Dependency* (1982), by Michael Talbot, leads its human characters through a multilayered plot that culminates in an encounter with an esoteric society of vampires, who guide the history and nurture the genius of the inferior but indispensable human race. *Vampire Junction* (1984), by S. P. Somtow, a violent story of a boy vampire who becomes a rock star, draws upon Jungian theory to explain vampirism as a spontaneous birth from the collective unconscious.

Blood Hunt (1987), by Lee Killough, is the first memorable novel in the thriving subgenre of vampire detective fiction. Garreth Mikaelian, a San Francisco police officer, investigates murders committed by Lane Barber, a vampire who attacks and accidentally transforms him. The core of the novel concerns Garreth's gradual realization of and adjustment to the fact of his vampirism. His personality remains intact through his transformation. Instead of becoming a bloodthirsty demon, he stands in the far more interesting position of an ordinary, decent man required to adjust to a new set of limits and temptations. Moral ambiguity occupies the foreground in the highly successful "Vampire Files" detective series begun with *Bloodlist* (1990), by P. N. Elrod. The books are narrated by Jack Fleming, who (like Killough's Garreth) after becoming a vampire investigates his own murder. Elrod's series, however, set in Depression-era Chicago, has affinities with the hard-boiled private eye subgenre rather than the police procedural. In *Children of the Night* (1990), by Mercedes Lackey, psychic investigator Diana Tregarde defeats a gang of life-force predators with the aid of Andre DuPres, a sensual and witty vampire reminiscent of Yarbro's Saint-Germain. Tanya Huff combines mystery with romance in her series about vampire Henry Fitzroy, illegitimate son of Henry VIII, and Toronto private detective Vicki Nelson, who investigate occult crimes together, beginning in *Blood Price* (1991). Barbara Hambly's *Those Who Hunt the Night* (1988) features a husband-wife investigative team, Professor James Asher and his wife Lydia, in Victorian England. They reluctantly accept a commission from vampire nobleman Simon Ysidro to find out who

has been murdering London's vampires. Hambly's undead resemble Rice's in their amorality, violence, and detachment from humanity. The novel's title has an ironic triple application—to the vampires, to the fanatical vampire-slaying antagonist, and to James in his role as detective. Hambly's novel illustrates the post-1970s shift in characterization of even less than ''good'' vampires from ravening demons to beings with individuality, free will, and the capacity for moral choice.

A number of late-twentieth-century novelists explore alternatives to the classic supernatural undead, frequently from a science fiction perspective. *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980), by Suzy McKee Charnas, presents its vampire, Dr. Edward Weyland, the sole survivor of his species, as a single-minded beast of prey with superior intelligence. The novel moves from an external view of this character as simply a ruthless predator to a more intimate and sympathetic perspective through the eyes of a teenage boy who befriends him 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. Finally, Charnas places the reader entirely within Weyland's viewpoint, demonstrating how he has grown and changed, unwillingly forced into relationships with the human beings he prefers to consider his ''livestock.'' Animal metaphors dominate this story; Weyland is characterized as a lynx, tiger, or raptor in deceptively human shape, with his human appearance merely an evolutionary adaptation to enable him to mingle unnoticed with his prey. Miriam Blaylock in *The Hunger* (1981), by Whitley Strieber, another naturally evolved vampire, differs sharply from Weyland in her orientation toward the human race. Unlike Charnas's protagonist, who values his isolation and would not want to create his own rivals, Strieber's Miriam craves human company. She futilely attempts to use her own blood to transform her victims into immortal companions, who eventually degenerate into a grotesque living death. Thus Strieber uses the vampire-as-alien to achieve a fresh perspective on the familiar motif of the vampire's tragic isolation. *Fevre Dream* (1982), by George R. R. Martin, features 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, but a representative of a species that combines features of the legendary werewolf and vampire. He invents a potion that substitutes for blood, freeing himself and his followers from the ''red thirst'' or ''fever.'' Joshua's human partner, steamboat captain Abner Marsh, provides the viewpoint through which we learn about the vampire race and come to understand that vampires, like human beings, are individuals with both good and evil traits.

In *Sabella or The Blood Stone* (1980), by Tanith Lee, an alien entity takes over the body and memories of a child living on a colonized planet in Earth's near future and transmutes her into a vampire, a process of which she has no

"But we must understand that we are not speaking—in the case of the vampire, for example—of a blood-sipping phantom who cringes from a clove of garlic. Now, how would nature design a vampire?" (Charnas, The Vampire Tapestry, *25)*

clear memory, believing herself to be the girl Sabella. The novel follows the protagonist's pilgrimage of self-discovery in Lee's inimitably poetic style. Another alien vampire species, the luren, in *Those of My Blood* (1988), by Jacqueline Lichtenberg, also originate on a different planet rather than on Earth as a human mutation. Stranded on our world for generations, they 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. As in many novels of this period, the conflict between vampire antagonists highlights issues of the ethics of predation and the possibility of harmonious relationships between human and nonhuman beings. *Shattered Glass* (1989), by Elaine Bergstrom, begins the saga of the Austra family, a clan of alien vampires who, despite their extraterrestrial origins, have been a part of human history for millennia. 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.

Sunglasses After Dark (1989), by Nancy Collins, is a violent, erotic novel that initially 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. Like many contemporary vampire novels, *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. Many such novels extend contemporary respect for the integrity and civil rights of minority groups to that misunderstood and feared minority, the race of vampire. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers of fantasy and science fiction are not content to destroy the alien on sight. Authors of this period frequently respond to their audience's desire to understand the mind of the not-quite-human by creating fictional vampires—Saberhagen's Dracula dictating his apologia on tape, Louis and Lestat in Rice's trilogy, Joshua telling his life story to Abner in *Fevre Dream*, Charnas's Dr. Weyland revealing his secrets to his therapist—who seem eager to be understood. Jewelle Gomez, for instance, makes connections between vampirism and humanity by using her undead characters to explore the plight of marginalized members of human society in *The Gilda Stories* (1991), a series of episodes in the history of a black, lesbian vampire who begins life as a slave in the antebellum South.

"My revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side. Your girls that you all love are mine already." (*Dracula, 267*)

Less gentle vampires, however, continue to thrive among the many different approaches to the theme explored from the 1980s on. Brian Lumley's *Necroscope* (1986) is the first volume in a series about a parasitic species of vampires from another dimension and the secret espionage bureau that battles against them. In *The Stress of Her Regard* (1989) by Tim Powers, three major Romantic poets—Byron, Shelley, and Keats—feature as victims of silicon-based, shapeshifting drinkers of blood and life-force. Powers combines a dazzling variety of mythical motifs in this sweeping novel. *Dracula Unbound* (1991), a time-travel tale by Brian Aldiss in which Bram Stoker features as a character, portrays the vampire species as reptilian predators completely alien to human emotions and ethics. Aldiss also meta-phorically associates vampirism with infectious disease, specifically syphilis. Yvonne Navarro in *AfterAge* (1993) portrays a postapocalyptic world in which a vampire plague has reduced those who remain human to cowering in hiding from the vampire hordes, a scenario reminiscent of Matheson's *I Am Legend*. *Carrion Comfort*, by Dan Simmons (1989), a novel of psychic vampirism, involves Nina and Melanie, a pair of antebellum Charleston belles, and Willi, a German aristocrat, who 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 feed-ing on the deaths they cause. Simmons explores the motif of vampirism as infectious disease in *Children of the Night* (1992), drawing connections with the AIDS epidemic and reflecting the political situation of the late twentieth century against the backdrop of the disruption caused by the downfall of Communism in Eastern Europe, as *I Am Legend* reflects an earlier decade's anxieties over potential nuclear war. Dracula appears in Simmons's novel as an aged despot directing the action behind the scenes.

Among many other revisionist treatments of Dracula as a character, Jeanne Kalogridis produced a trilogy, "Diaries of the Family Dracul," beginning with *Covenant with the Vampire* (1994). Kalogridis traces the malign influ-ence of Vlad Dracula over his kin through several generations, ending with events that overlap Stoker's novel. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro also wrote prequels to *Dracula*, dealing with the origins of the Count's three vampire brides. Each of these books is set in a different historical era, with the last having been designed to culminate just before Jonathan Harker's arrival at Castle Dra-cula. Two of the three planned "Sisters of the Night" novels were published, *The Angry Angel* (1998) and *The Soul of an Angel* (1999); the third appears to have been canceled. A recent bestselling novel by Elizabeth Kostova, *The Historian* (2005), adopts the traditional vampire-hunting plotline, narrated in an epistolary format in homage to Stoker's *Dracula*. Kostova's hunters,

however, are scholars, and the pursuit of Dracula, here identified with Vlad the Impaler, takes place mainly in libraries through the uncovering and analysis of hidden texts. The theme of a secret history underlying the public history known to the uniniated pervades the novel, echoed in the heroine's quest for the secrets of her own father's past.

Some authors of the 1990s revisit the traditional antagonism between vampire and mortal with a difference. As in older fiction of vampires as demonic predators, the two races can find no depth of common ground, but in these decentered works, the vampire point of view is privileged over the human. In Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* (1992), a postmodernist novel of literal and metaphorical alienation, a teenage boy named Nothing runs away from his adoptive parents in search of his true self. He discovers that he is the child of a vampire and a human woman, who died at his birth, as the mothers of vampire infants usually do. The common adolescent feeling of not belonging to one's family becomes literally true for Nothing. Batlike humanoids live secretly alongside modern human culture in Melanie Tem's *Desmodus* (1995). Essentially giant, blood-drinking bats in vaguely human form, they share the physiology and social structures of their lesser, unintelligent kin. In this innovative novel, humanity remains peripheral, bizarre and alien as viewed through the eyes of the Desmodus protagonist.

The emergent subgenre of vampire romance moves in precisely the opposite direction, toward intimacy rather than disconnection between human and nonhuman. Although vampires have occasionally featured as protagonists of love stories since the middle of the twentieth century, Lori Herter's *Obsession* (1991) was the first vampire novel to be sold expressly as a romance rather than shelved with horror or fantasy. The four-book series initiated by this novel signaled the advent of a new marketing category, which has since become extremely popular. Authors who followed soon afterward with multiple novels in this subgenre include Linda Lael Miller, Nancy Gideon, Nancy Kilpatrick, Maggie Shayne, and Amanda Ashley. Under the pen name "Rebecca Brand," Suzy McKee Charnas explores the traditional supernatural vampire in *The Ruby Tear* (1997), a revisionist take on vampire romance with suspense and touches of humor in a theatrical setting. The heroine, a stage actress who becomes entangled in an ancient vampire's quest to retrieve the eponymous jewel from her former fiancé, a playwright, must choose between human and vampire lovers, with an unexpected denouement. An unusual science fiction treatment of vampirism, Jean Lorrah's *Blood Will Tell* (2001), narrated from the viewpoint of a female police officer in a small town, dating a man with a mysterious past, at first appears to be a variation on the "vampire as alien" motif, then veers in a surprising direction. This novel postulates that vampires do not occupy the pinnacle of the terrestrial food chain but, rather, are bred and manipulated as prey for a still higher species. Christine Feehan creates nonhuman, naturally evolved vampires called "Carpathians" in a series that pits ethical members of the race against those who have succumbed to violent

bloodlust. Feehan's system postulates that the most fortunate Carpathian males attain intimacy with human female ''soulmates,'' a relationship seldom without tension.

The popularity of this kind of romance demonstrates female readers' attraction to vampire heroes that are both sympathetic and erotic. These novels strip vampire eroticism of the guilt that originally infused the sexual subtext in classic fiction, without quite abandoning the spice of the forbidden. Lynsay Sands and Kate McAlister, among other contemporary authors, combine vampire romance with humor. Vampirism blends with the subgenre of ''chick lit''—novels focusing on young career women finding their way in the world of work and relationships—in the work of such authors as humorous paranormal novelist MaryJanice [*sic*] Davidson, beginning with *Undead and Unwed* (2002), told in the first person by a heroine who unexpectedly arises from the grave to discover that, not only has she become a vampire, the supernatural community believes her to be the prophesied queen of the undead. For vampire fiction suffused with a higher degree of explicit sexuality than found in mainstream romance, readers can seek out erotic romance and women's erotica novels from electronic publishers such as Ellora's Cave (www.ellorascave .com), Loose Id (www.loose-id.com), and Liquid Silver (www.liquidsilver books.com), books from major publisher Kensington's Brava imprint, and novellas in the ''Secrets'' anthology series from small press Red Sage.

One popular variant on the theme presents vampires, often along with other nonhuman characters such as werewolves, as acknowledged members of society in an alternate present-day society where supernatural creatures are known to be real. Kim Newman's alternate history series, beginning with *Anno-Dracula* (1992), postulates that Van Helsing's band of hunters did not succeed in slaying Dracula as in Stoker's novel. Instead, Dracula transformed the widowed Queen Victoria into a vampire, married her in order to become Prince Consort, and now rules England. Vampires and mortals exist in uneasy fellow citizenship. Newman's incorporation of dozens of characters from history and literature enriches the series with the reader's pleasure in recognizing the author's allusions, as well as the drama of the gradually unfolding variations on real-world history as we know it. Laurell K. Hamilton's series of novels narrated by Anita Blake, a professional necromancer with a license to kill vampires who transgress legal boundaries, is set in an alternate contemporary America in which supernatural creatures are publicly known to exist. Law and custom have been restructured to deal with vampires, werewolves, zombies, and other nonhuman beings. Anita's triangular relationship with a master vampire and a werewolf pack leader draws her deeper into increasingly violent and explicitly erotic situations as the series progresses. Similar worlds are constructed by Charlaine Harris, with her stories of reluctant psychic Sookie Stackhouse, who becomes entangled with vampires and other creatures of the night, and Kim Harrison, whose series focuses on a witch professionally partnered with a female vampire. Also creating their own unique mythologies

are L. A. Banks in the "Vampire Huntress" series and Sherrilyn Kenyon in her "Dark-Hunters" books.

The mainline thread of supernatural vampirism flourishes alongside continued innovation, although with significant differences from older fiction. *Midnight Mass* (2004), by F. Paul Wilson, illustrates the tendency toward more nuanced treatment of character and ethics even in fiction harking back to the original concept of vampirism as a diabolical evil. In this novel, vampires have overrun the United States and forced the human remnant into hiding in most areas. A priest and a nun rally a group of survivors to take the offensive against the undead. When the priest falls victim to a deadly attack, he manages to restrain his encroaching vampiric nature and cling to his humanity long enough to continue supporting the heroes in their crusade. Science fiction author Octavia Butler, on the other hand places vampires at the center and human characters on the periphery in her recent novel *Fledgling* (2005). The first-person narrative is told by a preadolescent female member of a naturally evolved vampire species who suffers from amnesia following a murderous attack upon her family's home and rediscovers her true nature simultaneously with the revelation of her background to the reader. Unlike the humanoid bats of Tem's *Desmodus*, however, Butler's vampires depend on human blood donors for emotional connection as well as physical nourishment, and each individual forms a network of symbiotic relationships for that purpose.

YOUNG ADULT VAMPIRE LITERATURE

Fiction for children and teenagers in the past three decades has followed the precedent set by adult fiction in often portraying vampires as sympathetic characters, capable of ethical behavior. If presented as evil, they are usually more than one-dimensional villains, often morally ambiguous. Entertainment for younger children tends to portray them as amusing and harmless. The Count on the television program "Sesame Street" (1969–present), wearing a black cape and speaking in a Bela Lugosi accent, has an obsession with counting rather than bloodsucking. *Bunnicula* (1979), by James and Deborah Howe, narrated by a dog living in a middle-class American household, details the family cat's growing suspicions of Bunnicula, a pet rabbit with mysterious origins, who preys on vegetables by draining their juices, leaving them anemically white. In Mel Gilden's "Fifth Grade Monsters" series, analogies are drawn between the monsters and both the disabled and members of minority ethnic groups, deserving fair treatment and as capable of kindness and friendship as any other children. In the opening volume, *M Is for Monster* (1987), human protagonist Danny discovers that the four monster children who join his fifth-grade class, including C. D. Bitesky, a Transylvanian immigrant who wears evening clothes with a cape to school and carries a thermos of red liquid called Fluid of Life, make far better friends than the human class bully.

Angela Sommer-Bodenburg's "Little Vampire" series (translated from German), beginning with *My Friend the Vampire* (1982) has a sharper edge. The young vampire who befriends Tony represents a rebellion against adult norms, and his relatives, except for his little sister who is still too young to drink blood and lives on milk, appear overtly dangerous. The title character of Ann Jungman's *Vlad the Drac* (1982) and its sequels, by contrast, is a thoroughly domesticated vampire, even to the point of trivialization. The humorous tone of the narrative underscores the harmlessness of this vegetarian vampire. Probably unique to Jungman is the literal reduction of the monster in both size and status; Vlad the Drac (a name he adopts in an attempt to sound frightening) is treated like a pet. Two English children on a Romanian vacation rescue the diminutive vampire from under a stone where he has been trapped for over a century and take him home with them. Serious issues, however, are hinted at by his fear of being the last of his kind and his resentment of popular culture stereotypes of vampirism, the latter a theme Jungman's series has in common with Gilden's. All these works illustrate the trend among children's authors of using vampire motifs to promote tolerance toward people of different backgrounds.

"Before we began I told you that you are a vampire or you are not. . . . It is like having red hair and freckles." (Gilden, How to Be a Vampire in One Easy Lesson, *90*)

Jayne Harvey reverses this pattern in *Great-Uncle Dracula* (1992), in which a human child plays the role of outsider. When Emily Normal's father brings her and her brother Elliot to Transylvania, United States, to live with Great-Uncle Dracula, she becomes a misfit in a community of witches, werewolves, vampires, and ghosts. Transylvania is a parody of a generic American small town with the conventionally monstrous and normal reversed. By the story's end, Emily learns to appreciate her own unique qualities and recognize that her real friends can accept her for what she is. Another unusual variation on the theme, *Ma and Pa Dracula* (1989), by Ann M. Martin, focuses on a human boy's struggle with the discovery that his beloved adoptive parents are different from other children's families and are, in fact, vampires. His unsuccessful attempt to become just like all the other children ends in a renewed bond with his parents and appreciation for their unusual lifestyle.

For slightly older readers, *My Sister the Vampire* (1992), by Nancy Garden, depicts vampires for the most part in the traditional horror mode, as an evil fit only to be destroyed. The plot centers on young Tim's struggle to prevent his teenage sister from being transformed into one of the undead. At the climax, however, the vampires renounce their unnatural existence and thank the children for freeing them from their curse by leaving them bound to face the sun, another illustration of nuanced treatment of vampires even when framed as villains. L. J. Smith created one of the first vampire romance series for teenage readers in her "Vampire Diaries," beginning with *The Awakening* (1991). A stand-alone novel, *The Silver Kiss* (1990), by Annette Curtis Klause, involves a love story between Zoe, a teenage girl whose mother is dying, and

Simon, a 300-year-old vampire who appears about her age. His reluctant attraction to Zoe puts her in danger from his brother, Christopher, who became undead as a small boy. Zoe's experience with Simon helps her come to terms with her mother's imminent death, while he, in turn, gains the courage to end his unlife. Vivian Vande Velde presents a dangerous alliance between a human girl and a young male vampire in *Companions of the Night* (1995). When sixteen-year-old Kerry accidentally stumbles into a confrontation between vampire Ethan and a gang of would-be vampire hunters, she rescues him under the assumption that he is a human victim of deluded fanatics. Vande Velde maintains a dynamic balance between the allure and the lethal power of Kerry's bloodthirsty, secretive, charismatic ally. With a more positive view of vampires, although not discounting their predatory nature, L. J. Smith's "Night World" series explores relationships between human characters and members of a naturally evolved race of vampires. The first book, *Secret Vampire* (1996), is a romance in which the heroine's boyfriend saves her from a terminal illness by initiating her into the realm of vampirism. Young author Amelia Atwater-Rhodes published her first novel, *In the Forests of the Night* (1999), at age fourteen. The protagonist, lonely vampire Risika, is hunted by an unknown enemy while facing the memories of her past and trying to cling to the remnants of her humanity. Kate McAlister, under the name "Katie Maxwell," writes humorous novels for teenagers, beginning with *Got Fangs?* (2005), which gently satirizes the "soulmate" motif through the voice of the girl protagonist.

VAMPIRE CRITICISM

Literary criticism dealing with vampire fiction at first typically analyzed its psychological roots, applying Ernest Jones's Freudian model to fiction. Maurice Richardson, in "The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories" (1959), famously summarizes *Dracula* as "a kind of incestuous, necrophilious, oral-anal-sadistic all-in wrestling match" set in "a sort of homicidal lunatic's brothel in a crypt" (427). James Twitchell later takes a similar approach in *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (1985), analyzing vampire stories as an adolescent male fantasy. Psychological critiques of *Dracula*, in particular, encompass a wide range of supposed subtexts, including latent homosexuality, incestuous desires, and fear of female sexuality. Leonard Wolf's impressionistic meditation on the place of *Dracula* in modern culture, *A Dream of Dracula* (1972), also relies heavily upon a psychosexual approach to the vampire theme. Wolf followed this book with the first annotated edition of *Dracula* (1975), later revised and reissued as *The Essential Dracula* (1993). *In Search of Dracula* (1972), by Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu, popularized the theory of a connection between Stoker's Count and the historical Wallachian warlord Vlad the Impaler. McNally and Florescu wrote two later books focusing on Vlad's life and times, *Dracula: A Biography of Vlad the*

A Chronology of Major Vampire Films

Nosferatu (Prana, 1922)

Dracula (Universal, 1931)

Vampyr (Tobis-Klangfilm, 1932)

Dracula's Daughter (Universal, 1936)

Son of Dracula (Universal, 1943)

Horror of Dracula (Hammer, 1958)

Brides of Dracula (Hammer, 1960)

Dance of the Vampires (Ransohoff-Polanski Productions, 1967)

The Vampire Lovers (Hammer, 1970)

House of Dark Shadows (MGM, 1970)

Countess Dracula (Hammer, 1971)

Blacula (American International, 1972)

Dracula (Mirisch/United Artists, 1979)

Love at First Bite (Simon Productions/AIP, 1979)

The Hunger (MGM, 1983)

Fright Night (Columbia, 1985)

The Lost Boys (Warner Brothers, 1987)

Near Dark (De Laurentiis/Feldman-Meeker, 1987)

Bram Stoker's Dracula (Columbia, 1992)

Buffy, the Vampire Slayer (Twentieth Century Fox, 1992)

Interview with the Vampire (Warner Brothers, 1994)

Vampire in Brooklyn (Paramount, 1995)

Dracula: Dead and Loving It (Columbia, 1995)

From Dusk Till Dawn (Dimension, 1996)

Blade the Vampire Slayer (New Line Cinema/Amen Ra Films, 1997)

Underworld (Sony Pictures, 2003)

Van Helsing (Universal, 2004)

Impaler (1973) and *Dracula: Prince of Many Faces* (1989). They also edited an annotated *Dracula*, called, like Wolf's second edition, *The Essential Dracula* (1979). Other critics analyze Stoker's novel's narrative structure and its relationship to the social and political issues of its day. Many pioneering articles on *Dracula* from a wide range of critical viewpoints are collected in the anthology *Dracula: The Vampire and the Critics* (1988), edited by Margaret

L. Carter. Clive Leatherdale examines Stoker's work from a variety of historical, cultural, and literary perspectives in *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend* (1985).

Critical interest in *Dracula* permitted other works in the field to be considered worthy of scholarly attention. Basil Copper surveys the vampire theme in fiction, drama, and popular culture in general, including real-life bloodsuckers, in *The Vampire in Legend, Fact, and Art* (1973). Christopher Frayling's anthology *Vampyres: From Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (1978), including nonfiction as well as fiction and excerpts from Stoker's working notes as well as from sources used in writing *Dracula*, begins with an extensive essay on the history of vampire fiction and a chart summarizing the features of numerous major works. Several bibliographies of vampires in fiction and other media have been published, beginning with *Vampires Unearthed* (1983), a multimedia listing by Martin V. Riccardo. Margaret L. Carter covers fiction, nonfiction, and stage plays, with introductory essays on the history and evolution of vampire fiction, in *The Vampire in Literature: A Critical Bibliography* (1989). Greg Cox's more selective *The Transylvanian Library* (1993), confined to fiction, lists notable novels and stories with brief summaries and ratings graded by numbers of bats from one through four. Patricia Altner's *Vampire Readings* (1998) also contains useful summaries of the listed works to guide the potential reader. Brian Frost's *The Monster with a Thousand Faces* (1989) comprehensively surveys vampire fiction from its folklore roots and its literary inception in the eighteenth century to the 1980s. Carol A. Senf concentrates on selected periods and works in *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (1988), which, despite its title, includes reflections on some twentieth-century authors. Senf later wrote a reader's guide to Stoker's novel, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism* (1998). Gregory A. Waller's wide-ranging *The Living and the Undead: From Stoker's Dracula to Romero's Dawn of the Dead* (1986), as its subtitle suggests, deals with movies as well as print fiction and encompasses non-vampiric undead creatures such as zombies in addition to vampires. Ken Gelder's *Reading the Vampire* (1994) places fiction and movies in this genre in their historic and cultural context, drawing upon literary and psychological theory to analyze works from the nineteenth century through the late twentieth. Nina Auerbach, in *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995), also begins with the Romantic period and analyzes the vampire stories (and later, films) she views as characteristic of each period, with their social and political significance. David J. Skal explores the career of Bela Lugosi and the making of the classic Dracula films in *Hollywood Gothic* (1990). Skal's witty *V Is for Vampire* (1996) contains alphabetically arranged brief discussions of significant authors, characters, works, and themes related to vampires in popular media. *Vampire Legends in Contemporary American Culture* (2002), by Gothic scholar William Patrick Day, begins with the roots of vampire fiction but concentrates mainly on the cultural implications of late-twentieth-century novels, movies, and television.

The 1997 centenary of the publication of *Dracula* inspired several critical anthologies on Stoker's novel and vampires in literature, notably *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897–1997* (1997), edited by Carol Margaret Davison; *Blood Read* (1997), edited by Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger; and *The Blood Is the Life: Vampires in Literature* (1999), edited by Leonard G. Heldreth and Mary Pharr. James Holte, author of *Dracula in the Dark* (1997), a study of the film adaptations of *Dracula*, edited *The Fantastic Vampire* (2002), papers from the Dracula centennial year of the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts. Two new annotated editions of *Dracula* appeared around this time, *Dracula Unearthed* (1998), edited by Clive Leatherdale, and a Norton Critical Edition (1997), edited by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal; the latter includes reviews and critical essays. Glennis Byron edited an edition of *Dracula* (1998) featuring an introduction directed to students and several appendices elaborating on elements of the novel's nineteenth-century background. A version edited by John Paul Riquelme (2002) contains similar contextual documents as well as several essays from various critical perspectives written especially for that volume. Elizabeth Miller writes in depth about Bram Stoker, his work, and Vlad the Impaler in *Reflections on Dracula* (1997) and *Dracula: Sense and Nonsense* (2000), exhaustively debunking popular misconceptions about Stoker, the writing of *Dracula*, and the confusion between Vlad and the fictional Count.

> *"Listen to them—the children of the night. What music they make!" (Stoker,* Dracula, *Norton Critical Edition, 24)*

VAMPIRES IN THE MEDIA

Cinematic treatments of vampirism began in the silent film era with *Nosferatu* (1922), a thinly disguised adaptation of *Dracula*. Stoker's widow successfully sued for plagiarism, and most copies of the movie were destroyed, with, however, a few surviving, fortunately for later vampire aficionados. This film originates the popular motif of the vampire's destruction by sunlight. Graf Orlock, the villain in *Nosferatu*, is associated with images of contagion and has a ghastly appearance combining batlike and ratlike traits. Bela Lugosi in the Universal *Dracula* (1931), the movie that established the stereotypical image of the vampire for all time, has, in contrast, a suave, seductive manner. The script was based on the stage drama (1927) by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston, in which Lugosi had played the leading role before being chosen to portray the Count on film. The action of the play takes place entirely in London. Although the movie includes opening scenes set in Dracula's Transylvanian castle, the remainder of it follows the play so closely that the tension and horror of the early scenes are not consistently maintained. Important actions occur offstage, including the climactic staking of Dracula. Universal Studios

"I never drink—wine."
(Dracula, *1931 movie)*

produced several sequels, notably *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), with a lesbian subtext and a partially sympathetic treatment of the title character's plight. A German expressionist film, *Vampyr* (1932), purports to be based on "Carmilla" but has little or no similarity to Le Fanu's tale. The first of several films produced by the British studio Hammer, *Horror of Dracula* (simply *Dracula* in England, 1958), introduced Christopher Lee as the Count. Bloodshed in full color and blatant (for the time) eroticism distinguished the Hammer Dracula movies sharply from the earlier Universal films. Lee portrays a tall, dark, menacing Dracula who speaks little dialogue and engages in physical combat with Peter Cushing's Van Helsing. Van Helsing but not Dracula reappears in the next Hammer vampire movie, *Brides of Dracula* (1960), which characterizes vampirism as an obscene cult that ensnares the young man who preys on his own mother early in the film and goes on to seduce several young women at a girls' school. Lee went on to play Dracula in other Hammer films and also in a non-Hammer production, *Count Dracula* (*El Conde Dracula*, 1971). Hammer produced a cycle of movies loosely based on "Carmilla," the first, *The Vampire Lovers* (1970), adhering closest to Le Fanu's novella. Hammer's *Countess Dracula* (1971), contrary to the title, is based on the life of Elizabeth Bathory, the "Blood Countess." Roman Polanski's *Fearless Vampire Killers* (also known as *Dance of the Vampires*, 1967) parodies the established conventions of the vampire film, sending an elderly vampire-hunter and his naïve young assistant into a vampire-haunted castle.

Variations on the traditional motifs appear in movies of the 1970s and beyond. In *Blacula* (1972) an African prince whom Count Dracula has transformed into a vampire awakens in contemporary America. The humorous *Love at First Bite* (1979), with George Hamilton as a romantic Dracula, satirizes familiar elements from the Lugosi film, including an insect-eating Renfield. In the same year, Frank Langella, who had also performed the part onstage, plays the Count as a seductive lover in a serious adaptation of *Dracula* (1979). Like the original Universal movie, this version is based more on the Balderston-Deane play than on Stoker's novel; in fact, unlike the Lugosi film, the 1979 version includes no Transylvanian scenes. Moreover, it reverses the roles of Lucy and Mina, making the latter Van Helsing's daughter and having her transformed into a vampire early in the story. *The Hunger* (1983), adapted from Whitley Strieber's novel, stars Catherine Deneuve in a sexually charged performance as the solitary vampire Miriam. *Lost Boys* (1987), with its theme of never growing up, connects vampirism with contemporary youth culture. Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) claimed to follow Stoker's novel more faithfully than any previous adaptation. While this movie does include every significant element from the book, including details missing from previous films such as all three of Lucy's suitors and a faithful rendering of Van Helsing's sometimes dictatorial and sometimes manic behavior, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* also inserts a reincarnation romance subplot completely alien

to Stoker's original. *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995) parodies every major Dracula film that preceded it, including Coppola's, and even includes a homage to the mirror scene in *Fearless Vampire Killers*. *Blade the Vampire Slayer* (1997), bringing to life a hero from Marvel Comics, reflects the more ambiguous treatment

"Children of the night—shut up!" (Love at First Bite, *1979 movie)*

of vampires recently prevalent in both fiction and film, with Blade, although an implacable nemesis of the undead, displaying the effects of his prenatal exposure to vampirism through an attack on his mother. *Underworld* (2003) focuses on an ancient feud between vampires and werewolves, with a "Romeo and Juliet" plot involving a forbidden liaison between lovers from the two warring groups. The recent film *Van Helsing* (2004) pits the titular hero, entirely different in personality and background from Stoker's professor, against a menagerie of monsters in addition to vampires.

Television pioneered mass audiences' acceptance of the sympathetic vampire with the introduction of Barnabas Collins (played by Canadian actor Jonathan Frid) to the soap opera "Dark Shadows" (1966–1971). Originally introduced as a supernatural villain to improve the program's weak ratings, Barnabas searches for the reincarnation of his lost beloved, Josette, and kidnaps a young woman he identifies with that role. Gradually, Barnabas's character softens, with increased emphasis on his remorse for his bloodthirsty past and his quest for a cure for his condition. *House of Dark Shadows* (1970) adapts Barnabas's attempt to regain his humanity and find love as a theatrical film. The TV series enjoyed a brief revival in 1991, with the role of Barnabas taken by Ben Cross, who had previously played a vampire in the 1989 made-for-TV movie *Nightlife*. The comic series "The Munsters" (1964–1966) includes two vampiric characters, Grandpa, a parody of a Lugosi-like Dracula figure, and his daughter Lily, although no overt blood-drinking occurs on the program. A made-for-television mystery, *The Night Stalker* (1972), about a cynical reporter who exposes a vampire, spawned a series, "Kolchak: The Night Stalker" (1974–1975), in which Kolchak investigates a new monster every week. Dracula himself made several appearances on television over the years. Jack Palance played Dracula in a network television adaptation (1974) produced by Dan Curtis of "Dark Shadows" fame. The first film to identify Stoker's Count with Vlad the Impaler, this production depicts Lucy as the reincarnation of Dracula's late wife, anticipating the same device in Coppola's movie adaptation. Louis Jourdan starred in a BBC production of *Dracula* (1978), arguably the most faithful to Stoker's novel ever produced. The anthology series *Cliffhangers* (1979) featured one storyline, "The Curse of Dracula," about the Count as a history professor teaching night classes in San Francisco. Michael Nouri portrays Dracula as an attractive, romantic figure. The vampire as television protagonist achieved cult status for a late-twentieth-century audience in the Canadian series about a vampire police detective, "Forever Knight" (1992–95), which was preceded by a made-for-television

movie, *Nick Knight* (1989). The series differs from the feature film in that the medical examiner trying to help Nick find a cure for vampirism becomes a woman rather than a man, and Nick's vampire master, LaCroix, becomes a more nuanced, less unambiguously evil character. Also, Nick's backstory is changed, making him considerably older. The show's theme, Nick's search for redemption and his resolve to atone for his past sins by helping mortals, is reinforced by flashbacks linking present-day plots to past events in his eight centuries of existence. A failed series pilot, "Blood Ties" (1991), depicts vampires as a separate subspecies of humanity. Calling themselves Carpathian-Americans, most of them seek only to be allowed to live in peace, free of prejudice-induced violence, although an anti-assimilationist faction advocates treating human beings as prey. A short-lived British series, "Ultraviolet" (1998), takes a quasi-scientific approach to vampires, known as "leeches," which were hunted by a secret government organization. Another briefly flourishing cult favorite, *Kindred: The Embraced* (1996), derived from the "Vampire: The Masquerade" roleplaying game produced by the White Wolf gaming company, involves an elaborate subculture of vampire clans. As translated to television, the undead factions appeared more like rival crime syndicates than supernatural beings. The satirical light suspense movie *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1992) became the basis for a wildly popular television series by the same name, when the film's creator, Joss Whedon, had the opportunity to return to his original intentions for the character and her world. Reversing the familiar horror cliché of a beautiful girl victimized by a monster, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1997–2003) empowers its blonde, teenage heroine to become a hunter of monsters, the latest in a long line of Slayers who appear once (theoretically) in every generation. Guided by her Watcher, a middle-aged librarian who provides research, training, and occasional combat backup, Buffy confronts creatures and situations that often mirror and symbolize the horrors of adolescence as experienced in mundane life. Early in the series, demons in general and vampires in particular are framed as unequivocally evil, with no potential for moral choice. The exception, Angel, Buffy's romantic interest, achieves that status through a curse that restores his soul. Later, however, characters such as Spike demonstrate moral ambiguity and potential for personal growth even in soulless vampires. A spinoff program, "Angel" (1999–2004), transports the vampire with a soul to Los Angeles, where he solves mysteries as the hero of noir-style detective adventures. Dozens of novels based on these two series have been published.

Vampire anime (Japanese animation) has developed a large fan base among English-speaking audiences in recent years. The feature film *Vampire Hunter D* (1985), set in a post-apocalyptic world 12,000 years in the future, displays the influence of Western horror films such as Hammer's Dracula cycle. The vampire lord, Count Lee, inhabits a Gothic castle but has cybernetic as well as demonic servants. The hero, known only as D, is a dhampir, a human-vampire hybrid who possesses superhuman powers as a result of his mixed heritage.

Anime television series popular in the United States include the following: "Vampire Princess Miyu" (1988) stars Miyu, a gentle teenage girl vampire, who uses her supernatural powers to send wandering Shinma (demons) back to the darkness and sometimes takes blood as a reward from those she rescues, gifting them with peace and oblivion in the process. A Shinma she formerly defeated, Larva, accompanies her as ally and protector. In "Master of Mosquiton" (1996), set in the 1920s with a humorous tone, a Transylvanian schoolgirl resurrects the vampire Mosquiton and enlists him to help her search for the secret of immortality. "Night Walker: Midnight Detective" (1998) features half-vampire detective Shido hunting the demonic Nightbreed in Tokyo, in cooperation with his young female assistant Riho and Yayoi, a beautiful investigator from a secret government organization. "Descendants of Darkness" (2000) is a supernatural detective series with a homosexual subtext, about an elite class of vampires tracking down the lost souls of the undead. "Hellsing" (2002) centers on a secret organization of that name, directed by hereditary leader Integra Hellsing. The reformed vampire Alucard assists the Hellsing Organization in its crusade against vampires and other creatures of the night, and in the first episode of the series, Alucard transforms a young female operative, Seras Victoria, into a vampire to save her life. This series features violent, epic battles that often involve clashes between Hellsing and a covert Vatican-based society also dedicated to exterminating vampires.

Several popular vampire characters appeared in comic books from the 1960s onward. Gold Key released comics based on television programs "The Munsters" (beginning in 1964) and "Dark Shadows" (from 1969). Warren Publishing Company inaugurated *Vampirella* in 1969. The title character, a female vampire in a sleek, black costume, was an alien from the planet Drakulon, where blood replaced water. A sympathetic heroine, she avoided taking human life whenever possible. Marvel Comics launched its long-running *The Tomb of Dracula* in 1972. The team of hunters pursuing Dracula is led by an elderly Quincey Harker (son of Jonathan and Mina from Stoker's novel). After the demise of this publication in 1979, Marvel published six issues of a large-format, black-and-white *Dracula* magazine. The same company produced an anthology comic series called *Vampire Tales* beginning in 1973. Marvel also created the Morbius, a scientist who became a vampire by contracting a rare blood disease. He appeared as a villain in various different Marvel publications over the years, beginning in 1971. Blade the Vampire Slayer, an African American hero, first appeared in the July 1973 issue of *Tomb of Dracula*. His mother's murder by a vampire motivated his crusade against the undead. More recently, Chaos! Comics revived Vampirella from 1994 to 1996, Brainstorm Comics introduced the ancient vampire Luxura in *Vamperotica* (beginning in 1994), and the DC Vertigo series *Preacher* (begun in 1995) included an Irish vampire, Cassidy.

White Wolf's roleplaying game "Vampire: The Masquerade" offers players the opportunity to assume the identities of vampire characters in a world, like

the setting of Anne Rice's novels, where vampires are central and ordinary mortals peripheral. Rather than the solitary predators like most classic vampires, the undead in the parallel universe of "Vampire: The Masquerade" belong to an elaborate subculture, divided into clans with distinguishing characteristics and complex histories, existing secretly in the underworld of human society. Sourcebooks have been published detailing the Kindred (vampire) culture and politics of various major cities. The game's terminology has crept into fiction with the now commonplace use of "sire" for the vampire who transforms another person into one of the undead, "embrace" for the process of transformation, and "ghoul" for a servant under a vampire's supernatural influence or control, just as admirers of Anne Rice have popularized the term "fledgling" for a newly spawned vampire. Vampires have also infiltrated computer and video games, two of the most popular series being *Castlevania* and *Legacy of Kain*. The *Castlevania* cycle begins with vampire hunter Simon Belmont's quest to slay Dracula, battling many other monsters along the way. In later games, other characters with more complex motives also set out to destroy the undead Count. In *Legacy of Kain*, the player assumes the role of a vampire rather than a slayer. Morally ambiguous and extremely powerful, the player, as Kain, consumes the blood and souls of others and sometimes possesses the bodies of victims.

Several researchers have published studies of the vampire motif's pervasiveness in popular culture, including the phenomenon of people who believe themselves to be, in some sense, "real" vampires. *American Vampires* (1989), by Norine Dresser, surveys television, movies, advertising, music, and fan clubs as well as the subculture of real-life blood-drinkers and self-styled psychic vampires. Carol Page's *Bloodlust* (1991) devotes an entire book to people who consider themselves vampires. Rosemary Guiley's *The Complete Vampire Companion* (1994), which includes contributions on its various topics from a number of different writers, covers folklore, movies, fiction, television, comic books, fan clubs, and the world of "real vampires." This book features numerous quotes from and brief interviews with writers and directors of vampire fiction and films. Katherine Ramsland, author of the Anne Rice biography *Prism of the Night* (1991), conducts in-depth research on real-life vampire phenomena in *Piercing the Darkness: Undercover with Vampires in America Today* (1998). She reports on vampire-oriented nightclubs, Internet groups, and Goth communities, with numerous firsthand conversations and anecdotes. Unlike most writers on this topic, she has immersed herself in the subculture that forms the object of her study. Ramsland, a psychologist, also has written the more speculative *The Science of Vampires* (2002), which contains a chapter on vampire sex with exploration of real-life practices among people who consider themselves vampires.

The vampire in his or her many guises continually transforms in response to contemporary culture and shows no signs of fading away. As Nina Auerbach suggests in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, each decade gets the vampire it needs.

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Useful Web sites

Alt-Vampyres Newsgroup: www.altvampyres.net
Dracula: For the Dead Travel Fast: www.geocities.com/nansee_2000/dracula.html
The Dracula Library: www.cesnur.org/dracula_library.htm
Dracula's Home Page: www.ucs.mun.ca/~emiller/
Michelle Hauf's Ultimate Vampire List: www.vampire-books.com
Realm of the Vampires: www.simegen.com/reviews/vampires/vamprelm.htm
The Vampire Library: www.vampirelibrary.com
Vampire Readings: www.biblioinfo.com/vamp/vamp.html

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The Werewolf

by Stefan Dziemianowicz

INTRODUCTION

No one can say with complete certainty when the first tale of the werewolf was told. What seems indisputable, however, from a reading of Elliott O'Donnell's *Werewolves* (1912), Montague Summers's *The Werewolf* (1933), Basil Copper's *The Werewolf in Legend, Fact and Art* (1977), Charlotte F. Otten's *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture* (1986), and other clinical and anecdotal histories, is that virtually every culture has a variant on

the werewolf legend as part of its mythology and folklore. Indeed, accounts of human transformation into feral form (and, in some cases, vice versa) are just part of a larger body of myths concerned with shapeshifting into a variety of animal guises. In general, these stories range from marvelous accounts of unusual powers humans acquire by changing form and nature to cautionary tales in which the wicked backslide into a bestial state.

Although the werewolf legend is thousands of years old, its most popular version dates only to the middle of the twentieth century. Robert Siodmak's screenplay for the 1941 film *The Wolf Man* reduced the legend to bare essentials: The werewolf is a hapless victim who, once bitten in human form by another werewolf, changes into wolf form during the days of each month when the moon is full, between the hours of moonrise and sunrise. The human who is a werewolf usually is unaware of the supernatural side of his life, or at very least of his behavior after his transformation. As a werewolf, his sole purpose is to slaughter other creatures (especially humans), sometimes (but not always) for sustenance. Any injury he sustains as a wolf persists after his reversion to human form. The werewolf can be repelled only by wolfbane, and can be killed only by a silver bullet. Once killed, the werewolf immediately reverts back to his human form.

Most of the werewolf lore Siodmak put into his screenplay was taken from folktales or werewolf fiction that itself was derived from folk legend. However, the movie's impact cannot be underestimated. Reaching a larger audience than perhaps any werewolf narrative of the preceding century, it codified werewolf lore in the same way that Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* created the template for all vampire fiction written in its wake. However, the cinematic werewolf deviated markedly from the literary werewolf, which had by that point enjoyed a rich and varied life for nearly 2000 years. Universal, the studio that produced *The Wolf Man*, had ten years earlier produced the film adaptation of *Dracula*, and Siodmak's werewolf is easily identifiable as a vampire in wolf's clothing. In literature, the werewolf has a distinctly different pedigree and speaks to different concerns and ideas than the vampire does. The canonical werewolf sprung from the film *The Wolf Man* was largely cut loose from the rich literary tradition that has made the werewolf one of the more fascinating and complex icons of horror literature.

THE PRE-GOTHIC WEREWOLF

The word "werewolf" (which translates roughly as "man wolf") is of Anglo-Saxon origin, and has been traced at least as far back as the eleventh century. Most other descriptive terms for the werewolf—*loup garou*, shapeshifter, lycanthrope—are of later derivation. The *concept* of the werewolf, however, appears in literature that predates this considerably. In his eighth Eclogue, which dates to 39 B.C.E., the Roman poet Virgil mentions in passing of "baneful

herbs'' from Pontus with which ''full oft have I seen Moeris change / To a wolf's form, and hide him from the woods.'' Thus, in one of the earliest literary references, transformation of human into wolf is voluntary, and achieved by a means other than contact with another werewolf.

As with Virgil's account, most other evocations of the werewolf in classical literature are part of a larger catalog of supernatural marvels being described. Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*, relates the transformation of Lycaon, the King of Arcadia, who is punished with bestial transformation by the god Jove on a visit to Earth. Unlike other mortals who grovel and pray in Jove's presence, Lycaon decides to test whether Jove is actually a god by serving him a meal of cooked human flesh. Lycaon's fate is possibly the first instance in literature of lycanthropy depicted as a curse brought on by an evil nature—and, as befits that nature, his transformation is permanent. Of significant interest is his physical transformation, which Virgil describes in nearly cinematic terms:

> Howling he fled, and fane he wou'd have spoke;
> But humane voice his brutal tongue forsook.
> About his lips the gather'd foam he churns,
> And, breathing slaughters, still with rage he burns,
> But on the bleating flock his fury turns.
> His mantle, now his hide, with rugged hairs
> Cleaves to his back; a famish'd face he bears;
> His arms descend, his shoulders sink away
> To multiply his legs for chase of prey.
> He grows a wolf, his hoariness remains,
> And the same rage in other members reigns.
> His eyes still sparkle in a narr'wer space;
> His jaws retain the grin, and violence of his face.

Petronius, in the *Satyricon* (c. 55 C.E.), treats an instance of lycanthropic change differently from either Virgil or Ovid. His narrator, Niceros, recounts how, when a servant, he one night took a walk with the host of an eating house to a graveyard, where the man shed his clothing, urinated in a circle around them, and transformed into a wolf which immediately bounded off to savage sheep in the countryside. Niceros can scarcely believe his own eyes, until he is informed by the owners of one sheep fold that a servant ran the marauding wolf through the neck with a pitch-fork: the next day he sees that his host bears a wound on his neck at the exact spot the pitch-fork would have injured. Many writers after Petronius contrived ingenious examples of humans bearing the stigma of injuries sustained in werewolf form as proof of their inescapable moral responsibility for their crimes.

For the most part the werewolf of classical literature is not an innately evil being. Even for Lycaon, bestial transformation is a punishment for sins he commits as a human. In the literature of the Middle Ages, werewolves are less sinister than they are sympathetic. Two of the better werewolf narratives from

this period, the late-fourteenth-century tale "Arthur and Gorlagon," and "The Lay of the Were Wolf," attributed to Marie de France and dated circa 1150, tell basically the same story of werewolves who are victims of circumstance. In the first, a king whose garden contains a sapling that can turn the person struck with it into a wolf, is tricked by his unfaithful wife into demonstrating its power on himself, after which she turns him out into the wild. In the other, a husband who confesses to his wife that his regular nighttime disappearances are due to feral transformations, finds one day that she has stolen his clothes, preventing him from changing back and forcing him, too, into the forests. In both stories, the wives have schemed all along to replace their husbands with new lovers. The unfortunate men are forced to live the lives of wolves, even though they retain their human consciousness and are wolves only in outward form.

Ultimately, this curse proves their salvation, for in each case they ingratiate themselves with the king, who domesticates them as guardians. Through their benevolent and intelligent actions, the wolves reveal that they are more than animals, and ultimately are able to direct their keepers to the methods that allow them to be restored to human form—whereupon their deceitful wives are either executed or exiled with their lovers. The clear moral of these stories is that the truly virtuous can overcome the bestial, be it their own lupine form or the inhumane schemes of their fellow humans. A similar story can be found in *Guillame de Palerne*, a Middle English poem that dates to 1350, and which tells of Alphonse, heir to the throne of Spain, who is bewitched by his evil stepmother and turned into a wolf. In wolf form, Alphonse performs many good and heroic deeds, including protecting the lovers William and Melior. William ultimately attains the throne of Rome, and Alphonse's good deeds allow him to return to human form.

GOTHIC AND VICTORIAN PERIOD

The idea that humans are potentially a more potent source of evil than the werewolf persists into the early Gothic era in such stories as Sutherland Menzies's "Hugues, the Wer-Wolf: A Kentish Legend of the Middle Ages" (1838). Hugues Wulfric, the descendant of a family falsely assumed to be werewolves, finds himself so ostracized by townspeople that he watches his family die of neglect and is barely able to provide for himself. Desperate, Hugues pretends to actually be a werewolf by donning a costume found in a family chest: "the complete disguise of the wer-wolf:—a dyed sheepskin with gloves in the form of paws, a tail, a mask with an elongated muzzle, and furnished with formidable rows of yellow horse teeth" (62). In this outfit, Hugues is able to extort meat from the local butcher. When the man discovers the ruse, he cuts off the "werewolf's" paw. Only then does the supernatural enter the picture for, in a twist on the idea of the werewolf's severed limb

turning back to human form, Hugues's lost limb becomes animated with un-holy life and eventually causes so much mayhem that the butcher is driven to suicide. Prejudice and superstition, not lycanthropy, are true crimes that this story warns of.

Nevertheless, it is in the Gothic period that the werewolf, like the vampire, becomes almost exclusively a figure of supernatural evil. George W. M. Rey-nolds's *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf* (1846) is a werewolf story presented as an indirect sequel to the tale of Faust. Its protagonist, Fernand Wagner, is Faust's former servant and associate, now in his nineties. One day the Devil offers Wagner eternal youth and uncanny powers if he will agree to let himself transform into a werewolf one night a month during the full moon (one of the earliest stories to tie the werewolf's transformation to the lunar cycle). Wagner accepts, and many bloody adventures follow, including his capture by the Inquisition and close escape from the headsman through sheer brute force exercised in his werewolf form. In time, Wagner comes to realize, like Faust, that his supernatural powers are more curse than benefit, especially when he is shipwrecked on an island with his lover, Nisida, and finds he must exile himself from her each night of the month that he changes to a wolf. At various points the Devil intervenes and offers to relieve Wagner of his werewolf affliction in exchange for his soul. Wagner, who knows it will mean his damnation, steadfastly refuses, and ultimately meets up with a Rosicrucian who helps him find redemption and freedom from the werewolf curse. Reynolds's novel is memorable for scenes of Wagner's transformation to and from wolf form, which are colored by a sensuality that makes it easy to understand why Wagner so easily accepts being a werewolf:

> But, lo! What awful change is taking place in the form of the doomed being? His handsome countenance elongates into one of savage and brute-like shape;— the rich garment he wears becomes a rough, shaggy, and wiry skin; —his body loses its human contours—his arms and limbs take another form; and, with a frantic howl of misery, to which the woods give horribly faithful reverberations, and with a rush like a hurling wind, the wretch starts wildly away—no longer a man, but a monstrous wolf!
>
> . . . in the midst of appalling, spasmodic convulsions,—with direful writhings on the soil, and with cries of bitter anguish,—the Wehr-Wolf gradually threw off his monster shape; and at the very moment when the first sunbeam penetrated the wood and glinted on his face, he rose a handsome—young—and perfect man once more! (23)

Black magic and the Devil also play a role in *The Wolf Leader* (1857) by Alexandre Dumas *fils*, where, once again, lycanthropic transformation is a consequence, rather than a benefit, of a satanic bargain.

The hero, Thibault, is initially a benevolent man with noble ambitions who one day finds himself unable to trap game by praying, and so instead calls upon the Devil to help him. A talking wolf appears and agrees to grant Thibault's

every wish if Thibault will help hide him from an approaching hunting party. Thereafter, Thibault begins trying to advance ambitiously and becomes increasingly corrupted as the wolf's magic disposes of his enemies and removes obstacles that would prevent his rising in society. Every time he resorts to his unusual powers, though, one of his hairs turns the color of the wolf's pelt; until eventually his hair looks more like the wolf's mane than his own. At a point midway in the story, Thibault becomes the titular wolf-leader when outrage against him necessitates that a pack of wolves accompany him at all time.

Only at the story's end does the nature of lycanthropic transformation articulated. Despairing of the misery he has brought upon himself Thibault once again invokes the devil's name and the wolf appears offering his own position to the man. Each day, Thibault will be a wolf by night and a man by day, with the same supernatural powers. "This skin that covers me is impenetrable by iron, lead or steel" (423), the wolf tells him, and thus he will be immortal except for one day, when he must retain his wolf form for a full twenty-four hours, during which time he is vulnerable to any injury. Thibault accepts and, while fleeing a pack of wolf hunting dogs, he comes upon the funeral procession of a woman he once loved and whose death he caused directly. Smitten by his guilty conscience, Thibault asks to give up his life in exchange for returning hers. Heaven grants his wish, and by the time the dogs reach him, all that is left is an empty wolfskin.

A more subtle treatment of the werewolf theme can be found in Rudyard Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (*Pioneer*, July 12 and 14, 1890), which tells of Fleete, a British colonial in India who, while drunk one night, profanes a temple to Hanumann and is cursed by a leper serving as a temple priest. Fleete's bestial reduction under the curse is gradual: he develops a ravenous appetite for meat, horses begin shying away from him, he starts wallowing in dirt, and his eyes become lit behind from a greenish light. The less superstitious assume he has developed hydrophobia when he begins foaming at the mouth and howling like a wolf, but his friends ultimately locate the leper and torture him into removing the curse. In a story concerned with a sophisticated culture's clash with primitive magic, Kipling makes it clear that Fleete's own ignorant actions while drunk are themselves savage, as are the actions of his friends who, in torturing the leper, are aware they "had disgraced themselves as Englishmen forever" (62).

It is also in the Victorian era that female werewolves begin to gain currency. In "The Werewolf," a story excerpted from Frederick Marryat's novel *The Phantom Ship* (1839), a female lycanthrope is portrayed as the ultimate betrayal of domesticity, home and hearth. Krantz, a steward to a noble family, murders his wife and her lover, and flees with his three children to the Hartz Mountains where he encounters Wilfred and his daughter Christina, two travelers to whom he offers shelter while pursuing a white wolf. Christina is beautiful but there is something about her that the children instinctively fear:

> She was dressed in a traveling dress, deeply bordered with white fur, and wore a cap of white ermine on her head. Her features were very beautiful, at least I thought so, and so my father has since declared. Her hair was flaxen, glossy and shining, and bright as a mirror; and her mouth, although somewhat large when it was opened, showed the most brilliant teeth I have ever beheld. But there was something about her eyes, bright as they were, which made us children afraid; they were so restless, so furtive; I could not at that time tell why, but I felt as if there was cruelty in her eyes; and when she beckoned us to come to her, we approached her with fear and trembling. (115)

Krantz is beguiled into marrying Christina, and not until two of the children are savaged by a marauding white wolf does Krantz realize that his bride and the wolf are one and the same. When he kills her he brings down a curse that ultimately claims the lives of all in the family.

The reversal of the traditional treatment of the werewolf in Marryat's tale—Christina is actually a wolf who transforms into a human shape—says a great deal about gender politics of the time and the perceived predatory nature of females in non-traditional roles. It is recapitulated in Clemence Housman's allegorical short novel *The Were-Wolf* (1896). Sweyn and Christian are twin brothers living as part of a community in northern lands when they are visited one night at the farm hall by a beautiful woman dressed in white furs. Her name is White Fell, and she quickly beguiles Sweyn with her beauty. Christian is wary of her, however, and comes to the realization that the victims of a spate of recent wolf-killings all were last kissed by White Fell and that Christian is next. The hardheaded Sweyn refuses to listen to his brother's warnings but Christian, whose very name suggests his appreciation of the mysterious side of life, subscribes to a bit of werewolf lore passed down by an elder in their community: "[Y]ou should watch the suspected person until midnight, when the beast's form must be resumed, and retained ever after if a human eye sees the change; or, better still, sprinkle the hands and feet with holy water, which is certain death" (298). On the next night that White Fell leaves the farm to avoid becoming trapped in human form, Christian follows her, maintaining her arduous pace in order to witness her transformation and thereby force her permanently into her wolf form. At the moment when it seems Christian will triumph, White Fell overwhelms him and, stabs him with knives. Christian, however, proves the victor, when the blood he sheds for his brother's sake kills White Fell even as he dies: "[H]e did not presume that no holy water could be more holy, more potent to destroy an evil-thing than the life-blood of a pure heart poured out for another in willing devotion" (316).

THE EARLY MODERN WEREWOLF

Until the 1900s the overwhelming majority of werewolf tales were written by British or continental writers. The first four decades of the twentieth

century saw an explosion of werewolf fiction, much of it with American settings and by American writers, and these stories are notable for their treatment of lycanthropy as a taint associated with foreigners and emigrants to countries where old European superstitions have less of a foothold and outsiders are more likely to thrive unnoticed, or at the very least undisturbed.

Margery Williams was a British writer, but her novel *The Thing in the Woods* (1913; revised and reprinted as by "Harper Williams" in 1924) is set in a small Pennsylvania Dutch town recently beset by a series of inexplicable deaths and killings. Suspicion falls on Aaron Menning, whose brother Jake died of an apparent seizure a short time before. Aaron rouses immediate feelings of aversion in visiting doctor Austin Haverill, the narrator of the story: "His face, with unpleasantly close-set eyes, was scarred by smallpox, and apart from the repugnance which this disfigurement always inspires, more or less, I think I have seldom seen a countenance which impressed me more disagreeably" (180). Haverill's instinctive dislike of the man is well placed, for it transpires that the man is actually Jake, the more degenerate of the two brothers, who killed Aaron and is actually impersonating him. Jake and Aaron are the offspring of different fathers born to a Westphalian woman who is "a curious survival of the original peasant stock": "She had preserved a great deal of her native superstition and traditions, and was reputed to have a great knowledge of herbs and some skill in home doctoring and decoctions, when she could be induced to use it, by reason of which the neighbours, ready enough in such gossip, believed her to have actual powers of witchcraft" (243).

It turns out that Jake, who was born overseas, is a throwback of sorts. His mother toured with a traveling circus and when Jake reached the age of seventeen, he began to play the sideshow wild man—a role that perfectly fit his "apish and uncouth" character. Jake seems to have played his role a little too well, according to another doctor who knows the family: "There is a form of mania which takes just that expression, and it is possible that in Jakey's case it began out of sheer maliciousness, and developed later into something a great deal worse—a fixed mania which, with the rousing of the homicidal instinct, turned him actually, at moments, into the wild beast he pretended to be" (292). Only in the novel's finale, when Jake is dispatched in wolf-like form, is it established that Jake is not just a deluded victim of his homicidal psychosis, but an actual werewolf who inherited the condition from his father:

> Menning's mother came from Westphalia, one of the parts of Europe where the belief in lycanthropy is most widely spread and where its existence is still credited among the peasants of to-day. Lycanthropy was believed to be a hereditary taint, as transmissible as insanity, which may lie dormant through one or more generations, so much so that at one time the relatives of an accused man or woman were all held suspect. (291)

Greye La Spina's novel *Invaders of the Dark* (1960) first appeared in serial form in the American pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in 1925. It is the account of a trio of Russian werewolves who move into a part of Brooklyn, New York. Princess Irma Andreyevna Tchernova, her two retainers, and a pack of wolf-hounds move in and almost immediately set about preying on the locals. Even in human form, the Princess shows features drawn straight from folklore that suggest her bestial nature: "the beryl-green eyes that in dusk gleamed like garnets; the sharp white teeth; the small, low-set ears, pointed above ... the over-red lips; the narrowed lids under eyebrows that curved down to meet the base of the nose ... slender fingers on which the third finger was abnormally long," and a "slinking, sinuous walk ... that by its resemblance to the tireless gait of the wolf, would have betrayed her real personality to an expert" (89).

To these traditional folkloric elements La Spina adds several new and modern wrinkles. Werewolves are the disciples of evil entities inhabiting the ether who are endowed with the power to grant supplicants the power of transformation. "These infatuated people who believe in the Evil are actually metamorphosed—either at their own desire for some personal reason, or by someone evilly disposed toward them—into the form of a wolf, so that at night time they are impelled to go about mauling, killing and eating small animals, such as rabbits and sheep, until they come to the point where they prey upon human beings" (90). This transformation occurs at the atomic level for, as La Spina writes, in an unusual fusion of clinical scientific and conventional Christian belief, "everything in is composed of infinitesimal intelligences which I believe they call electrons" (92), which have free will, and can exercise it in a choice for evil much the same way the individual consciousness can. The Princess herself, seeking a mate, effects this transformation in an ordinary male character in the story with occult rituals, exposure to orchids associated with lycanthropic transformation, and imbibement of water "from some lycan-thropus stream" (109).

Ultimately, the narrator of this novel presents the threat the Princess poses in terms of an alien invasion of America:

> The world ought to know that these forces of the dark are organizing for the advancement of their own individual and collective purposes, just as the forces of light are cooperating for the advancement of humanity; that invasions from the dark will periodically be made, slyly, subtly, whenever opportunity offers; that embodied and disembodied evil is marching upon the New World, intent on conquest.
>
> And most terrible of all, the New World is ignorant of these potent influences on mind and body, attributing the ancient wisdom of the Old World along occult lines to the superstitious beliefs of ignorant peasants. (10)

Invaders of the Dark is similar to Gerald Biss's *The Door of the Unreal* (1919) not only in plot, but in its racially conscious treatment of the werewolf

as a foreign invader from an alien culture. Its villain, Lycurgus Wolff, is a botanist who hails from Berlin and Vienna, and who has set up residence on a British estate with a mostly sinister entourage of fellow countryman. Biss gives Wolff many of the typical stigmata of the werewolf, and makes it clear that the foreignness of his appearance clashes with what one might expect to find in the otherwise ordinary surroundings:

> He was a very striking man of sixty with shaggy grey hair and beard, a pair of remarkably piercing black eyes under long, straight, slanting brows, which met in a point over his nose, and distinctly pointed ears set low and far back on his head, half-hidden by his long hair. His mouth under his straggling, unkempt moustache was full and red-lipped, and he had a very fine set of even, white teeth, especially considering his age. His hands were long and pointed, projecting curiously far at the third finger, and noticeably hairy with red, almond-shaped, curving nails. He was tall and rather lean, with a sight stoop, and walked with a peculiar long, swinging stride—altogether a strange and rather bizarre personality in the surroundings of sleepy Sussex, especially as in winter he always wore a Russian cap of grey fur and a heavy grey fur coat. (37)

Biss further emphasizes Wolff's foreignness by contrasting his appearance to that of his daughter Dorothy, a beautiful innocent who "was unlike the Professor as anyone could well be, and without the least trace of the Teutonic type" (38). Dorothy, as it turns out, is not Wolff's true daughter, but a ward who is the object of his experiments to bring about lycanthropic transformation through the occult properties of certain strange plants, which themselves represent an unnatural infiltration or infection of the setting. Wolff says of them that that they "are rare and unobtainable in this highly civilized country" (81), and the narrator, Lincoln Osgood, characterizes a particularly noxious bloom that Wolff makes Dorothy wear as "a flower the like of which I would dare have bet had never been seen in England before" (124).

Biss's and La Spina's novels were followed into print shortly after by Alfred H. Bill's *The Wolf in the Garden* (1931). Set in New York State in the years immediately following the American and French Revolutions, the novel is a crude and largely conventional werewolf thriller, notable for its use of racial identity and sexual menace. Its werewolf is an expatriate French nobleman who sums up the worst of his type, and the threat he poses is infection of the novel's heroine with his werewolf taint.

Robert Farrier is a clerk serving his uncle in the town of New Dortrecht when Monsieur de Saint Loup (an obvious reference to "wolf" that is just one of the novel's blatant signals) arrives seeking a home. He is an aristocrat who fled the terror in France, and who plans to take up residence in the States until it is safe for him to return to his home country. Arrogant, aloof, and somewhat dissipated, Saint Loup is off-putting to many of those whom he meets. He has a growling chuckle, and children and animals instinctively recoil from

him. Shortly after his arrival a wolf begins causing mayhem around the town, including the slaughter of the miser whose house Saint Loup covets and then moves into once the obstacle of ownership has been removed.

There follows a mildly complicated plot in which Robert is informed that the miser had made him the sole beneficiary of his estate and money but that the will cannot be found. Robert is desperate to find the will, as the family business is in arrears and his uncle is compelled to let Saint Loup marry Felicity, a cousin whom Robert himself is in love with, in order to link himself to Saint Loup's fortune. Robert, the jealous suitor, aptly fears that Saint Loup, who has a reputation as a lecher and ladies man, will "devour" Felicity. Saint Loup is out of town for portions of the novel, but his wolfhound De Retz (named, as Saint Loup takes great pains to clarify, for Cardinal de Retz, not Gilles De Retz, the infamous child murderer) is always there when he is not, and it is only a matter of time before the townsfolk realize that the depredations of the marauding wolf, all of which seem to benefit Saint Loup directly or indirectly, began after the Frenchman's arrival, and that Saint Loup and De Retz never appear together.

The origins of Saint Loup's lycanthropy are never explained, but Saint Loup has a degenerate streak that makes it understandable. At one point in the story, he shows Robert a preserved strip of skin that hangs in his room as a decorative ornament. The skin is that of a Circassian slave who was flayed alive by a pasha friend of the Count's as he watched. Saint Loup takes delight in the handling of the skin, and later, in the only scene suggesting his werewolf transformation, Robert sees Saint Loup naked, having emerged from his lupine form, wearing the strip of flesh around him.

In the only part of the novel where lycanthropy is discussed, the rector Sackville, who has a more than healthy suspicion of Saint Loup's true nature, avers that "lycanthropy in our modern sense means only a form of insanity" in which "the unfortunate imagines that he is a wolf and acts accordingly" (49), but notes that in the past, when witchcraft and superstition were rampant, it was believed that selling one's soul to the devil, or the bite of another werewolf, could confer the curse. Echoing Charles Robert Maturin's Gothic novel *The Albigenses*, the rector then recalls how in olden times, it was assumed that the werewolf in human form simply wears his hairy coat on the inside of his skin. Robert is in fact bitten by De Retz but saved from transformation owing to the intervention of Felicity's Haitian nursemaid. Saint Loup is eventually dispatched with a silver bullet.

Even as the authors of these werewolf tales were deploying mostly traditional folkloric elements, other writers were attempting interesting variation of the theme in novels combining science, psychology, and mythology. Jessie Douglas Kerruish's *The Undying Monster* (1922) is one of the more elaborate werewolf tales of the early twentieth century and shows the inventive extremes to which writers were resorting in their effort to revitalize a classic horror theme.

Ten Essential Werewolf Novels

Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf by George W. M. Reynolds (1846–1847)

The Undying Monster by J. D. Kerruish (1922)

The Werewolf of Paris by Guy Endore (1933)

Grey Shapes by Jack Mann (1938)

Darker Than You Think by Jack Williamson (1940; 1948)

The White Wolf by Franklin Gregory (1941)

The Wolfen by Whitley Streiber (1978)

The Nightwalker by Thomas Tessier (1979)

Thor by Wayne Smith (1992)

Walking Wolf by Nancy Collins (1995)

The monster in question is a curse of the Hammand family, who for centuries have been visited by a monster no one lives to describe: the victims are the eldest born, who either die as a result of the confrontation or kill themselves shortly afterward. There are many theories as to the monster's origin, not the least that the first in the family line made a pact with the devil to keep the Hammands at Dannow forever. This elder is rumored to live still in a secret room in the estate house, emerging every so often to drink blood of a family member. Another theory has it that the creature is half-human half-animal. The legend of the Undying Monster has given rise to a cryptic couplet: "While the monster is alive, Hammand's race shall live and thrive." It has also inspired an effigy of a strange-looking animal with rounded paws under the feet of one Hammand ancestor: "The beast's head was vaguely doglike, with long nose and prick ears, the body slim in the waist, and the tail snaky and ending in what might have been either a tuft of hair or the conventional barb that ends the conventional devil's tail" (60). The monster appears only on frosty nights, on Thunderbarrow Shaw, a rise surrounded by pines and fir trees.

The recent resurgence of the monster's activity, after it lay dormant for centuries, is blamed on a family ancestor, known as the Warlock who, in the sixteenth century, excavated portions of the Shaw and removed artifacts found there, including parts of a Viking longboat and a sword, which he believed to be imbued with occult powers that he might harness. The sword is traceable back to the eighth century, and it is presumed that its removal from the Shaw removed a protective seal that had kept the monster in place for centuries.

Such is the belief that the modern-day heroes and heroines of the story act in, trying to apprehend the monster's meaning through historical and archeological investigation, and even hypnosis of Oliver Hammand, the current family scion, in order to stir up racial memories of the monster that family members have carried silently in their brain for centuries. In fact, something

altogether different is stirred up by psychic Luna Bartendale, the occult investigator consulted for the case. It is discovered that the Hammands are descendants of Sigmund of the Volsung line, an eighth-century Viking whose family was persecuted until only he and his sister sere left, and she died while Sigmund was forced to survive by fighting a wolf in hand-to-hand combat. Maddened by grief and the apparent abandonment by his gods, Volsung took on a curse. "He made a solemn vow that in the Final Warring, the Norse Day of Judgment, when all heroes shall come to life and ride behind the Asa Gods to the Final War with the Powers of Evil, instead of having him—Sigmund the human hero—to help them, they should find him opposing them; *as a wolf* on the side of the Evil Powers" (224).

Sigmund made this vow "in a wood of firs and pines, on a frosty starlit night," and was so smitten by his alliance with the wolf that he was subject to a bout of wolf mania in which he believed he actually had become a wolf. So firmly did he believe this that it became impressed upon his brain as a type of racial memory blending nature and nurture: "the impression on Sigmund's brain was so acute that it passed on to his descendants, and to this time at uncertain intervals a man has been born in his line liable to turn, mentally, into a wolf in this combination of circumstances:—a wood with pines and firs in it, a cold starlit night, and only one human companion" (225). Even when the curse was long forgotten, the memory of it lurked in the subconscious recesses of the Hammand brain. Each generation of the Hammands has so expected the curse of the wolf that befell Sigmund that any prompt of the night Sigmund made his blasphemy stimulates the racial memory of the family and revives the strain of wolf-mania that is the Undying Monster. Hence, the monster is not a product of the fourth dimension, which is the dimension inhabited by the supernatural. As Luna Bartendale explains, "The Monster did not enter into you Mr. Hammand, simply because the monster has never had any existence. It is purely a creation of the Fifth Dimension, and the Fifth Dimension is—the human mind" (208–9). In a unique exorcism, Luna succeeds in hypnotizing Oliver, and taking him back along the path of racial memory to become one with Sigmund, whereupon she convinces Sigmund that Ragnarok has come and it is time for him to become wolf for the final time and ride with the powers.

Two other novels echo Kerruish's tale and further develop ideas she introduces. Jack Mann's *Grey Shapes* (1933) is the second in his series of novels featuring detective Gregory George Gordon Green (known as "Gees"). Gees is summoned by Tyrrell, a squire in Cumberland, to investigate the regular marauding of Tyrrell's sheep by a pack of dogs or wolves when none are known to live any closer than twenty miles away. The killing of the sheep has coincided with the letting of Locksborough Castle by Diarmid McCoul and his daughter Gida. It does not take long for Gees to realize from poking around in local history and folklore that Locksborough's pedigree can be traced back to Norse times, and that it was populated 2000 to 3000 years before by an older

race: "Flint men, one may call them. . . . A people who believed in fierce gods, made human sacrifices to them, and were fierce themselves. Evil, from our point of view. They are the race that our people here call 'the old dead' " (103). The history of this race dovetails with Daione Shih, or Shee—the faery folk, and the legends Etain, a fairy princess who dallied briefly in the mortal world, leaving a daughter, half human, half fairy. She is the origin of a race that survives into the present day, of whom Diarmid and Gida are descendants, as well survivors of a family from centuries before who disappeared mysteriously. The two have returned to the modern age as werewolves (shapeshifting being one of the powers of the Shee) and it is they who periodically savage Tyrell's flock. Their home serves as a locus that amplifies the evil necessary for them to transform lycanthropically. As one character observes:

> "Don't you see that—there you have a place stained and soaked in evil. . . . A place, humanly speaking, abhorrent, haunted by evil, if not by visible ghosts, and a place from which all the people of the district shy away. What more probable than that the more evil of the Shee, the dregs of the sub-human race, say, should use it, haunt it, come there to consort with their familiars." (278)

In Franklin Gregory's *The White Wolf* (1941), as in Kerruish's novel, lycanthropy is a family curse. Eight hundred years before an ancestor of Pierre de Camp D'Avenes committed blasphemy. After his death, "he was not seen as a man. He was seen as a wolf, a huge white wolf, burdened with chains. And on still, dark nights, they said you could hear his bay from the forest as if he were in pain." An occultist awakens the impulse to lycanthropy in Pierre's daughter Sara, who secretly indulges her wolfish appetites in and around suburban Philadelphia. Her lycanthropy is described in terms of a contagion, which also infects a lover through her. Ultimately, the werewolf transformations are attributed to an expression of the fourth dimension, or dimension of the supernatural.

The werewolf tale hit its height of creativity just on the eve of the release of the film *The Wolf Man* in Jack Williamson's novel, *Darker Than You Think* (1948), the original, shorter version of which appeared in 1940 in the pulp magazine *Unknown*. *Unknown* specialized in fiction that surveyed the everyday events in the modern world and saw behind them machinations of the fantastic and supernatural. The result was stories that were patently fantastic yet that grew from the sort of logic one associates with science fiction. In this novel, Williamson proposed a lycanthropic race that coexists with mortal humanity and that has been manipulating the course of human events since prehistoric times.

Events in the novel build around the return to the United States of an expedition to the Gobi Desert led by anthropologist Professor Mondrick. Mondrick went to the desert hoping to find the remains of the Garden of Eden

and the origins of the human race. What he found, instead, were the remains of an advanced race, *Homo lycanthropus*, who evolved independent but parallel to *Homo sapiens*. More sophisticated, they developed powers of telepathy, clairvoyance, and prophecy that allowed them to dominate and subjugate the weaker race of *Homo sapiens*:

> "For hundreds or thousands of years, all through the main intergalacial period…those witch people were the hunters and the enemies and the cruel masters of mankind. They were cunning priests and evil gods. They were the merciless originals of every ogre and demon and mean-eating dragon of every folk tale." (260)

As mental giants who could literally exert mind over matter, they also possessed the power to shift shape. The horror of what they represented impressed itself upon humanity's racial consciousness in the form of superstitions regarding witches, werewolves, and supernatural being that have come down through history in the form of superstitions and legends:

> "Almost every primitive people is still obsessed with the fear of the loup-garou, in one guise or another—of a human-seeming being who can take the shape of the most ferocious animal of the locality to prey upon men. Those witch people, in Dr. Mondrick's opinion, learned to leave their bodies hibernating in their caves while they went out across ice-fields—as wolves or bears or tigers—to hunt human game." (259)

Ultimately, humanity rose up and overthrew *Homo lycanthropus* although they failed to eliminate them entirely. For more than 100,000 years, *Homo lycanthropus* has lived unobtrusively among human beings. Those whose powers were uncovered were stigmatized as witches, sorcerers, werewolves, and other supernatural beings persecuted down through the ages. The beings have bred with the human race, refining their skills and increasing their numbers, until they have reached the point in evolution where their re-emergence is inevitable. That time is now.

The novel's hero, Will Barbee, is a journalist who was once a student of Mondrick's until he was exiled from Mondrick's group for reasons he has never completely understood. Shortly after Mondrick's team returns, members of the expedition are killed savagely, one by one, through a series of animal attacks, before Barbee can interview them about their findings in the desert. Barbee is afflicted with dreams in which, under the instruction of April Bell, an alluring woman he met at the airport where Mondrick's plane landed, he transforms into a variety of animals—wolf, tiger, snake, even prehistoric creatures—and strikes at the expedition members. He consults a psychoanalyst, who dismisses the dreams as delusions brought on by guilt and other

subconscious emotions. In fact, psychoanalysis itself is revealed to be a tool of *Homo lycanthropus*, created to deflect humanity from an understanding of the true meaning of psychological impulses rooted in *Homo sapiens*' instinctive fear of *Homo lycanthropus*. It is just one of many scientific rationales Williamson offers to explain *Homo lycanthropus* and their powers, including the properties that silver and sunlight have to neutralize the werewolf because they interfere with mind-matter vibrations crucial to shapeshifting.

The meaning behind all of this eventually become manifest to Barbee, who also realizes that his dream transformations are accompanied by an exhilarating sense of liberation he has never known before: "Those painful bonds, that he had worn a whole lifetime, were abruptly snapped" (101), he acknowledges while changing into a wolf. And when he transforms into a snake, "In this glorious awakening from the long nightmare of life, all his values were changed" (208). He is, he discovers, the prophesied Dark Child, who will lead *Homo lycanthropus* to ascendancy once more.

THE MANY VARIETIES OF MODERN WEREWOLF FICTION

Hundreds of werewolf stories have been written since the 1940s and as might be expected for a genre staple the majority feature the canonical werewolf immortalized in *The Wolf Man* and the legends and fiction that inspired the film. Even so, writers have worked numerous variations into their plots, if not into the actual thematic foundations of their stories, such that the werewolf tale now assumes a multitude of shapes, forms, and guises. The werewolf has taken the role of hero in Anthony Boucher's "The Compleat Werewolf" (1942), Seabury Quinn's "Bon Voyage, Michele" (1947), and Richard Jaccoma's *The Werewolf's Tale* (1988) and *The Werewolf's Revenge* (1991). The werewolf story has been crossbred with the tale of crime and detection in Les Whitten's *Moon of the Wolf* (1968), George R. R. Martin's "The Skin Trade" (1988), Geoffrey Caine's *Wake of the Werewolf* (1991), and Crosland Brown's *Tombley's Walk* (1991). Werewolves are sympathetic and misunderstood beings in Bruce Elliott's "Wolves Don't Cry" (1954) and objects of romance in Manly Banister's "Eena" (1947), Jane Toombs's *Under the Shadows* (1992), and Cheri Scotch's *The Werewolf's Touch* (1992) and *The Werewolf's Kiss* (1993). There is even a subcategory of werewolf lifestyle fiction, which includes Scott Bradfield's "Dream of the Wolf" (1984), Whitley Strieber's *The Wild* (1991), Michael Cadnum's *St. Peter's Wolf* (1993), and other tales that juxtapose the natural and full-blooded life characters live in wolf form to the stunted and stressful lives they lead during their human hours.

While these approaches and treatments have broadened and expanded the body of werewolf fiction, some perspectives on the theme have yielded particularly significant work that has accelerated the evolution of the werewolf as an iconic figure of horror.

Wolfe Wolf was no longer primarily a scholar. He was a werewolf now, a white-magic werewolf, a werewolf-for-fun; and fun he was going to have. He lit his pipe, stared at the blank paper on his desk, and tried desperately to draft a letter to Gloria. It should hint at just enough to fascinate her and hold her interest until he could go south when the term ended and reveal to her the whole wonderful new truth. . . . He could see Gloria now and claim her in all his wolfish vigor.

—Anthony Boucher, ''The Compleat Werewolf''

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WEREWOLF

Psychological interpretations of the werewolf theme in fiction have complemented supernatural treatments for over two centuries. It is easy to understand why. The werewolf is unique among monsters insofar as it is both human and inhuman at the same time. Consequently, some writers choose to view the werewolf's predatory activities as extensions or exaggerations of ordinary human behavior. Just as the separation between the human and wolf aspects of the werewolf is often ambiguous, so in many werewolf tales are the distinctions between supernatural and psychological motivations for lycanthropic behavior. The werewolf's divided nature has been used in horror fiction as a symbol for a variety of psychological conditions, ranging from the sociopathic serial killer to the victim of psychotic delusion, split personality, or multiple-personality disorder.

Some authors have presented lycanthropy as largely a phenomena of mind over matter. Charles Robert Maturin, in his novel *The Albigenses* (1824), presents a character who acts in a wolf-like manner, although there is no outward physical transformation: he claims that his fangs and fur grow on the inside. In "A Pastoral Horror" (1890), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle presents a troubled clergyman prone to fits of madness in which he kills with the savagery of a wild animal.

The best-known psychological werewolf story features no traditional werewolf at all. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is the classic tale of a personality split into human and bestial halves. Its protagonist, Henry Jekyll, is a scientist who recognizes the dual nature of the ordinary human being and concocts a formula for separating them out:

I not only recognized my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but, managed to compound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy, and a second form and countenance substituted, none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul. (77)

At the time he undertakes the experiment Jekyll fails to appreciate that the "lower elements" of his soul, incarnated in the form of his dark alter ego, Edward Hyde, will express themselves so powerfully that Hyde will completely overwhelm the benevolent side of Jekyll's personality, and begin manifesting spontaneously, without the need for the drug infusions that first bring him out. The crimes the liberated Hyde commits are memorable for their brutality. And though Hyde appears in a semblance of human form, his coarseness has a bestial quality that can be understood in terms of lycanthropic transformation:

> The hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white, and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough in the yellow light of a London mid-morning, lying half shut on the bed clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde.

There is no traditional werewolf to speak of either in Fritz Leiber's "The Hound" (1942). Rather, Leiber conjures a predatory entity that is an expression of humanity's collective subconscious. The protagonist of the story is a young man living in a modern city who periodically sees a scavenging dog or wolf-like being in his peripheral vision and sometimes hears distant baying. Increasingly anxious, he begins to sense that he is being stalked or driven by something he cannot explain. A casual conversation with a friend about the translation of basic human superstition from the medieval age to the modern urban frontier finally brings it all into focus for him:

> "[W]hat's happening inside each one of us? I'll tell you. All sorts of inhibited emotions are accumulating. Fear is accumulating. Horror is accumulating. A new kind of awe of the mysteries of the universe is accumulating. A psychological environment is forming, along with the physical one. . . . Our culture becomes ripe for infection. From somewhere. It's just like a bacteriologist's culture . . . when it gets to the right temperature and consistency for supporting a colony of germs. Similarly, our culture suddenly spawns a horde of demons. And, like germs, they have a peculiar affinity for our culture." . . .
>
>   "How would you know the infection had taken place . . . Why, they'd haunt us, terrorize us, try to rule us. Our fears would be their fodder. A parasite-host relationship. Supernatural symbiosis. Some of us—the sensitive ones—would notice us sooner than others. Some of us might see them without knowing what they were. Others might know about them without seeing them." (160)

In effect, Leiber suggests that the modern werewolf would be a psychological manifestation with all the force of an occult monster, a creature spawned and nourished by the neuroses and anxieties of modern life:

> "I think there'd be werewolves among our demons, but they wouldn't be much like the old ones. No nice clean fur, white teeth and shining eyes. Oh no. Instead

you'd get some nasty hound that wouldn't surprise you if you saw it nosing at a garbage pail or crawling out from under a truck. Frighten and terrorize you, yes. But surprise, no. It would fit into the environment. Look as if it belonged in a city and smell the same. Because of the twisted emotions that would be its food, your emotions and mine. A matter of diet." (160)

Joseph Payne Brennan takes Leiber's idea that the werewolf is largely a projection of our own psyches down another avenue in "Diary of a Werewolf" (1960). The protagonist of this story is a former city resident who moves to rural Hemlock House to recover from a variety of dissipations, including heroin addiction. Over the months of April to July in 1958, he records in brief diary excerpts his developing desire to drop to all fours and hunt like a wolf. He reports killing small game at first before moving on to humans: an old woman, a derelict, and finally a young girl. Making the most of his first-person narrative, Brennan presents the story almost exclusively from the narrator's point of view, making it virtually impossible to establish whether he actually transforms into a werewolf, or is merely projecting his psychoses. There is no doubt, however, in the mind of the narrator, who goes so far as to suggest that historical legends of the supernatural werewolf are merely embellished accounts of killers like him who have existed throughout the ages:

> I am convinced that werewolves like myself have existed for centuries. Harassed peasants may have invented some of the trappings in the first place, but I can clearly see now that there is a solid basis of fact for the many legends that have come down through the ages. There must have been many like me! External trappings invented for effect are as nothing compared to the hidden horrors which exist unseen in the convolutions of our brains—brains subjected to who knows what monstrous pressures, derangements, diseases, hereditary taints. (10)

In the last forty years the werewolf tale has become the template for many horror stories featuring serial killers. A number have followed Brennan's lead, narrating the story from the viewpoint of a killer whose judgment is not to be trusted during (or even outside) his rampages. David Case's "The Cell" (1969) is related in the form of a diary written by a man who monthly turns into a werewolf—or so he tells the reader. At the approach of the full moon, he allows his wife to lock him into a specially constructed cell in their basement. He blames his condition on a peculiar hereditary taint, and repeatedly reassures his readers of his sanity. Even though he himself is aware of that, he has no physical proof to offer:

> I am completely sane.
>   It occurs to me that I have not stated that, and it is necessary. If anyone ever reads this they must understand that I am not crazy. It is not a disease of the mind, it is a disease of the body. It is purely physical. It must be, to cause the physical change that it does. I haven't yet written about the change. That will be

> hard, although I can see it objectively. I can see my hands and body, and feel my face. I cannot see my face, of course, because there is no mirror. I don't know if I could bear it if I had a memory of what my face must become. And I don't know if I can describe it honestly, or honestly describe it. (14)

The narrator never refers to himself as a werewolf, and as his narrative unfolds it seems increasingly clear that he is deluded about his condition. Since childhood he has been unable to control or explain violent outbursts. He is romantically remote toward his wife (which he justifies on the basis of not wanting to produce offspring who would inherit his condition), and expresses aversions that suggest he is sexually inhibited. Stridently self-righteous, and lacking the self-consciousness to connect himself to vicious unsolved murders that he reads took place at sites he visited, he is a textbook psychopath who looks to blame society for his crimes:

> The middle classes have such a ridiculous idea that man-made laws have some higher right than the man who is behind them. I cannot understand how people can be so dense, so easily led. How can they regard the rules of society as the rules of God? They make no distinction between descriptive laws and laws that are relative to the situation; between eternal laws of nature and God and morality and the fluctuating and often wrong laws that men create to hinder themselves and others. It truly bothers me that this is so, that prejudice has made it so. Just think how it applies to myself . . . I would be scorned and hated and punished if anyone knew of my affliction. The authorities would most likely pass a law to make it illegal to have this disease. But what good would that do? Diseases are not governed by the laws of governments, and I would be thought a criminal although powerless to help myself. That is why no one must ever know about it. The old, almost forgotten prejudices and fears and superstitions would join forces with the new powers of the authorities and destroy me. It is a terrible thing. One sees it everywhere, and can do nothing to combat it. I feel very bitter about it. If I had lived three hundred years ago I would have at least been feared and acknowledged by anyone who knew. Now I would simply be legislated against. It is a good thing that I am a well-balanced man, as there is no telling what such stupidity would drive me to. (45)

In his novel *The Nightwalker* (1979), Thomas Tessier seeks a middle ground between the psychological and supernatural. The protagonist, Bobby Ives, is an American expatriate who finds himself suddenly afflicted with inexplicable headaches, strange body sensations, and violent tendencies. He tells his girl-friend that he has also had dreams of a life in the historical past where he lived as British colonialist on the island of Guadalupe and witnessed a voodoo ceremony, after which he was bitten on the way home by a feral man. He died of his injuries, but quickly came back to life as a werewolf and was eventually killed by the islanders. Ives also served as a soldier in Vietnam, and had an experience there where he was clinically dead, but successfully resuscitated.

His symptoms of illness have been manifesting ever since, and getting increasingly stronger.

By the time he consults a psychic Ives has murdered his girlfriend and taken the lives of several other people. The psychic informs him that she sees the mark of the wolf on him (including a ring finger as long as his middle finger). But her explanation for his condition is far from the traditional explanation for a werewolf:

> "You see, you aren't possessed, in the strict sense, by an outside spirit or demons. Only by yourself. Some of the powers that are part of lycanthropy, the physical transformations for instance, are supernatural. But think of the word 'supernatural'. It doesn't necessarily mean an omnipotent, external force of either good or evil." (140)

According to the psychic Ives may have an innate proclivity for his behavior that comes out only under the proper set of circumstances. His, and all forms of lycanthropy, may or may not have an occult basis:

> "[L]ycanthropy may need something to trigger it off within a person. We know so little. In the old stories lycanthropy came about through a pact between an individual and the devil, and I'm sure that's what many people believed, absolutely. Because it is such a terrible thing, to become a wolf-man-creature. But if you take the devil away, why couldn't the seed still be there in some people, perhaps everyone? Manifesting itself, growing, taking control *only after* something or some set of conditions triggers it? (145)

Although enough happens to suggest that Ives is the victim of a supernatural curse that replicates itself through serial incarnations, there is never enough objective proof to establish that he is a true werewolf. The few scenes of physical transformation are presented through his eyes and it is never resolved whether Ives's dreams of past lives have a basis in reality or are simply the delusions of a psychotic mind.

The psychological and the supernatural also work in tandem in Stephen King's *Cycle of the Werewolf* (1985), which relates a series of werewolf-like killings that terrorize the town of Tarker's Falls, Maine for twelve months of one year. The murders are eventually revealed to be the handiwork the Reverend Lester Lowe, a Baptist minister whose bestial side is just an expression of what he refers to in his sermons as "The Beast," or the natural human capacity for evil. Although Lowe assumes the classic werewolf form, there is no explanation for how or why he transforms. In a final twist, King suggests, if only through thoughts that may be a madman's self-delusion, that Lowe's lycanthropy may serve some divine purpose:

> "I do good here, and if I sometimes do evil, why, men have done evil before me; evil also serves the will of God, or so the book of Job teaches us; if I have been

cursed from Outside, then God will bring me down in his time. All things serve the will of God . . ." (111)

THE SCIENCE-FICTIONAL WEREWOLF

Science fiction treatments of the werewolf theme are at the opposite extreme of psychological interpretations. Where the one attempts (for the more part) to rationalize lycanthropy in terms of aberrant psychology and dismiss it as a supernatural phenomena, the other attempts to explain how the seemingly supernatural elements of lycanthropy can be explained within the realm of known science.

One of science fiction's earliest explorations of the werewolf, Jack Williamson's *Darker Than You Think*, proposes that werewolves are members of the species *Homo lycanthropus*, a race superior to *Homo sapiens* owing to their ability to psychically manipulate probability in order to shift shape. "The stability of atoms was a matter of probability," concludes the main character, who understands the significance of being able to manipulate matter at the atomic level through powers of the mind. "The direct mental control of probability would surely open terrifying avenues of power." Indeed, it explains extraordinary powers of shapeshifting, invisibility, and even telepathy that hitherto would have been attributed to the supernatural:

> "No common matter is any real barrier to us, in this free state . . . Doors and walls still seem real enough, I know—but wood is mostly oxygen and carbon, and our mind-webs can grasp the vibrating atoms and slip through them, nearly as easily as through the air. Many other substances we can possess for our vehicles, with a little more effort and difficult." (113)

In James Blish's "There Shall Be No Darkness" (1950), virtually everything about the traditional werewolf is demystified when explained in terms of standard biology. The ability of the werewolf to shift shape, for example, is attributed to hormonal rather than occult factors. Hyperpinealism, "the little-known aberration of a little-known ductless gland," contributes to "a plastic, malleable body, within limits. A wolf is the easiest form because the skeletons are so similar. Not much pinearin can do to bone, you see. An ape would be easier still, but lycanthropes don't assume shapes outside their own ecology . . . As the pinearin blood level increases the cellular surface tension is lowered so much that the cells literally begin to boil away" (110–11).

The werewolf's reaction to wolfsbane and garlic can be explained in terms of anaphylaxis: "The herbs, for example, are antispasmodics—they act, rather, as ephedrine does in hay fever, to reduce the violence of the seizure" (110). Aversion to religious symbols, on the other hand, is due purely to ingrained superstition. "As for the religious trappings, their effects are perhaps solely

psychological"—meaning that its quite that an artifact like the crucifix would have no effect against a religiously skeptical werewolf. The werewolf's bite infecting another with lycanthropy can be explained in terms of disease vectors: "The pinearin in the wolf's saliva evidently gets into the bloodstream, stimulates the victims pineal gland" (125).

The werewolf in Poul Anderson's "Operation Afreet" (1956) is also a hyperpineal who is able to control his transformations with a simple tool built to aid transformation in a wartime situation: "How hard to believe that transforming had depended on a bright full moon until only ten years ago! Then Wiener showed that the process was a simple one of polarized light of the right wavelengths triggering the pineal gland, and the Polaroid Corporation made another million dollars from its WereWish lens." He explains that the laws of conservation of energy apply when shapeshifting, with the result that human weight translates directly into wolf weight, no matter how big a wolf it produces. Anderson's scientifically inclined werewolf is also able to describe clinically the experience of being a werewolf, which is usually lost in the oblivion suffered by most supernatural werewolves:

> A lot of writers have tried to describe how it feels to be were, and every one of them has failed, because human language doesn't have the words. My vision was no longer acute, the stars were blurred above me and the world took on a colorless flatness. But I heard with a clarity that made the night almost roar, way into the supersonic; and a universe of smells roiled in my nostrils, wet grass and teeming dirt, the hot sweet odor of a scampering field mouse, the clean tang of oil and guns, a faint harshness of smoke—Poor stupefied humanity, half-dead to such earth glories!
>
> The psychological part is hardest to convey. I was a wolf, with a wolf's nerves and glands and instincts, a wolf's sharp but limited intelligence. I had a man's memories and a man's purposes, but they were unreal, dreamlike. I must make an effort of trained will to hold them off and not go hallooing off after the nearest jackrabbit. No wonder weres had a bad name in the old days, before they themselves understood the mental changes involved and got the right habits drilled into them from babyhood. (51)

Several writers have looked beyond scientific explanation for the werewolf to regard it in the same terms as extraterrestrials and aliens. In Jack Williamson's "Wolves of Darkness" (1932), invaders from another dimension assume the form of frightening wolf-like creatures. Clark Ashton Smith, in "A Prophecy of Monsters" (1954), imagines the darkly amusing consequences of a future where a ravenous werewolf does not realize until too late that its quarry is a humanoid robot. Larry Niven's "There's a Wolf in My Time Machine" (1971) sends its luckless time traveler to an alternate future where all human are lycanthropes, descended from wolves rather than apes, while Michael Swanwick, in "A Midwinter's Tale" (1988), imagines a wolf-like race of extraterrestrials who periodically feed on humans to absorb their thoughts and

thereby strengthen a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship. In Al Sarrantonio's *Moonbane* (1991), earth is invaded by extraterrestrial werewolves who come, not surprisingly, from our moon.

There have also been numerous science fiction takes on the werewolf's ability to transform physically. In A. Bertram Chandler in "Frontier of the Dark" (1952), characters acquire the power to shift shape lycanthropically following a mishap with a spaceship atomic drive during interstellar travel. The werewolves in Clifford D. Simak's *The Werewolf Principle* (1967) are actually androids constructed to genetically mimic the life on any planet where they live (including one that is home to a wolf-like species) and transform back upon leaving it. In Michael Flynn's "Werehouse" (1990), lycanthropic shape-shifting is a new form of illicit thrill-seeking entertainment made possible through nanotechnology.

THE WEREWOLF AS SYMBOL OF RACIAL AND POLITICAL IDENTITY

In early horror fiction the werewolf was frequently presented as an alien to the culture it preyed upon as much as a supernatural anomaly. The ethnicity of title character of Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* is not clear, except that she is an outsider to the close-knit northern society she insinuates her way into. Likewise, the werewolves in Gerald Biss's *Door of the Unreal*, Greye La Spina's *Invaders from the Dark*, and Alfred H. Bill's *The Wolf in the Garden* all are foreigners who, even in human form, provoke unease through suspicious behaviors associated with their nationalities. The depiction of the werewolf as a foreign invader intent on undermining its adopted culture is a dominant strain in horror fiction that persists in contemporary horror novels including Jerry and Sharon Ahern's *Werewolves* (1990), which features a werewolf contingent of the Nazi army, and Jeffrey Sackett's *Mark of the Werewolf* (1990), in which neo-Nazi white supremacists attempt to use a werewolf to breed a fascist army for the Aryan nation.

Modern werewolf fiction features an abundance of stories in which the werewolf serves as a symbol not only for the social outsider, but for a wide variety of political and racial issues. In his novel *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933), Guy Endore deliberately juxtaposes the activities of his nineteenth-century werewolf, Bertrand Caillet, to the natural cruelty of humans down through history. Caillet's history begins with two rival households in medieval France, the Pitavals and the Pitamonts. When one of the Pitamonts is captured after having murdered two of the Pitavals, he is subject to a brutal imprisonment that reduces him to a howling beast. Centuries later, a priest descended from the Pitamonts molests a young woman, Josephine, and their union yields Bertrand. Bertrand bears some of the typical stigmata of the werewolf, including eyebrows that meet and hair on the palms of his hands. His earliest kills

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Thirteen Groundbreaking Werewolf Short Stories

''The Were-Wolf'' by Clemence Housman (1890)

''The Mark of the Beast'' by Rudyard Kipling (1890)

''The Camp of the Dog'' by Algernon Blackwood (1908)

''The Werewolf of Ponkert'' by H. Warner Munn (1925)

''The Compleat Werewolf'' by Anthony Boucher (1942)

''The Hound'' by Fritz Leiber (1942)

''The Refugee'' by Jane Rice (1943)

''There Shall Be No Darkness'' by James Blish (1950)

''The Cell'' by David Case (1969)

''The Company of Wolves'' by Angela Carter (1979)

''The Dream of the Wolf'' by Scott Bradfield (1984)

''Twilight at the Towers'' by Clive Barker (1985)

''Boobs'' by Suzy McKee Charnas (1989)

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are livestock, but eventually he progresses to human prey. Owing to his community's disbelief in superstitions, and to Bertrand's own ignorance of his condition, his atrocities are often blamed on others, who tend to be the poor and those on the margins of society incapable of defending themselves or articulating their innocence.

Once he realizes his true nature, Bertrand flees to Paris that is in a state of chaos at the height the Paris Commune uprisings. In a city facing starvation where domestic animals and vermin are being killed for food, and where executions under martial law are common, Bertrand's activities go all but unnoticed. In fact, he joins the National Guard and applies himself all the more zealously to his duties under the protection of his rank. Bertrand is "cured" temporarily by the selfless love of a woman who regularly yields her blood to him, but eventually he is apprehended and put into prison, where he commits suicide. There is no question that Bernard is a genuine werewolf—his skeleton, exhumed years later, is that of a wolf. But Endore sees the evil that Bertrand represents as just a facet of a greater evil infecting humanity. The narrator of the novel writes, "I have often wondered if several such monsters might not, by geometrical progression, infect whole nations in a few days," but the behavior Endore describes is clearly endemic to humanity, regardless of Bernard's presence:

> [C]ertainly Paris seemed to be infected, though the cause is more easily traced to the horrors of war than to werewolves. The bitter winter, with multitudes starving, with babies dying like flies, with shells bursting in all directions, was

an experience likely to weaken many characters. The city was full of hate and suspicion. A man of a too Germanic name or a too Germanic cast of countenance was likely to suffer for what was scarcely his fault. Every strange house was people with spies. Poor people who took to sewers for warmth and refuge from a wintry night might wake rudely to find themselves vehemently suspected of planting bombs to blow up the city. (145)

A superior officer later puts the evil that Bernard represents in its proper context:

"Evil exists. And evil breeds evil. The horrors and cruelties of history link hands down the ages. One deed engenders another, nay multiplies itself. One perpetrator of crime infects another. Their kind increases like flies. If nothing resists this plague, it will terminate with the world a seething mass of corruption.

"[T]he bars have been let down, the doors are opening wide and monsters of old, in new disguises, will soon throng the world. The new terror will not lurk in the forest, but go abroad in the market place; it will not attack lonely wayfarers but will seize the throats of nations. There will be such wars as the world has never seen, and inhumanities such as no one has dreamed of." (183)

   In his novel *The Wolfen* (1979), Whitley Strieber takes the werewolf out of the realm of good and evil by imagining a predatory wolf-like race that has coexisted with humanity for 10,000 years or more. This race is the foundation of werewolf tales told by primitive man. As human civilization progressed, the tales came to be regarded as myths. Not only did the skepticism and disbelief of modern times afford this race the cover of superstition to move about among mankind, as a scientist in the novel realizes, but the inevitable shortcomings of the social contract in any expanding human civilization allowed them to flourish. The wolfen have a particularly strong foothold in the cities, where they prey upon societies outcasts. As a scientist in the book realizes:

[T]he werewolves, tormented for generations by humanity's vigilance and fear, had found a way to hide from man. Their cover was now perfect. They lived among us, fed off our living flesh, but were unknown to all except those who didn't live to tell the tale. They were a race of living ghosts, unseen but very much a part of the world. They understood human society well enough to take only the abandoned, the weak, the isolated. And toward the end of the nineteenth century the human population all over the world had started to explode, poverty and filth had spread. Huge masses of people were ignored and abandoned by the societies in which they lived. And they were fodder for these werewolves, who range through the shadows devouring the beggars, the wanderers, those without name or home. (141)

   The marginalization of non-Caucasian cultures in America has given rise to a number of variations on the werewolf theme. In *Moon Dance* (1989), S. P. Somtow weaves the werewolf myth into the myth of the American frontier.

Set in 1880s in America's Dakota territory, it tells of a turf war between the Shungmanitu, who are members of the Lakota Sioux, and the retinue of Count von Bächl-Wölfing, a German immigrant who hopes to appropriate Native American land in the name of Manifest Destiny and to fulfill his own perverted take on the American Dream. Both represent werewolf races, and their struggle reprises the American immigrant experience insofar as immigrants oppressed in their own countries fled to America only to displace Native Americans from their own lands.

Nancy Collins builds on Somtow's theme in her novels *Walking Wolf* (1995) and *Wild Blood* (1994). *Walking Wolf*, a period western, features young Billy Skillet, who is the offspring of a human mother and a werewolf father. Raised by the Comanches, Billy seeks entry into the society of white men with whom he has much more in common. In *Wild Blood*, Skinner Cade has long presumed he was of Native American descent, insofar as he is persecuted for his looks by the white men in the contemporary American southwest. Both endure the prejudice the dominant culture directs towards outsiders, even though they neither are Native American. Rather Billy and Skinner are both *vargr*, the name shapeshifters call themselves (werewolf being considered a pejorative name invented by humans). Billy learns the true background for his kind:

> I learned that what I was, in truth, was a species of being known as a metamorph, a creature who could take the shape of man or beast at will. I also learned that there are many different kinds of metamorph scattered all over the globe. There were the *kitsune* of Asia, the *naga* of India, the *birskir* of the Arctic Circle, the *anube* of the Nile, the *bast* of Africa, the *silkie* and *undine* of the north and south seas... and the *vargr* of Europe.
>
> The *vargr*, my particular clan, are wolves... they were the most successful (meaning the most aggressive) breed of metamorph on Earth. Europe had proven a fertile home for their packs, and many had come into power in the world of man as popes and kings and warlords, albeit in human guies.
>
> In fact the *vargr* had proven so successful in getting what they wanted that they had grown bored with their original territory and begun traveling with their unwitting human cattle to the New World, often coming into conflict with the breeds of metamorphs and other Pretender races already established there. The *vargr*, like the Europeans they had tied themselves to, were champion exploiters and imperialists. (211)

Indeed, in *Wild Blood*, the *vargr* openly persecute the *ulfr* and the *coyotero*, other species of metamorphs whom the *vargr* deem inferior and persecute as they themselves are persecuted by humans.

Kim Newman extends the idea of the werewolf as a symbol for the fringe members of a dominant culture in "Out of the Night, When the Full Moon Is Bright..." (1994), a variation on the legend of Zorro. In this story the Mexican peasant Diego Vega becomes an avenger of the oppressed after he is transformed into a werewolf. The popular legend of Zorro as a masked outlaw who

etches his signature letter "Z" in the clothing or skin of his victims with his rapier is actually just a bastardization of the story of the true Zorro (who makes the mark with his claws). Newman's tale is set in a modern racially divided Los Angeles in which Zorro still lives and in which his services are needed more than ever. As Zorro tells the hero of the story, a black man: "At first, I understood that I killed for *my* people. I was wrong, I killed for my *kind*. Chicano, black, white, whatever. My kind is all colours. I am of the pobres, the poor, the oppressed, the neglected, the inconvenient. I am the cry of the sad, the true grito de Dolores" (492).

One of the more ingenious stories deploying the werewolf as a political metaphor is Clive Barker's "Twilight at the Towers" (1985), which explores personal identities in the context of Cold War politics. Barker populates a Berlin still divided by the Iron Curtain with werewolves whose own divided natures make them the perfect double agents in the game of espionage played between East and West. Ultimately, their loyalties and allegiances become so confusing and unpredictable that all they can embrace with any certainty is the dividedness of their own natures.

THE FEMINIST WEREWOLF

In early werewolf fiction, women were usually limited to playing the thankless roles of villain or victim. Women cast as werewolves in Frederick Marryat's "The Werewolf" or Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* were portrayed as predatory monsters who used female vulnerability and sexual allure to seduce and deceive their unwitting prey. By contrast, the women in Gerald Biss's *The Door of the Unreal* and Alfred H. Bill's *The Wolf in the Garden* are traditional imperiled innocents whose purpose is to be rescued by masculine heroes. In a small but significant number of stories from the same period, notably J. D. Kerruish's *The Undying Monster* and Greye La Spina's *Invaders from the Dark*, plucky heroines use superior intelligence and guile to fight werewolves. The culmination of this trend is Jane Rice's "The Refugee" (1943), in which a woman facing starvation in wartime France dallies with a young man whom she knows is a werewolf long enough to catch him off guard and kill him so that she can feed off his carcass.

Positive treatments of female werewolves began appearing regularly in the early twentieth century, in romances by Seabury Quinn, Arlton Eadie, and other pulp writers. However, it was not until the 1960s that writers began looking to the werewolf as a symbol of feminine identity. The title character of Peter S. Beagle's "Lila the Werewolf" (1974) is a young woman whose ly-canthropy is depicted as an expression of her liberal, exuberant personality which resists the conformity and repression that her steady lover and her family would impose upon her. In Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves" (1979), a retelling of the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf who disposes of

the young girl's grandmother is not a villain, but rather a symbol of her own sexuality whom she embraces at the story's end. In Carter's "The Werewolf" (1979), grandmother turns out to be the wolf, and once the girl has disposed of this figure of parental authority, she becomes the mistress of the family house.

The idea that lycanthropy represents a liberation rather than a curse is predominant in Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs" (1989), which parallels a young girl's transformation into a werewolf with the onset of puberty. On the day she begins menstruating, Kelsey Bornstein experiences her first change into a werewolf. Whereas Kelsey as a human feels embarrassed and disgusted about the transformations of womanhood, as a wolf, she comes to appreciate her appearance: "I was a werewolf, like in the movies they showed over Halloween weekend. But it wasn't anything like your ugly movie werewolf that's just some guy loaded up with pounds and pounds of makeup. I was *gorgeous*" (32). Not only does Kelsey's feral side give her a sense of comfort, it provides her with a feeling of empowerment that she has never known. Speaking of her domineering stepmother, she says: "I realized, all of a sudden, with this big blossom of surprise, that I didn't have to be scared of Hilda, or anybody. I was strong, my wolf-body was strong, and anyhow one clear look at me and she would drop dead" (31). This new-found confidence, which expresses itself vividly in wolf form when she attacks a pack of dogs, extends to her human life where she unapologetically kills in cold-blood the most merciless of the boys in her class who tease her for her developing body.

In the wake of the researches of Clarissa Pinkola Estes, whose sociological text *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (1991) used the wolf as a symbol of the instinctive side of femininity, several novelists have used lycanthropy to explore aspects of modern female experience. The heroine of Dennis Danvers's *Wilderness* (1991) is a young woman who has treated her werewolf identity as a guilty secret most of her life. Revealing it to her lover and her psychiatrist proves the first step in her journey to self-fulfillment and psychic wholeness. By contrast, in Pat Murphy's *Nadya* (1996), Nadya Rybak, a werewolf of European descent who emigrates to America in the nineteenth century, and Elizabeth Metcalf, the woman with whom she has an intimate romance, both accept the uniqueness of a relationship that places them beyond the norms of the proper society of their times. In *Wilding* (1992), Melanie Tem describes a matriarchal clan of werewolves who cherish the integrity and strength of their wolf pack, even though the impulse to lycanthropy in their teenage children manifests as restlessness, emotional liability, anger, and promiscuity. In *Bitten* (2002), Kelley Armstrong, takes the opposite tack, presenting her heroine, Elena Michaels, as the only female werewolf in what is essentially a werewolf fraternity:

> "The werewolf gene is passed only through the male line, father to son, so the only way for a woman to become a werewolf is to be bitten to survive, which, as I've said, is rare. Given the odds, it's not surprising I'm the only female. Bitten

on purpose, turned into a werewolf on purpose. Amazing, really, that I survived. After all, when you've got a species with three dozen males and one female, that one female is something of a prize. And werewolves do not settle their battles over a nice game of chess. Nor do they have a history of respect for women. Women serve two functions in the werewolf world: sex and dinner, or if they're feeling lazy, sex followed by dinner." (18–19)

Not only the sole female werewolf, but someone who understands her outsider status within the pack, Elena comes to understand her importance when she is enjoined to help hunt down renegade independent werewolves not that much unlike herself.

THE CINEMATIC WEREWOLF

Although no werewolf film produced since *The Wolf Man* has had a similar impact on the popular consciousness, the cinematic werewolf is an important figure whose influence is intimately bound up with that of the werewolf in horror fiction. There are hundreds of werewolf films, a significant number of which have been adapted from stories and novels, and in them one can frequently find the same ideas and concerns that have distinguished the werewolf as potent monster of horror fiction.

The film generally acknowledged as the first with a werewolf theme is *The Werewolf* (1913), a short silent film about the daughter of a Navajo witch woman who assumes the form of a wolf to attack the white men she has been raised to hate. One hundred years after her death, she even returns from the dead to seek out the reincarnation of the man who killed her lover. This relatively unconventional story, steeped in Native American lore, might suggest that the cinematic werewolf has a wilder and more unconventional history than the literary werewolf. In fact, the majority of werewolf films made in the

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Eight Essential Werewolf Films

Werewolf of London (1935)

The Wolf Man (1941)

I Was a Teenage Werewolf (1957)

Curse of the Werewolf (1961)

The Howling (1980)

The Company of Wolves (1985)

Teen Wolf (1985)

Wolf (1994)

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near-century since has been largely conventional in their telling, although several stand out for their ingenious twists and their unique telling.

The first feature-length werewolf film, Stuart Walker's *Werewolf of London* (1935), is a product of Universal Studios, who would also produce *The Wolf Man* and its numerous sequels. The film's basic story concerns scientist Wilfred Glendon who, while on an expedition to Tibet to find the rare mariphasa plant, is attacked by a wolf-like creature. Back in London, while training a moon lamp on the plant in order to stimulate its growth, Glendon is shocked to discover that his hand, when accidentally exposed to the light, grows hairy and wolf-like. He is reminded of a conversation he had with a colleague, Dr. Yogami, who showed up after his return from Tibet claiming to have met him there. According to Yogami, a man bitten by a werewolf will himself become a werewolf, a condition for which the mariphasa provides only temporary relief. Once Glendon realizes he is becoming a werewolf, he seeks the healing power of his mariphasa plant, only to discover on two successive occasions he has been pre-empted by Yogami, who is not only a werewolf himself but the very one who bit Wilfred in Tibet. Although somewhat original in its use of botany, the film introduces several ideas that would become staples of werewolf lore, including the werewolf's transformation by moonlight, and its reversion to human form at death. Notwithstanding the similarity of their titles, the special effects extravaganza *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), which tells of an American traveling in England who is transformed into a werewolf, and its sequel, *An American Werewolf in Paris* (1997), about a werewolf subculture perfecting a drug that will allow them to shape at any time, have little to do with the original.

Also introduced by *Werewolf of London* is the notion of lycanthropy as a foreign menace with a primitive or uncivilized origin. This idea was developed further in George Waggner's *The Wolf Man* (1941), which became the bible for most werewolf films that followed it. In this story, American Lawrence Talbot is visiting his family's ancestral home in Wales when he is mauled by a wolf that he manages to kill with his silver-headed cane. The wolf is actually a werewolf, from a visiting gypsy camp but Talbot, now tainted by the bite, is prone to lycanthropic transformation at the full moon, during which he loses human awareness and transforms into a ravenous wolf. This movie was the first to tie the werewolf to the pentagram, which the werewolf supposedly sees the image of in the hand of his next victim. More important, the film captured the essence of the werewolf's turmoil as a reluctant victim. Talbot experiences no joy in his transformation, which has the look of physical torture. In a scene where his family is attending mass and he finds himself curiously unable to enter the church, there is a sense of deeply conflicted emotions, and inexplicable impulses boiling inside of him. The true horror he feels is the slow and ineluctable revelation that he is the killer in the many unsolved crimes he becomes aware of. Silver is used to kill the wolf in this story, but not a silver bullet: in a deeply symbolic final scene Talbot is bludgeoned to death with the

same cane he killed the first werewolf with, only this time it is wielded by his own father.

The Wolf Man yielded four sequels from Universal: *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943), *House of Frankenstein* (1944), *House of Dracula* (1945), and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948). As the titles suggests, these films were uninspired commercial products. The most interesting werewolf film from this period, *She Wolf of London* (1946), is only nominally concerned with werewolves. In essence, it is a murder mystery in which a family curse is invoked to deceive an heiress into believing she bears a hereditary taint of lycanthropy.

The most notorious of all werewolf films after *The Wolf Man* is Gene Fowler Jr.'s *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957), one of the slough of horror and science fiction B-movies aimed at the youth culture of immediate post–World War II America. Its main character, Tony Rivers, consults Dr. Alfred Brandon, who subjects him to treatment combining hypnotherapy with scopolamine (or truth serum) for his troubled behavior. But the treatment backfires in Jekyll and Hyde fashion, liberating Tony's savage side in werewolf form. As Stephen King wrote in *Danse Macabre* (1979), the werewolf of the film, played by Michael Landon, transcends its cinematic vehicle to provide a commentary on the politics of adolescence: "Landon becomes the fascinating embodiment of everything you're *not* supposed to do if you want to be good . . . if you want to get along in school, join the National Honor Society, get your letter, and be accepted by a good college" (74).

I Was a Teenage Werewolf was not the last film to use the werewolf as a symbol of adolescent experience. *Teen Wolf* (1985) is the story of a young man who discovers he has werewolf tendencies and parlays them for social acceptance. When average, anxiety-ridden teen Scott Howard discovers he has inherited lycanthropy through his family, he exploits his powers to become a top basketball player and social celebrity. Rather than being repulsed or horrified by his transformation, Scott's peers accept his special character. As Scott discovers, though, they begin to prefer his flamboyant and more rambunctious wolf self to his human side. Ultimately, the film explores the pressures of teenage conformity and its price. *Ginger Snaps* (2000), on the other hand, is more faithfully struck from the mold of *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, in its story of two teenage sisters, members of the Goth subculture, who share an unhealthy fascination with death. On the night of her first period, Ginger is bitten by a werewolf and thereafter begins acting more and more wild and promiscuous as the full moon approaches.

The werewolf has been featured in all manner of movies ranging from the serious to the silly, and in a manner of guises that can be gleaned from the titles alone: *Werewolf on Wheels* (1971), *Werewolf of Washington* (1973), *Werewolf of Woodstock* (1975), *Curse of the Queerwolf* (1989), and so on. The most original werewolf film at the end of the twentieth century was *Wolf* (1994), set in the world of modern business. Will Randall (played by Jack

Nicholson) is senior editor at a publishing house that is being bought out by a corporate conglomerate who hopes to squeeze him out. Bitten by a wolf that he accidentally hits while driving one night on a foggy road, the hitherto acquiescent Will begins to develop aggressive tendencies that soon make him a formidable opponent against the new owners and an ambitious underling eager to climb the corporate ladder. The film is memorable for its use of the werewolf as a symbol for the dog-eat-dog business world, which it depicts as a sort of Darwinian proving ground where humans have free reign to indulge in aggressive and brutish behavior that might otherwise be criticized outside its boundaries.

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The Witch

by Bernadette Lynn Bosky

INTRODUCTION

The classic witch is easy to depict, but the icon in all its variety is difficult to define. We imagine a woman, old and baleful, perhaps with a long, warty nose and one clouded eye. She is accompanied by a familiar, a supernatural helper in the shape of an animal, especially a black cat. She meets others in a coven, usually a group of thirteen, to call upon the devil to work magic. This magic is always harmful, usually involving herbs, recited spells, or a doll that symbolizes her victim. She often ends up getting burned at the stake.

Even in the witch trials of medieval and early modern Europe, male as well as female witches were condemned, and in England and its colonies, they were not burned, but hanged or pressed to death. Both fiction and fact include witches who are young and attractive, good as well as bad witches. Their power can come from the devil or demons, from a benevolent goddess, from

their ancestors, from study of books to gain knowledge of the right words and herbs, from items with supernatural power, or from being qualitatively different, supernatural creatures themselves. From a modern perspective, the witch may be an innocent victim of superstition, a master of the powers of suggestion, or perhaps someone with abilities that should be studied by a parapsychologist. Moreover, those who fight witches—the ''witch doctors''— often become confused and identified with what they fight, in part because their powers seem similar.

The approach of this chapter is like that of the DSM, the diagnostic manual used by psychiatrists, in which anyone with a number of the key symptoms qualifies, and no patient is expected to demonstrate them all. The main criterion, in fact or fiction, is of course that the person is called a witch. However, an old, unattractive woman with supernatural powers would still qualify, even without the label; so would a young child who works destructive magic. Satanic worship is so closely associated with the term ''witch'' that it alone could lead to accusations of witchcraft, as is having a familiar.

The themes witches represent—their psychological resonance, their social implications—vary as widely as the witches do. A witch, in one short story, may evoke disgust as the abject, reviled ''other,'' while in another, she or he is the inciter of uncontrollable desire. One story of a witch may evoke our sympathy for an innocent victim of persecution, while another may chill us about how easy it is to be corrupted by power. Even the lessons of historical cases of witchcraft have changed as various eras reinterpreted them in the light of different values and beliefs. At the core, though, there still lies a figure who is like us because she or he is human (or seems to be), and also not like us because he or she is said to really have powers that most of us have fantasized about. As Stefan Dziemianowicz writes in his editorial introduction to *100 Wicked Little Witch Stories*, ''It is this dual nature that makes witches so fascinating—and so frightening'' (xiii).

ASPECTS OF THE WITCH

For most of history, in most of the world, the prevailing view of witches is that they represent some kind of threat. From Australian aboriginals ''pointing the bone'' at the person they want dead through the mysterious menace of the move *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), one of the defining characteristics of the witch is the capability of and inclination to do supernatural harm. For the study of the icon of the witch, it is irrelevant whether this harm—or any other actions of the witch—were real results (of supernatural power, of psychic ability, or of the powers of suggestion) or not. Hexing or cursing is often a charge directed by one person against another, but it also may be a power claimed by individuals themselves. In either case, it defines a major aspect of the figure of the witch.

Culturally and historically, although people may also believe in other kinds of witches, the belief in witches who cause harm to others is nearly universal. In many cultures, witches are said to have "the evil eye"—the power to harm by looking at someone, not necessarily deliberately. Roman mosaics, including one from the second century C.E., depict weapons or threatening animals drawing towards the eye, presumably a protective image. Other protections against the evil eye include inscribed amulets, cowrie shells, or a stone with a natural hole in it. Cuneiform tablets from ancient Assyria include instructions for curses; a curse "to dispose of someone who stands in the path of you and your desires" was collected by a folklorist in Essex, England, in 1971. Ancient Greek spells include one to stop the speech of a rival orator—the same effect that a male African American witch achieves for the lawyer protagonist of the movie *The Devil's Advocate* (1997), directed by Taylor Hackford and written by Jonathan Lemkin, based on the 1990 novel of the same name by Andrew Neiderman. Throughout the world, spells might be directed against individuals, their children, their domestic animals, and even their property. In medieval and early modern Europe and the English colonies in America, witches were said to curdle milk or cause cheese not to set.

Melanesia, Africa, and Asia have strong traditions of harmful magic. In Africa today, AIDS is often thought to be caused by witchcraft, and anthropologists are working with health-care professionals to help them explain prevention and treatment within that paradigm. In fact, evil witches are a vital part of African life. Curses are accepted as a factor in all aspects of life, from family relationships to politics. Individuals accused of witchcraft were burned to death by lynch mobs in South Africa as recently as 1995, and the Congolese Human Rights Observatory reported that forty people in that country were burned or buried alive as witches in 1996.

Fictional third-world malign witches have a strong and embarrassing place in colonial and post-colonial literature. The stories inspire genuine horror, but say more about European fears than about actual African magic. Edward Lucas White's "Lukundoo" (1927) concerns a curse by an African sorcerer with peculiar effects upon the British victim's body; "The Mark of the Beast" (*Pioneer*, July 12 and 14, 1890) by Rudyard Kipling, and "Pollock and the Porroh Man" (*New Budget*, May 23, 1895) by H. G. Wells, involve curses on Europeans by an Asian and an African black magician, respectively. In each case, the European has done something to deserve the curse—quite serious mockery of the statue of a god in the former story—and yet the reader's sympathy for the European victim is assumed. In "The Snake" by Dennis Wheatley, a relative latecomer (in *A Century of Horror Stories*, 1935), an African "witch doctor" kills a European to whom he owes money, by turning his staff into a living snake. More recent and authentically based fiction about African magic tends to concern protective magic, but Charles Saunders provides an interesting and well-written exception: "Ishigbi," a 1982 short story concerning twins, one evil and one good.

The ancient Celtic Druids were said to cast deadly spells, but they are primarily known for sacrificing people to give themselves magical power. A person was placed in a huge humanoid figure made of straw and wicker, and this was set alight, burning the sacrifice alive. Because of stories about this, the Druids represent wasteful evil in the later poems of William Blake (1757–1827). *The Wicker Man,* a 1973 movie for which Anthony Shaffer wrote the screenplay and then did a novelization, concerns a modern revival or continuation of this tradition in contemporary England. A police officer stumbles on the situation when he comes to an isolated island community to investigate a teenaged girl's disappearance. The movie creates sympathy for the locals, yet horror at what they do.

Of course, the height of European belief in evil witches, or at least official opposition to it, occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During that time, many people were put to death as witches—although more likely 60,000 to 100,000 instead of the 7 or even 11 million, some sources say. Another section of this chapter will examine the causes and effects of this persecution; here the subject is the image of the threatening witch that developed in those trials. Besides harming individuals, their families, and their property, these witches were seen as threats to the social order and an offense to God, because they had made a pact with the Devil to achieve their powers. Descriptions of the gatherings of such witches became more specific and more specifically anti-Christian as time went on, especially in Catholic countries, from general revels to a specific Black Mass complete with desecrated or parodic hosts (the latter made of a slice of black turnip, or a concoction of unsavory ingredients including menstrual blood). One could well say that the witch trials created Satanism, which later people actually began to practice.

Among the many weapons of the witch, two that stand out in folklore and in fiction are the book of evil spells and the doll, poppet, or manikin used to project curses on an individual. The book, sometimes called a grimoire, contained words of incantations, instructions for rituals and herbal spells, and the names of devils, demons, and spirits to summon. These books were frequently thought to have power in themselves, as well as powerful information. Perhaps the most well-known evil book is the *Necronomicon*, featured in the stories of H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937) and others. Stories about evil books include "The Book," a terrifying and often reprinted piece by Margaret Irwin (1889–1967); "The Minister's Books" (*Atlantic Monthly*, August 1942), by Stephen Vincent Benét, is less frightening but equally well crafted. Fiction also uses references to historical books of magic, such as *The Key of Solomon*, probably written in the thirteenth century. Some of the fantasy stories by Manly Wade Wellman (1903–1986) feature *Pow-wows; or, Long Lost Friend*, a book in the Pennsylvania Dutch tradition of magic written by George Hohman and published in 1820.

Most systems of magic have had some form of curse made by identifying an image with a person and then damaging it. Ovid (43 B.C.E.–17 C.E.) mentions

sticking needles into wax marked with the victim's name as a way to do harm; a plastic doll with pins stuck into it was found on a doorstep in Manchester, England, in the 1960s. Historically, the image need not be a doll, as the example from Ovid shows: a calf's or sheep's heart pierced with thorns was also common in England. However, it is the doll that predominates in fiction. "The Witch's Vengeance" (*International*, 1930), by William Seabrook (1886–1945), a world traveler who also wrote nonfiction about witchcraft, is just one example. Theodore Sturgeon's "A Way of Thinking" (*Amazing Stories*, October–November 1953) provides an interesting twist on the poppet, as do Robert Bloch's "Sweets to the Sweet" (*Weird Tales*, March 1947) and Fredric Brown's "The Geezenstacks" (1943).

One particularly horrible offense, held against witches in many cultures and some fiction, is the killing and even eating of children. Of course, this is the fear behind the fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel." A little-known work by Ulrich Molitor, from 1489, alleges that witches eat newborn children and presents a woodcut of their doing so at a table under a tree. The protagonist of "Hunger Gulag" (1995), by Martin Mundt, is a horrific witch who fights an angel in order to eat a newborn baby.

Moreover, in the United States today, many people believe in satanists who sexually abuse children, kill them, use their bodies in rituals, and sometimes even eat some of the flesh. Real satanists do exist—especially in members of groups such as the Temple of Set or the Church of Satan who do no physical harm but may cast harmful spells; rare but real murderous magical groups such as the one behind the murders in Matamoros, Mexico, in April 1989; and troubled individuals, often teens such as Sean Sellers, who combine interests in satanism and murder for personal reasons. In addition, due to uncritical publicity and the same process by which urban folklore stories spread, many people believe stories of a vast satanic conspiracy which have never actually been proven to exist. Some books, even by credible psychologists, support this view, but the lack of evidence, such as the bodies of those sacrificed, is telling.

Movies concerning malign witches are too common to more than suggest here. Sometimes, the witch has good reasons for vengeance, but terror at her destructive powers is still the driving force of the work, as in *Black Sunday* and *Witchcraft* (1964), directed by Don Sharp and written by Harry Spalding. Other works primarily concern ritual sacrifice, including *The Witches* (1966) and *The Seventh Victim* (1943), directed by Mark Robinson and written by DeWitt Bodeen and Charles O'Neal.

Fiction about the harmful witch also abounds, from fairy tales such as "Rapunzel" to novels such as *Darkfall* by Dean Koontz (1984) and *Furnace* by Muriel Gray (1997). Besides African and Asian witches, Sabbath-attending witches and Black Mass–attending Satanists, purely supernatural creatures, and spiteful women with poppets, stories may concern the American Halloween hag, such as "Yesterday's Witch" (*Witchcraft & Sorcery*, 1973) by Gahan Wilson. "The Cookie Lady" (*Fantasy Fiction*, June 1953), by Philip K. Dick,

never uses the word "witch," but no one could mistake the old lady who offers sweets but delivers menace. In fact, there is a small subgenre of stories concerning people who do not practice magic per se but have the effects of witches, including the title character of "The Warlock" by Fritz Leiber (*Saint*, February 1960), who through some unknown psychic power brings insanity to those around him. Stephen King's novel *Thinner* (1984) features a curse by an aged, ugly gypsy witch, in this case a man.

At least since the 1920s, as will be shown, the image of the good witch has gained prominence, until in some ways it may be the dominant image of the witch in the early twenty-first century. However, the harmful witch persists, not only in fiction, but also in reality—at least culturally defined reality.

One particular kind of horror the baleful witch can present is that of a hidden organization, a secret conspiracy. For instance, the classic story "Young Goodman Brown," by Nathaniel Hawthorne (*New-England Magazine*, April 1835) presents the title character's horror and disillusionment when he discovers that the most respected people in his town and his innocent-seeming wife all meet regularly at the witches' sabbat. This fear is also well conveyed in *Conjure Wife* by Fritz Leiber, and in Algernon Blackwood's 1908 story "Ancient Sorceries." Elizabeth Hand's novels concerning the Benandanti and worshippers of an ancient goddess, discussed in the next section, have much of the same impact. People love to think of secret conspiracies, an idea that is frightening and yet at least implies some order in the world, some group-shaping events instead of everything happening chaotically. In addition, these stories, like those of Hermetic magic and other traditions, imply a hidden dimension of supernatural experience, available to us for good or ill, if we only knew.

WITCHES AS HEALERS AND PROTECTORS

Though it has gained strength since the 1940s, the idea of the good witch is far from recent. As long as people have feared harm from supernatural creatures and human practitioners of magic, they have turned to supernatural or human witches for protection from magic and help in other ways. For instance, protective amulets against sorcery were made in ancient Egypt. Moreover, when medical practice declined after the fall of the Roman empire, many people relied on spells and charms to stop bleeding, cure illness, and help women conceive. However, the terms "white witch" or "good witch" are more the product of writers than of the benign practitioners and those they aid.

In England, those who provide services have generally been called "cunning men" or "cunning women"; they also have been called "conjurers" and "pellars" (apparently from "spell"). This tradition survived into the nineteenth century, when it was studied by folklorists who first used the term "white witch." Most of the people in the English countryside and even city had some

knowledge of charms or herbs, but the cunning folk were specialists who knew more, were considered to have more power, and even possessed magical books. People came to them, and paid them, to cure their own illnesses or those of their domestic animals, to recover lost or stolen property, to find treasure, to tell their fortunes, and to provide love charms. Also, if someone had been cursed by a witch, the cunning man or woman could identify the witch and remove the spell; they also offered preemptive protection against witchcraft. Lesser practitioners, sometimes called charmers, specialized in one skill, such as curing warts. James Murrell was a well-known cunning man.

Historian Carlo Ginzburg's studies *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (originally published in 1966, English translation 1983) and *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (first appearance in English 1991) take evidence from rural European witch trials and other sources to show that some medieval and early modern beliefs about witches may have come from an age-old tradition of counter-witches called the Benandanti. They reported going out to battle witches; if the witches won, the crops would be bad, and if the Benandanti won, the crops would be good. Because they were so closely associated with witches, and because they themselves gathered either in person or in shamanistic trances, they came to be tried as witches, and stories of their gathering contributed to the idea of the witches' sabbat. Ginzburg's argument is interesting, and much better documented than Margaret Murray's similar attempts to find a real lineage for many of the characteristics of medieval and early modern witchcraft, but as with her work, time and future scholarship are needed before his work can be accepted as truth. Taken as the basis for fiction, the concepts are fascinating. Elizabeth Hand has written three novels in which the Benandanti is indeed a secret organization with stupendous magical powers, and the witches they oppose are also powerful worshippers of an ancient mother goddess: *Waking the Moon* (1995), *Black Light* (1999), and *Mortal Love* (2004). In these novels, both groups think they are in the right and both are ruthless and uncompromising.

The African "witch doctor" fills a similar role to the cunning folk and Ginzburg's Benandanti, although the term is often misrepresented, especially in fiction. Sometimes the "witch doctor" is used for a harmful witch, as in the 1966 movie *The Witches* and Dennis Wheatley's "The Snake," both discussed above. Other times, including as a common image in cartoons from the 1930s through the 1970s, the term is used for a witch who is a doctor, that is, a medical practitioner who works through ritual and magic (and wears an exotic mask but little else). Actually, like cunning folk and charmers, witch doctors do cure disease, but that is because culturally many diseases are seen as the creations of sorcery. The main business of the witch doctor is to thwart evil magic. In Zaire and Sudan, they detect and stop negative magic with herbs and amulets. There are two Zulu words for such practitioners: *inyanga* is one who specializes in herbs, while *sangoma* refers to someone who uses divination. In

modern Kenya, one can buy magical help in getting pregnant or getting and keeping a lover.

This helpful figure does appear in some fiction, although it is still much less common than the evil, and stereotypical, African witch. Janet Berliner Gluckman and George Guthridge refer to the tradition in their 1995 story "Inyanga." Richard Matheson's story "From Shadowed Places" (*F&SF*, October 1960) uses "witch doctor" to refer to a Zulu native who delivered a curse, but primarily concerns a real witch doctor, a Black anthropologist who studied counter-magic among the Zulus. She emerges as a heroic figure, and the story is as much about many kinds of prejudice as it is about magic.

As universal as practitioners of counter-magic and healing-magic are, the image of the good witch received its biggest boost with the development of a view of witches now known to be false, crystallized and popularized by Dr. Margaret Murray (1863–1963), and the development of a real religion and magical system, variously known as witchcraft, paganism, neo-paganism, and Wicca. In her book *Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) and others, Murray argued that the witches persecuted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were actually adherents of a goddess-worshipping nature religion that extended back to prehistoric times. By now her work is completely refuted, but the idea had such undeniable appeal that Gerald Gardner and others actually created the religion, often claiming they worked from secretly transmitted traditions.

Wiccans use the term "witch" for both men and women; "warlock," which is usually understood to derive from the Old English *wærlog*, meaning deceiver or oath breaker, is considered an insult. Modern Wiccans and neo-pagans come in all ages, may be anywhere on the socio-economic ladder from professionals to manual laborers, and definitely inhabit the cities as well as the countryside. They tend to be pantheistic, worshipping one or more deities, usually a god and goddess, who represent nature. Some are materialists who view the energies raised during a magical ritual as psychic, or due to some other natural force we do not yet understand. Above all, Wiccans and neo-pagans are never the same as Satanists; some say that the Christian Satan is too modern an invention for them to care about. These modern witches avoid any curses or harmful magic; many believe in "the law of three," according to which any harm they do will come back to them threefold.

With the founding of Wicca, the witch gained a new—and more benevolent—presence in fiction as well. Many of the fiction writers are themselves Wiccans or neo-pagans. The novels of Diana Paxson, a priestess from San Francisco, include *Paradise Tree* (1987), the story of a witch who uses a Cabalistic brand of neo-paganism to defeat evil magic. Rosemary Edghill has written a series of novels featuring an occult detective, Karen Hightower, who goes by the name of Bast: *Speak Daggers to Her* (1994), *The Book of Moons* (1995), and *The Bowl of Night* (1996). The heroine is a Wiccan who lives in New York City, and the background of the books reflects real events and people in modern witchcraft,

with added supernatural menaces. Neo-pagan and Wiccan protagonists appear in Benjamin Adams's "Alexa, Skyclad," Lillian Csernica's "On the Wings of the Wind," and other stories in the 1995 collection *100 Wicked Little Witch Stories*. On television, Willow, the witch in "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer" (1997–2003), shows Wiccan influence, as do the witches in "Charmed" (1998–2006), the opening episode of which is titled "Something Wicca This Way Comes."

Not all good witches in fiction are Wiccans or neo-pagans, of course. Besides Old Nathan, African witch doctors, and others who work against evil magic, many witches in children's literature are helpful. Before benevolent witches were very popular, *The Good American Witch* (1957), by Peggy Bacon, featured a witch who granted children's wishes; there was always a price, which the witch tried to alleviate as much as she could. *Strega Nona*, written and illustrated by Tomie De Paola (1975), concerns a generally nice witch, although the plot of the story concerns a "sorcerer's apprentice" in which someone she has hired to do chores uses her magic pasta-producing pot but cannot make it stop. Good witches also appear in the movies, including *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*.

WITCHES AS FIGURES OF POWER

Both the hexing, sacrificing witch and the healing, protective witch come from one root: the witch is essentially a being defined by supernatural power. Some modern practitioners of witchcraft view magic as a neutral force, often compared to electricity that can power a lifesaving respirator or an electric chair. An example of this from comic books is The Scarlet Witch: her ability to change reality is actually a mutant power, and it has been used for both good and evil during her career in Marvel Comics such as *The Uncanny X-Men*.

In literature, history, and modern practice, many witches have tended to take one side or the other: the witch who curses and the cunning man or woman who removes the curse, the modern Satanist and the modern Wiccan. Often, fictional works ensure conflict by having both a good witch and a bad witch, most famously Glinda the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch of the West in L. Frank Baum's Oz books (1900–1920) and the movie *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Among all the good witches in the Harry Potter books, from Albus Dumbledore and Harry Potter himself on down, we find the evil witch, Lord Voldemort. The conflict between good and bad witches also shows up in *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*.

However, historically, the two uses of power probably coincided in the same witch's practice more than most people imagine. Apart from the idea of one magical source of energy behind all magic, which is relatively recent in human history, the same kinds of power often unavoidably can be used for good or ill. For instance, witches often have control over weather: the Druids

He looked at her, trying to comprehend it. It was almost impossible to take at one gulp the realization that in the mind of this trim modern creature he had known in completest intimacy, there was a whole great area he had never dreamed of, an area that was part and parcel of the dead practices he analyzed in books, an area that belonged to the Stone Age and never to him, an area plunged in darkness, acrouch with fear, blown by giant winds. He tried to picture Tansy muttering charms, stitching up flannel hands by candlelight, visiting graveyards and God knows what other places in search of ingredients. His imagination almost failed. and yet it had all been happening right under his nose.

—*Fritz Leiber,* Conjure Wife

were said to command thunder and lightning, and in many cultures witches can control the winds and weathers of the sea. Even those European witches who sold good winds to sailors—often bound in the knots tied in a cord—must have been tempted to produce bad weather on some occasions. Still more ambiguous is the knowledge of herbs and potions that witches from ancient Israel and ancient Greece to the present are reputed to have. Often, witches who worked as healers and midwives almost certainly also supplied abortions, and it may not be too large a step from there to eliminating a patron's unwanted husband.

The last example also shows that good versus bad may be a matter of perspective. Legend has it that the defeat of the Spanish Armada by storms in May 1588 was caused by patriotic English witches. Who is to say whether that was, or would have been, good magic or bad? Similarly, in the films *Burn, Witch, Burn* and *Conjure Wife*, each witch advances her husband's career at the expense of everyone else's husband, whether they do it by curses or by protective spells. The story "The Chestnut Beads" by Jane Roberts (*F&SF*, October 1957), also presents the moral ambiguity of power, in this case involving women made witches without their knowledge, in preparation for a later good. Showing that benevolence and malevolence can be a matter of perspective, some revisionist novels have improved the respectability of famous harmful witches by providing background regarding their motives. In Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995), the Wizard is an arrogant oppressor, especially of the sentient animals of Oz, and the witch is called wicked because she opposes him. *The Third Witch*, by Rebecca Reisert (2001), presents a background to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1605–1606) in which Macbeth killed the family of one of the witches, so their action is vengeance rather than pure spite.

African American traditions such as voodoo and mojo tend to be less polarized than European or even African traditions of the witch and counterwitch. In voodoo, despite its evil reputation in most fiction and movies, the gods, called Loa, curse and bless with equal willingness. "Mojo," a term with

origins in Africa, originally meant a charm; in the United States, from slavery times through the early twentieth centuries, it meant a small bag, filled with herbs, written prayers or spells, magical ingredients such as cemetery dust, and hair or fingernail clippings to tie the magic to an individual. Also called the mojo hand, conjure bag, and nation sack, such bags were usually protective, but could be used in casting a harmful spell. References to these charms are common in blues songs, including those by Blind Willie McTell, the Memphis Jug Band, Lightnin' Hopkins, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and Robert Johnson (who, incidentally, was rumored to have sold his soul to the devil for his musical gifts). As the term became known through popular culture, it became more widely applied to magic, on the one hand, and sexual urges, especially male sexual urges, on the other. Nalo Hopkinson, who often uses African-Caribbean folklore in her own fiction, has edited an excellent anthology called *Mojo: Conjure Stories* (2003). Its major flaw may be that it does not include any fiction by the editor; for instance, the story ''Greedy Choke Puppy'' in her collection *Skin Folk* (2001) is a frightening story of malign magic.

Finally, the witch often represents female freedom and power, which is itself often the cause of ambivalent responses. This is, for instance, clearly the theme of *The Witches of Eastwick*. There, the empowerment is genuine, but not without cost—and in the novel, John Updike is quite clear about the petty and self-serving use of power as well as its positive social, psychological, and artistic potential. In moralizing stories of witchcraft, the sense of freedom and power is illusory, as in ''The Nocturnal Meeting'' (a chapter from *The Lancashire Witches*, 1849) by W. Harrison Ainsworth (1805–1882). However, it is difficult to look at many drawings of witches on the way to the Sabbath—on a pitchfork, a shovel, a hurdle, a goat, or, yes, a broomstick—and not imagine the joy of flight. The delirious delight is even conveyed within the generally negative and Satanic depiction of witches in the ''Night on Bald Mountain'' segment of the Disney movie *Fantasia* (1940). Nancy Holder's 1995 story "The Only Way to Fly" explicitly uses the flight of the witch as a metaphor for freedom from imposed limitations and joy in an active life.

LEGENDARY OR MYTHIC WITCHES

Given that belief in witches and witchcraft dates to the earliest periods of human history, it is not surprising that folklore and early literature have depicted a number of legendary or mythic witches whose powers range from the benevolent to the spectacularly evil. We present capsule biographies of thirteen such witches:

1. The traditional witch from folklore, known in Russian as Baba Yaga—in Polish, Czech, and Slovak as Baba Jaga, and in Serbian as Baba Roga—flies through the forest in a mortar, using the pestle to steer. Her house has giant

chicken legs and can turn away or come when told to; her fence is made of human bones with skulls on top. She is ugly, thin, and old: according to some versions, she ages a year for every question she is asked, and people always come to her to ask questions. She is a profoundly ambivalent figure. She undeniably is a fearsome hag who eats children. In other stories, she aids those who are pure of heart. In between are stories of a girl, Vasilisa, who outwits her and escapes.

Baba Yaga and her hut are popular subjects for pictorial art and music. Jane Yolen has written a children's book about her, *The Flying Witch*, with illustrations by Vladimir Vagin (2003). The Bone Witch, in R. Garcia y Robertson's *Firebird* (2006)—a fixup novel made from previously published novellas and novelettes—is based on Baba Yaga. Baba Yaga has also gotten interesting treatments in comic books, including Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and Bill Willingham's *Fables*. A useful recent study is *Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of the Russian Folktale*, by Andreas Johns (2004).

2. The Witch of Endor appears in the Hebrew Bible as a necromancer who calls up the dead prophet Samuel. King Saul of Israel, in disguise, goes to the witch for this service; the prophet's ghost does not give Saul the advice he wants but predicts Saul's downfall. The story appears in 1 Samuel, 28:4–25. Medieval theologians decided that the spirit was not the ghost of Samuel but a demon or imp taking Samuel's form. In Theodore Sturgeon's short story "The Hag Seleen" (*Unknown*, December 1942), a clever modern-day tale of evil magic, the ending turns upon a reference to the Witch of Endor. In the television series "Bewitched," Samantha's mother is named Endora.

3. The Thessalian witches are so named because they lived in Thessaly, a part of Northern Greece bordering Macedonia, that was known in classical times as a hotbed of sorcery and black magic. The devoted and enthusiastic servants of the goddess Hecate, the witches used herbs both to kill and to cast love spells and were able to shape-shift into birds or other animals. They were also the first witches said to "draw down the moon"—that is, use lunar forces magically.

In Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* comics, the story arc "A Game of You" (1991–1992) introduces Thessaly, the last of the Thessalian witches, who appears to be an innocuous, bespectacled young woman. In that story, Thessaly shows that for her, "drawing down the moon" is no metaphor or psychic experience: doing so, even though she puts it back, creates a storm and tsunami that ravages New York City. Thessaly became a popular character and has starred in two spin-off miniseries; hers is always a harsh, gritty magic, atavistic and dangerous.

4. Circe, in Homer's *Odyssey* (c. eighth century B.C.E.), is the child of the Titan Helios and an Oceanid (a type of nymph) named Perse; she is a sorceress, highly skilled in the use of drugs and potions. Her home, a stone mansion in the clearing of a dense wood, is surrounded by people she turned into lions and wolves. When she serves a feast to Odysseus's crew, the potion in the food turns the men into pigs. Odysseus, advised by Hermes, comes to her

protected by the herb moly and makes her turn the men back. He and his crew spend a year with her, and she falls in love with Odysseus.

Circe has appeared in works from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* (1853) to *Wonder Woman* comic books; she has inspired characters from Acrasia in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1593) to the Marvel Comics character Sersi. Circe appears in the short story "Justice," by Elizabeth Hand (first published 1993). Of course, she also appears in any retelling of the *Odyssey*, from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) to David Drake's science fiction novel *Cross the Stars* (1984).

5. Medea, the daughter of the king of Colchis, is the niece of Circe and is often described as a priestess of Hecate, a many-faceted goddess who governs sorcery. In the story of Jason and the Argonauts, Medea magically helps Jason with the tasks her father gives him: for instance, the dragon that guards the golden fleece is put to sleep with narcotic herbs. She is also an expert with poisons and can foretell the future. Medea falls in love with Jason and sails away with him. However, in Corinth, Jason leaves Medea for the king's daughter, Glauce; Medea gives Glauce a cursed dress that burns her to death. In the play *Medea* by Euripides (431 B.C.E.), Medea kills her own children by Jason for vengeance on their father.

   Euripides's play has inspired many newer versions, including Robinson Jeffers's *Medea* (1946) and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), by Marina Carr, which adapts the action to an Irish setting. Austrian poet-playwright Franz Grillparzer tells the entire story in his three plays, *The Host* (1818), *The Argonauts* (1819), and *Medea* (1820). The Medea of Pier Paolo Passolini's disturbing film by that name (1970) is definitely a witch.

6. Erichtho is a famous Thessalian witch who appears in *Pharsalia*, a Roman epic poem by Lucan (c. 61 C.E.). There, Erichtho is said to have raised a spirit for Pompey the Great's son, Sextus Pompeius. Her incantation calls upon Hermes, Charon, Hecate, Proserpina, and Chaos. She is also mentioned as a necromancer in Dante's *Inferno* (1308–1321).

7. Morgan Le Fay, also called Morgaine or Morgana, is a powerful sorceress in the legends of King Arthur. She is half-sister to Arthur and often his nemesis. She is also a healer as well as a shape-shifter, but grows more troublesome as the story developed within the Christian tradition. In *The Mists of Avalon* (1982), by Marion Zimmer Bradley, Morgaine is the protagonist, with second sight and other magical abilities. A goddess worshipper, she at first fights against the coming of Christianity and then comes to terms with it. She is also a central character in Gene Wolfe's novel *Castleview* (1990). In some modern versions of the story, such as John Boorman's film *Excalibur* (1981), she seduces Arthur and gives birth to his adversary Mordred.

8. Aradia began as fiction but has influenced Wiccan practice. In the novel *Aradia; or, The Gospel of the Witches* (1899), by Charles Leland, she is the daughter of the goddess Diana and the fallen angel Lucifer, and she comes to Earth to teach witchcraft. Leland claimed that his work was based on a hidden historical tradition from Tuscany; this is probably not true, although one modern witch, Raven Grimassi, claims evidence that Aradia was the

name of a goddess and a fourteenth-century Italian witch (*strega*). Certainly, a speech by Aradia in the first chapter of the book is sometimes used as an important piece of Wiccan ritual called The Charge of the Goddess.

9. Gilles de Rais (1404–1440), after a distinguished military career and time as a national hero, retired to his estate; there he tortured, raped, and killed as many as 200 young boys (higher estimates, up to 600, are inaccurate). He was tried and executed by hanging. The charges included heresy; he was accused of performing the Black Mass; he has a significant reputation in folklore as a practitioner of black magic, with the murders also serving as sacrifices. In *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921), Margaret Murray argues that he was the practitioner of a surviving pre-Christian cult that worshipped Diana. While this is almost certainly not true, it does indicate and did shape his image as a witch. In *Là-Bas* (1891), a decadent novel of sorcery and sanctity by J.-K. Huysmans, the protagonist is researching a biography of Gilles de Rais. In one videogame he appears as a vampire, but there is a niche for fantasy fiction that treats him as a witch.

10. Elizabeth Bathory (1560–1614), in modern folklore now thought of as a vampire because she killed young women for their blood, was at the time thought to be, and may have thought of herself as, a witch. A Hungarian countess, she certainly was, like Gilles de Rais, a serial killer of staggering proportions—such that even royalty could not get away with. She was caught in torture and murder; she was never tried, but kept isolated in her own rooms until she died. She was rumored to be influenced by a local Satanic witch, Anna Darvula, who died before Bathory was stopped; under torture, others confessed to practicing witchcraft alongside Bathory. One letter to her husband mentions her learning a fatal spell. She has inspired many works, predominately factual studies or works in which she is a vampire. The fantasy novel *This Rough Magic* (2003), by Mercedes Lackey, Eric Flint, and Dave Freer, does depict Bathory's bloodletting as a kind of magic.

11. Catherine Deshayes, known as La Voisin, was burned alive as a poisoner and witch in 1680. The French court of Louis XIV was tolerant of witchcraft, and there was even a fad for love potions, séances, fortune-telling, and other magic—up to a point. A scandal began over three Black Masses arranged by La Voisin and conducted by an infamous priest named Guiborg; the altar was the naked body of the Marquise de Montespan, the king's mistress, who sought magical help in keeping his attention. The mass invoked Satan and his demons and reputedly included the sacrifice of children. La Voisin also worked as a midwife and probably engineered abortions, so one child, said to be "obviously premature," may well have been already dead. No charges were brought against Madame de Montespan.

12. James Murrell practiced as a cunning man in Hadleigh, England, from 1810 until his death in 1860. He made a living curing warts, finding lost or stolen property, treating both human and animal illnesses, and breaking spells by evil witches. He used books, herbs, prayers, and amulets in his work. Most educated people disliked him but left him alone, while the common people admired him and became his customers. One fictional counterpart of

Murrell is Old Nathan, the eponymous protagonist in a collection of stories by David Drake (1991). Like Cunning Murrell, Old Nathan bills himself as ''the devil's master.'' Old Nathan can also talk to animals, and he generally prefers their company to that of human beings.

13. Marie Laveau, ''the Witch Queen of New Orleans,'' was born in the 1790s, a ''free person of color.'' She married and is also known as the Widow Paris. She learned her craft from a ''voodoo doctor''; by 1830 she was known as a voodoo queen, but she soon became *the* voodoo queen. She performed rituals on the banks of Bayou St. John on June 23, St. John's Eve, and sold charms or hexes to the wealthy. Her position was also built on a strong network of informants, whose information made her respected and feared. She was also a devout Catholic and saw no conflict between that and voodoo. People still visit her tomb in New Orleans and leave flowers and other tokens. Marie Laveau appears in the novel *Voodoo Dreams*, by Jewell P. Rhodes (1993) and in Francine Prose's well-regarded *Marie Laveau* (1977). She is the subject of the 1971 song by the group Redbone, ''The Witch Queen of New Orleans.'' She also appears in Neil Gaiman's novel *American Gods* (2001).

WITCH HUNTS AND THE PERSECUTED WITCH

Long before the founding of Wicca and the rise of the image of the good witch in fiction and popular culture—separate though sometimes related trends—fiction presented witches, or those accused as witches, in a positive light compared to their persecutors.

The witch hunts are definitely shameful moments in history; earlier historians of the early modern European witch hunts tended to emphasize the condemnable superstition, while more recent historians have explored the psychological and social scapegoating. Generally, historians now agree that the European witch hunt began in the Alps and other mountain regions, and that they had less to do with any indigenous pagan or magical tradition than with the then-recent extermination of heretics such as the Cathars. In various places, lepers, heretics, Jews, and witches would be killed during or immediately after times of misfortune such as famine and pestilence. Since suspects were tortured, and punishment might be lessened if the accused confessed and named other witches, the number of witches naturally increased like a snowball rolling downhill.

Even at that time, many people objected to the witch trials and found the methods of the witch finders unsound. In 1584, Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* argued that witchcraft was not supernatural, but trickery and perhaps hysteria. Many officials protested against the Salem witch trials at that time, and less than twenty years later the colony officially restored the rights of the accused, declared them not guilty, and gave 600 pounds to their heirs in restitution.

Salem, a Year of Witch Fever

Salem, Massachusetts, was founded in 1629; in 1641, witchcraft became a crime punishable by death under English law. Other witch trials had been held in the new world, including that of Anne Glover in Boston, executed in 1688. However, the events in Salem and surrounding towns, resulting in twenty executions, took place within one year, 1692. Approximately 150 people were imprisoned, of whom seventeen died in custody; the last accused were pardoned and released from prison in May 1693.

The following is a chronology of the major events of the Salem witch panic:

Late January: Abigail Williams, age eleven, and Elizabeth Parris, age nine, begin acting strangely, including seizures, trances, and screaming out blasphemies. Soon other Salem children show similar symptoms.

Mid-February: The girls' doctor states that witchcraft may be causing their behavior.

Late February: Elizabeth identifies Tituba, the Parrises' Carib slave, as a witch; the girls also name Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne.

March 1: Tituba confesses to witchcraft.

March 11: Anne Putnam and other girls also say they are victims of witchcraft.

March 12–28: Martha Cory, Rebecca Nurse, and Elizabeth Proctor are accused of witchcraft. Magistrates Hathorne and Corwin begin examination of accused witches.

April 3: After defending Rebecca Nurse, her sister Sarah Cloyce is accused of witchcraft.

Early April: Mary Warren, the Proctors' servant, admits to lying when accusing Elizabeth Proctor.

April 11: Elizabeth Proctor's husband, John, who protested his wife's situation, is the first man accused of witchcraft.

April 13: Giles Cory is accused.

April 19: Mary Warren is examined by the magistrates; she recants her statement and rejoins the ''afflicted.'' Deliverance Hobbs confesses to practicing witchcraft.

April 22: Hathorne and Corwin examine Mary Easty, also a sister and defender of Rebecca Nurse, and eight others, three men and five women.

April 30: Former Salem minister George Burroughs is accused of witchcraft.

May 4–7: Burroughs is arrested in Maine, imprisoned back in Salem.

May 10: Sarah Osborne dies in prison.

May 18: Mary Easty is released from prison, then re-arrested. Roger Toothaker is arrested for witchcraft.

May 27: Sir William Phipps, new governor of the colony, orders a Court of Oyer and Terminer (hearing and deciding), appointing seven men, including John Hathorne, as judges.

June 2: Bridget Bishop is tried and convicted of witchcraft.

June 10: Bishop is hanged at Gallows Hill.

June 16: Roger Toothaker dies in prison.

July 19: Rebecca Nurse, Susanna Martin, Elizabeth Howe, Sarah Good, and Sarah Wildes are hanged at Gallows Hill.

August 6: Elizabeth Proctor is tried and condemned; her hanging is delayed because she is pregnant.

August 19: George Jacobs Sr., Martha Carrier, George Burroughs, John Proctor, and John Willard are hanged at Gallows Hill.

September 9: Dorcas Hoar is tried and found guilty. She escapes execution by confessing to witchcraft.

September 19: Giles Cory is pressed to death for refusing to enter a plea and undergo a trial for witchcraft. He takes two days to die.

September 22: Martha Cory, Margaret Scott, Mary Easty, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Wilmott Redd, Samuel Wardell, and Mary Parker are hanged.

October 29: Sir William Phipps dissolves the Court of Oyer and Terminer; he stops arrests and releases many accused witches from prison.

November 25: The General Court of the Colony creates the Superior Court to try the remaining witchcraft cases. None will be convicted.

From http://www.salemweb.com/memorial/ and http://www.law.umkc.edu/ faculty/projects/trials/salem/ASAL_CH.HTM

Thus, it is not surprising that a significant body of fiction treats the witch finders as the real villains. Many of these works are not supernatural, but historical novels. *The Amber Witch* by Wilhelm Meinhold, which first appeared in an English translation in 1844, concerns an innocent girl tried as a witch and saved just in time; a detailed historical novel, it has sometimes been taken as fact. Elizabeth George's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, a popular and Newbery Award winning book from 1958, for young adult readers, presents a fictional protagonist, teenage Kit Taylor, who is accused of being a witch in the Connecticut Colony in 1867. "The Witch-Baiter," a story by R. Anthony (pen name for Richard A. Muttkowski) first published in *Weird Tales* (December 1927), has no supernatural component but is a horror story, concerning vengeance enacted upon a witch-finder named Mynheer van Ragevoort. Of course, the most famous work that presents a sympathetic picture of those who were tried and condemned as witches is Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* (1953). Miller presents the hysteria of the Salem witch hunts as a tragedy in its

own right and a metaphor for the persecution of suspected communists in his own time.

One of the most famous witch hunters was Englishman Matthew Hopkins, who declared himself, or was declared by the Puritan Parliament, "Witch-finder Generall." He worked from 1644 to 1646, primarily in Suffolk, Essex, and East Anglia; he is also known for writing *The Discovery of Witches*. Torture was technically illegal, but he extracted confessions by psychological intimidation, sleep deprivation, and "swimming"—testing to see if the water would reject the witch, which often amounted to partial if not complete drowning. Ronald Bassett's 1966 novel *Witch-Finder General*, a historical novel about Hopkins, was made into the 1968 movie, *Witchfinder General*, directed by Michael Reeves, with a script by Tom Baker. Neither has any supernatural element. The film, starring Vincent Price, is also called *The Conqueror Worm*, although it has little connection to Poe's poem by that name, artificially referenced to link the film to a popular series of movies based on Poe's stories and starring Price. Julie Hearn's 2005 novel *The Merrybegot*, which blends history and fantasy, includes a negative portrait of Matthew Hopkins and a positive one of a young witch, conceived on the morning of May 1, which is Beltane, a traditional Gaelic holiday also celebrated by Wiccans.

The most well-known witch trial in England, referred to as that of the Pendle Witches or Lancashire Witches, has also inspired historical fiction, though it is not as consistently sympathetic to the accused. In 1612, ten men and women were hanged for alleged murder by witchcraft; one woman, found guilty of witchcraft but not murder, was sentenced to one year in prison, and another woman died before her trial. The accused, especially Alizon Device, confessed and incriminated each other with lavish tales of meeting the devil and having a familiar spirit in the shape of a black dog. The reasons for the confessions are still debated, explanations including schizophrenia and hallucinations because of mushrooms or ergot; some writers have noted the similarities to impossible confessions of child abuse, exposed in articles such as Lawrence Wright's "Remembering Satan," published in the *New Yorker* in 1993.

Harrison Ainsworth's 1849 novel *The Lancashire Witches* captures the historical setting, but does include supernatural elements. Alizon Device is innocent and good, but the other witches are evil and do much damage before they are executed—inaccurately, by being burned alive. Robert Neill's *Mist over Pendle* (1951) introduces a fictional character, and presents the witches as innocent dupes of a criminal mastermind, some of them likeable but others, such as Agnes Nutter, personally unpleasant; this novel has no supernatural elements. Incidentally, most modern readers are probably delighted by the idea of a witch named Nutter, and that Lancashire witch is likely the inspiration for the name in Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's funny yet profound story of the relationship between an angel and a devil on the eve of the End Times depicted in St. John's Apocalypse, *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch* (1990).

Because of the nature of the charges against the witches, many supernatural stories treat the witch as a negative figure who deserved to be executed, such as the movie *Black Sunday*. The 1993 Disney film *Hocus Pocus*, directed by Kenny Ortega and written by David Kirschner, Mark Garris, and Neil Cuthbert, is interestingly ambivalent. The three witches, executed in 1693, return from the grave, intending to live forever by stealing the souls of children; when they are foiled by teenagers, one turns to stone and two explode into dust. However, the witches are played with humor by Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Kathy Najimy, and many scenes evoke some audience sympathy. Another interestingly double-edged work is ''Young Goodwife Doten'' (1995), by Robert M. Price. The protagonist cannot conceive, and so she visits the local witch, Goody Watkins, who is in danger from the zealous witch hunter, Reverend Hoadley. The reader is fully set up to expect a standard post–Margaret Murray, pro-Wiccan story of the persecuted wise woman—and then Goody Watkins arranges to have Goodwife Doten impregnated by the devil. The child is born with wings and a tail, and Goody Watkins enjoys watching Goodwife Doten burned at the stake. That error—since witches in the English colonies in North America were hanged or pressed to death—is probably another play on the conventions of stories about witches.

Still, in general the author's sympathy, and the readers', is with the persecuted witch. Following the theory of Margaret Murray and others that medieval and early modern European witchcraft was a survival of pagan polytheism, works such as Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1982) present early witches as oppressed, if not in personal terms, because their religion is threatened by Christianity. Just as Lucifer became a proud figure of rebellion for some Romantics and post-Romantics, the witch has become a symbol for those persecuted by the envious, the cruel, and those who take advantage of political or religious power over others. In Elise Matthesen's poem ''Nettie's Garden'' (1995), a witch's talisman gives a survivor of family violence, the toughness to survive. The persecuted witch, whether triumphing over circumstances or doomed by them, will likely become an even more common figure in future writing.

Familiars

One of the characteristics of the classic witch is her or his association with a helping spirit, often in the shape of an animal, called a familiar. The spirit is usually demonic and aids in magic; the witch may feed it blood or it may nurse from a supernumerary teat the witch possesses. Historically, familiars were reported more commonly in early modern English witch trials than on the continent. In fiction, familiars may be the witch's servant or master—or comic relief. Keeping a familiar spirit is prohibited in the Book of Leviticus (20:27) and is punishable by death.

Discovery of Witches (1647), by Matthew Hopkins of Essex, England, abounds in familiars he discovered as "witchfinder general." Elisabeth Clarke was said to be observed with familiars in the shape of a kitten, two dogs, a rabbit, a toad, and a polecat. A famous illustration shows familiars named by a witch who had been kept awake for four days: Holt, who looked like "a white kittling"; Jarmara, "a fat spaniel without any legs at all"; Vinegar Tom, "a long-legg'd Greyhound, with an head like an Ox"; Sack and Sugar, "a black Rabbit"; and Newes, "a Polecat." She also mentioned familiars named "Ilemauzer, Pyewacket, Pecke in the Crown, and Griezzel Greedigutt." Another historical witch, Jane Wallis of Huntingtonshire, England, confessed that the devil, appearing as the "Black Man," gave her three imps, one called Greedy Gut. Apparently feeding familiars could be a burden.

An illustration of Joan Prentis of the Chelmsford witches, executed in England in 1589, shows frog or toad familiars and two odd creatures, with doglike bodies and earless, toad-like heads, named Jacke and Gill.

Familiars abound in supernatural literature. Most recently, they figure extensively in the Harry Potter series written by J. K. Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997; U.S. ed. as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, 1998), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), and *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005) as of this writing. Harry's familiar is an owl named Hedwig, Hermoine Granger has a cat named Crookshanks, and Ron Weasley had Scabbers, a rat; Professor Dumbledore's familiar is a phoenix, while the evil Voldemort's is a snake. Other familiars include other cats and owls and at least one toad. These familiars do not seem to talk, and most of them primarily help with errands such as sending and bringing mail.

Much of His Dark Materials series by Philip Pullman—*Northern Lights* (1995; retitled *The Golden Compass* in the United States), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), *The Amber Spyglass* (2000)—takes place in an alternate world in which all human beings (though not sentient animals) have familiars, called daemons. These creatures constantly accompany their companions, and it is taboo to touch someone else's. The familiars shape-shift until the companions reach adulthood, when they adopt one shape that reflects (and perhaps influences) their companions' natures. The familiar of the protagonist, Lyra, is named Pantalaimon. The daemons of witches have the ability to range further than other daemons; that of the witch Serafina Pekkala's is Kaisa, a large gray goose.

WITCHES, SEX, AND DEATH

Whether for good or ill, witches are traditionally deeply involved with that most basic of human functions, sex. Witches in every culture provide love spells; many also can cause or prevent erections, facilitate fertility, or give

abortions. For instance, in fourteenth-century England, witches were said to create impotence by tying knots in a thread, and finding such a thread was legal ground for the husband to dissolve the marriage. The mandrake root, used for spells in Europe from the Roman empire to early modern times, was selected in part because it resembles either the male genitals or, if growing in two parts, female legs and hips. La Voisin foretold the future and performed other services, but it was saying the Black Mass as part of a love spell against King Louis XVI—and using his mistress as the naked altar—that caused her downfall.

In medieval and early modern Europe, especially, the witch herself, or himself, was a sexual creature. Sometimes this is seen as repellent: the witch may be ugly and old, copulating with the devil, who often appears as an animal and whose penis is often described as cold and painful. Sometimes it is viewed with a lurid fascination, especially stories of male and female witches in one big orgy after dancing at their sabbats. The range in art is quite striking, from the hags surrounding a black goat in Francisco Goya's painting ''The Witches' Sabbath'' (1821) to a quite attractive young witch (though overweight by today's standards) receiving the devil's tongue in her genitals, depicted in a striking pen-and-ink drawing by Hans Baldung in 1515. Many drawings and engravings show both old and young witches, with varying degrees of sexual allure.

Unsurprisingly, fiction and movies often depict the lustful witch. *Haxan*, a Flemish film from 1922, written and directed by Benjamin Christensen, is presented as a documentary on the history of witchcraft. Nikolas Schreck writes in *The Satanic Screen*, ''Christensen didn't shy away from recreating the erotic fantasies that swirled around visions of the Devil's Sabbath. His writhing witches display more exposed flesh than was seen in the Satanic cinema for decades to come'' (34). Less explicit but even more lurid, the classic Gothic novel by Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), features the temptation and degradation of the title character, Ambrosio, by his pupil Matilda, who embodies the morbid fascination of the sexual witch. Similarly, Valery Briussof's novel *The Fiery Angel* (translated into English in 1930) concerns a hero who is seduced by a witch and becomes involved in the sabbat. More recently, John Brunner's ''All the Devils in Hell'' (*Science-Fantasy*, 1960) is the story of a man tempted by a totally desirable and totally selfish witch and saved by his love for a plain but loving woman who sees through the witch. Such an idea sounds trite, but Brunner's story succeeds, thanks to excellent characterization, suspense as to whether the woman really has supernatural power or not, and the descriptions of sexual tension.

Stories of voodoo women and other exotic witches—that is, Hispanic or African American rather than European-American—often have an erotic charge. ''Cerimarie,'' by Arthur J. Burks, is a fine example, first published as ''Voodoo'' under the pen name Estil Critche in *Weird Tales* (December 1924). For a contemporary reader of this tale about Haitian voodoo, it may

be difficult to decide whether the lecherous descriptions or the racism is more unnerving. However, the lecherous appeal of the witch of color has by no means died out. Todd Grimson's novel *Brand-New Cherry Flavor* (1996), set in Hollywood, features the seduction of the heroine by Boro, a South American shaman complete with jaguar skin. The novel combines humor and horror, and manages to exploit the exoticism without the problems of Burks's piece. *Witch-Light* (1996), by Nancy Holder and Melanie Tem, is another erotic novel, this one featuring a WASP woman and a dark and handsome *brujo* (male witch); it takes place in New Mexico.

Small presses and collections of erotic fiction provide plentiful stories about the lustful witch, although they are still vastly outnumbered by erotica and pornography about vampires. In fact, the prevalence of the helpful witch as a cultural image may sometimes be turning writers about sexual compulsion and fascination into vampires instead of witches, male or female. Still, Satanic witches do appear in numerous hard-core pornographic novels, including *A Girl Possessed* (1973) by Richard E. Geis under the pen name Peggy Swenson.

This may be the most appropriate place to mention the almost universal associations of witches with animals. As seen in the character of Circe, the transformation of people into animals is deeply connected to the witch's power over, and association with, our own animal nature. Fiction includes many stories of witches changing people into animals, including John Collier's "The Lady on the Grey" (*New Yorker*, June 16, 1951). Similarly, the witch's ability to transform herself into an animal, and her association with familiar spirits in the shape of animals, may speak of her own animal nature. In medieval and early modern Europe, the witch sometimes turned into a cat, but it could also be a rabbit or dog. At least as far in the past as ancient Rome, and in countries around the world, witchcraft is also connected to the traditions of shape-shifters, from werewolves to leopard people. One excellent story concerning witches who turn into cats is "Ancient Sorceries" (1908) by Algernon Blackwood. Witches are also believed to be able to project their souls into natural animals, such as rats or birds, in order to travel or accomplish magic without revealing their human identities.

As universal a human concern as sex, death is also closely associated with the witch. In folk belief and legend, witches can both curse the living to death and raise the dead. In fact most cultures have some version of necromancy, in which witches gain information, and sometimes power, by the evocation of departed souls. This was the offense of the biblical Witch of Endor; in Renaissance and early modern Europe, necromancy was primarily practiced by sorcerers, men like John Dee (1527–1608/09).

Nickolai Gogol's story "The Viy" generally takes a satiric tone but achieves genuine scares with its presentation of a witch who returns from the dead as a scholar must stay and read prayers for her. In some traditions witches are said to live in graveyards; bones or graveyard dirt are used in many spells, from those of the ancient Thessalian witches to the mojo bag,

discussed earlier, and the *gris-gris*, another African or African American charm. All this is apart from the idea that witches can be immortal, either in their own bodies or by possessing the bodies of others, which is quite common in fiction and often implied or explicit in folklore.

WITCHES AND THE TRIPLE GODDESS

Along with Margaret Murray, the poet, novelist, and scholar Robert Graves presented an idea that, while historically unjustifiable, shaped our contemporary concept of the witch and Wiccan and neo-pagan practice. In the case of *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (1948, revised 1966), the idea was only part fabrication; the rest was overgeneralization. Also, he did not exactly present his concept as historical fact, as shown by the ambivalent subtitle. Graves proposed a European goddess whose worship dominated antiquity and survived in folklore and literature, a triple goddess identified with love, birth, and death, represented by the three forms of maiden, mother, and crone.

Certainly, there is a common association of witches with the number three, or three aspects. Hecate was often depicted in classical times as having three aspects, a characteristic that William Blake conveys in his 1795 painting of that goddess of sorcery. The three witches in *Macbeth* are called the weird sisters, linking them to the three fates, also female and often cruel. Yet one could also associate witches with the number four, for the four seasons and the associated celebrations of Beltane, Midsummer, Samhain, and Yule; or two, for the sun and the moon, night and day, or male and female. Indeed, some Wiccans and neo-pagans do base their craft more on those numbers than on the number three.

Still, Graves and his triple goddess have influenced both fiction and Wiccan or neo-pagan practice. She shows up in Susan M. Schwartz's introduction to the anthology *Hecate's Cauldron* (1982) and some of its stories (all original to the collection), such as C. J. Cherryh's "Willow" and Jayge Carr's "Reunion."

NEW TYPES OF WITCHES

The Domestic Witch

For eight years, ending in 1972, the most popular image of the witch in America was blonde, perky Samantha Stevens in the television show "Bewitched." Witches, on the show, were inherently different creatures, immortal or at least living for centuries, possessing vast powers, but looking like human beings and living among us. Instead of evoking the fear of a conspiracy, however, this is the setup for domestic comedy: Samantha is basically good,

though mischievous and tempted to use magic on people who are unkind or pretentious. Most of all, the situation is played as domestic comedy. Samantha meets and falls in love with a mortal man, Darren, and agrees to subdue her magic to marry him. He is an up-and-coming man in advertising, a situation that creates constant worry that her magic might compromise his image at work.

This image of a domestic witch was not original to "Bewitched." Many critics have observed the similarity to the 1958 movie *Bell, Book and Candle*. Doubtless that was an influence on the TV series, including the link between witches and a counterculture lifestyle—in the movie, the setting in bohemian Greenwich Village, and in the television show, Samantha's cousin Serena, a Hollywoodish combination of early sixties mod, late-sixties hippie, and early seventies liberated partier.

However, the more important predecessor to *Bewitched* was a 1942 movie, *I Married a Witch*, directed by René Clair. One of the writers of the film was Thorne Smith, known for his humorous yet humanly touching supernatural stories. *I Married a Witch* provides a hard-to-beat "meet cute" (a term film critic Roger Ebert coined for first encounters in movies that lead to romance but are initially embarrassing or filled with tension). Jennifer is a seventeenth-century witch who returns to life to take revenge on her persecutor, a politician named Wallace Woodey. As the title indicates, they fall in love and marry.

The domestic witch provides an ironic twist to some older aspects of the witch while continuing others. After all, finding out that one's wife is a witch (albeit probably confessed under torture) was a historical actuality. More than that, as we have seen, this discovery is central to stories such as Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and the novel *Conjure Wife* by Fritz Leiber. The twist is that such discovery becomes, with the movies and television show, less a source of fear and more a source of confusion, chagrin, and unpleasant social consequences. In fact, in later seasons of "Bewitched," conflict came less from Darren's reaction to Samantha's magic and more from Samantha's mother— Endora, an archetypally unaccepting mother-in-law—and other troublesome relatives.

Furthermore, the traditional evil witch, though often associated with lust, seems incompatible with love. In fact, in "The Final Ingredient" by Jack Sharkey (*F&SF*, August 1960), a would-be witch discovers that no magic can be cast when the witch has any love in her heart—not even a love spell. The domestic witch contradicts this idea, but it also subtly continues it. The opposition between power and love is seen in *Bell, Book and Candle*, in which Gillian must give up her powers in order to marry; in "Bewitched," Samantha promises not to use her powers in order to please her husband.

The domestic witch is definitely the product of its time, hence an interesting comment on women's social place during those years. After World War II, women who had gone off to work had to be redomesticized, turning their

Familiars in Supernatural Literature

Greymalkin is the familiar of one of the witches in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; another witch refers to Paddock, a toad.

Brown Jenkin, a rat-like creature with a bearded human face and sharp canine teeth, is the familiar of Keziah Mason, an immortal witch who escaped the hanging in Salem; they appear in H. P. Lovecraft's short story ''The Dreams in the Witch House'' (*Weird Tales*, July 1933).

Enoch, in the short story of that name by Robert Bloch (*Weird Tales*, September 1946), is a murderous imp that sends its host, Seth, voluptuous dreams in exchange for brains to eat.

Pyewacket became a popular name in fiction and is the name of Gillian Holroyd's familiar, a Siamese cat, in the play (1950) and movie (1958) *Bell, Book and Candle*.

Carbonel, in Barbara Sleigh's *Carbonel: King of the Cats* (1955), is the King of the Cats but enchanted by an evil witch, Mrs. Cantrip; he gets a girl named Rosemary to learn some witchcraft in order to find Mrs. Cantrip and undo the spell.

Salem, a wisecracking black cat, is the familiar of Sabrina, the teenaged witch, both in Archie Comics beginning in 1962 and in the television show, 1996–2003.

Throgmorton is a huge tabby, somewhere between a familiar and a wizard in his own right, in the Chrestomanci series by Diana Wynne Jones, including *Charmed Life* (1977) and *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988).

Peach, short for Machu Picchu, is a scarlet, blue, and yellow macaw belonging to an advisor wizard, Tom, in Diane Duane's *So You Want to Be a Wizard?* (1983). There are hints that Peach was an ordinary bird before Tom became a wizard.

Loiosh, a small dragon-like creature called a jhereg, is the familiar of Steven Brust's Vlad Taltos in *Jhereg* (1983) and other books.

Jiji, a black cat, is Kiki's familiar in the 1989 movie *Kiki's Delivery Service* by Hayao Miyazaki.

Greebo, a tough, one-eyed tomcat, is the familiar of Nanny Ogg, the motherly witch in Terry Pratchett's Discworld books, including *Wyrd* Sisters (1988), *Lords and Ladies* (1992) and *Witches Abroad* (1991), in which he is transformed into a sexually attractive, bearded young man dressed in leather. Nanny Ogg insists he is gentle as a kitten.

Kit the Cat, a pale Siamese with blue eyes, appeared as the young witches' familiar in the first season (1998–1999) of the WB television show, ''Charmed.''

In the Earthsea books by Ursula Le Guin—*A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1972), *The Farthest Shore* (1974), *Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea* (1990), and *The Other Wind* (2001)—the wizard Ged has a mouse familiar; other familiars include ravens and boars.

jobs over to the returning soldiers to instead keep their homes and raise their families. Yet, by the time of ''Bewitched,'' the wheel was turning again, and women began to receive more education and enter a wider range of careers. Cultural critics have noted this ambivalence in the television series, but tend to polarize it. Some see the show as pro- or at least proto-feminist because Samantha has such power. As has been shown, witches can represent female power, and there are more female than male witches in the series, though characters include men such as Samantha's powerful father. Other commentators find ''Bewitched'' sexist because Samantha promises to stop using that power in order to please a man. Of course both insights are true—of ''Bewitched,'' of the times, and perhaps of the whole idea of the domestic witch.

The Younger Witch

In fiction, young children who are witches are generally evil. Many such stories were written during a spate of horror fiction about evil children in the 1970s, although some of the more striking examples predate that fashion. Besides the eternal fear that one's children might turn out to be ungrateful or even harmful, increased by the generational tension of the late 1960s, there is the aesthetically pleasing irony when children, usually seen as more innocent than not, are depicted as witches.

A standout even among Arthur Machen's many powerful stories concerning magic and decadence or corruption, ''The White People'' (1899) is told in the form of a journal by a young girl undergoing a strange and terrifying supernatural initiation; it was the inspiration for T.E.D. Klein's novel *The Ceremonies* (1984). Another disturbing and potent short story of a young practitioner of magic is Jane Rice's ''The Idol of the Flies'' (*Unknown*, January 1942). The story convincingly depicts a child of pure malevolence and the temptations of an elusive state of consciousness in which he can practice magic. Ramsey Campbell, author of numerous short stories and novels concerning frightening magic, depicts the possession of a young girl by an old woman with supernatural powers in *The Influence* (1988). Other frightening stories of evil witches include August Derleth's ''The Place in the Woods'' (*Weird Tales*, May 1954) and ''Timothy'' (*SF Impulse*, September 1966) by Keith Roberts. One exception to the tendency of child witches to be evil, of course, is Wendy, ''the good little witch,'' a long-running character from Harvey Comics.

Pre-teen and teenage witches, however, are more apt to be good than bad, and their stories are more apt to be funny or charming than horrific. These include Sabrina, the teenaged witch, and the three weird sisters in the television show ''Charmed,'' discussed above. One subdivision is that of the students at a witches' school, which is referred to in *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* and other sources but has recently reached its height of popularity in the Harry Potter books, discussed above. While these witch schools primarily turn out benevolent alumnae, ''The Cyclops Juju'' by Shamus Frazer (1965) presents an account of evil magic (much like that of ''Lukundoo,'' mentioned above) at a boys' school. Also, although it concerns sorcery more than witchcraft, Peter Straub's novel *Shadowland* (1980) should be mentioned for its chilling and evocative presentation of both a boys' school invaded by magic and a school set up by a magician to train and initiate one of the pupils of that school.

The Business Witch

A final recent face of the witch is that of a contemporary businessperson. In one way, this is nothing new: cunning folk were paid for their spells, although the ethics of many Wiccans and neo-pagans prevented them from taking money for magic. On the other hand, one charge against witches in many times and cultures, sometimes justified, is extortion of money by threats of supernatural harm. In addition, the image of the business witch is a natural outgrowth of the many deal-with-the-devil stories that take place in a modern setting. In fact, when the protagonist arrives to make a deal with the devil in ''Blind Alley'' by Malcolm Jameson (*Unknown Worlds*, June 1943), he first has an appointment with Madame Hecate, Consultant Witch, in suite 1313.

Most of all, the business witch had an entertaining irony: supernatural power juxtaposed to mundane payment and setting, ancient folklore and myth juxtaposed to modern values, and often sacred worship of the goddess juxtaposed with profane commercial practices. The anthology *100 Wicked Little Witch Stories* contains multiple stories of the business witch, including ''Vend-a-Witch'' by Adam-Troy Castro and ''1-900-Witches'' by Nancy Holder and Wayne Holder. In ''Buyer Beware,'' by Tim Waggoner, a witch shopping at a used-car dealership uses magic to resist being conned into a sale, but the dealer is using magic too. ''So Sweet as Magic...,'' a story by Bruce Elliott (*Fantasy Fiction*, August 1953), presents a traveler into an alternate world: in ours, stores sell supplies for stage magic, while in the other, stores sell the ingredients for effective spells and potions. Another story from *Unknown Worlds*, Robert A. Heinlein's novella ''Magic, Inc.'' (September 1940, originally ''The Devil Makes the Law''), is the ultimate business witch story. All businesses use magic, powered by demons and elementals (spirits of the four elements); the story concerns an attempt to create a monopoly and drive up the price of magic.

Stories concerning the business witch may also reflect a distrust of anyone who is motivated by money. "Sorcerer's Moon" (*Playboy*, July 1959) is one of Charles Beaumont's many brief, clever, and effective short stories. The magician involved, who is paid to raise a demon for harmful magic, directs the spell against his original customer when he is paid a higher price by the intended victim.

THIRTEEN WITCH MOVIES ADAPTED FROM LITERATURE

As noted previously, the witch has figured prominently in films from the very beginning of the movie industry. While it is in some cases difficult to distinguish movies about witches from movies involving related supernatural phenomena—notably demons or the Devil himself—some of the most successful films, adapted from novels, stories, or plays, are as follows:

1. *Bell, Book and Candle* (1958), directed by Richard Quine, screenplay by Daniel Taradash based on the 1950 play of the same name by John Van Druten. Though this was not the first movie about a mortal's romance with a witch (*I Married a Witch*, 1942), its genuine sweetness and the offbeat chemistry between the protagonists (James Stewart and Kim Novak) help make it the most famous. The Greenwich Village setting helped establish witches as bohemians—outsiders, but chic and charming rather than threatening. The play is more lighthearted, with less emotional depth.

2. *Black Sunday*, originally *La maschera del demonio* (1960), directed by Mario Bava, screenplay by Ennio De Concini after "The Viy" by Nikolai Gogol. This is the classic story of revenge by an executed witch, given style by Bava and allure by the witchy eyes and appealing figure of Barbara Steele. Gogol's short story, both amusing and frightening, has little in common with the movie, though both do feature a witch returning from the grave.

3. *Burn, Witch, Burn!*, also *Night of the Eagle* (1962), directed by Sidney Havers, screenplay by Charles Beaumont and others based on the 1953 novel *Conjure Wife* by Fritz Leiber. Both novel and movie depict a rational mathematics professor who discovers that his wife has been practicing witchcraft to protect him and advance his career—as do all wives of faculty. It has been called the best story of campus politics; it also is an early exemplar of the theme that witches exist in an unknown conspiracy.

4. *Witches' Brew* (1980) is another adaptation of *Conjure Wife*, more humorous and less frightening than the book or earlier movie; it is not nearly as good as *Burn, Witch, Burn!*, despite Terri Garr in the lead role. It was directed by Richard Shorr and Herbert L. Strock, with a screenplay by Syd Dutton based on Leiber's novel.

5. *The Witches* (1966), directed by Cyril Frankel, screenplay by Nigel Kneale from the 1963 book by Nora Lofts, *The Devil's Own* (also known as *The Little Wax Doll* and *Catch as Catch Can*). A woman is threatened by

witchcraft in Africa, then she comes home to England and teaches at a school which she finds is controlled by a coven of witches, who are about to sacrifice one of the students. Both the movie and the novel are better than a bare plot summary makes them sound.

6. *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), directed by Roman Polanski, screenplay by Roman Polanski from the 1967 novel of the same name by Ira Levin. Rosemary discovers that her New York apartment building is rife with witches, her husband has joined their coven, she has been drugged and raped by the devil, and her child will be its offspring. From religious doubt—"Is God Dead?" is a real *Time* magazine cover shown in the film—to fears of conspiracy and of what one's children might become, Levin and Polanski expressed many subtexts of the culture at the time. The movie is quite faithful to the novel, which combines supernatural horror with a tightly developed detective-story structure.

7. *The Devil Rides Out* (1968), directed by Terence Fisher, screenplay by Richard Matheson based on the 1934 novel of the same name by Dennis Wheatley. In production before *Rosemary's Baby*, this film helped start the supernatural boom of 1960s–1970s. However, with its sternly moral stance, it did not match the tone of the times as Polanski's film did, and it was never as popular. The coven members are mostly respectable older men, but one female is being tempted into the group. The head Satanist, based on Aleister Crowley, is more realistic and interesting in the movie than in the novel.

8. *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971), directed by Robert Stevenson, screenplay by Bill Walsh and Don DaGradi based on Mary Norton's novels, *The Magic Bedknob; or, How to Become a Witch in Ten Easy Lessons* (1945) and *Bonfires and Broomsticks* (1957). This musical film by Walt Disney Productions shows the importance of children's literature in shaping a more benign image of the witch; it also features the idea of a school for witches, whose headmaster visits, aids, and falls in love with the adult protagonist. Events are set in motion when three children are sent from London to the countryside during World War II. The film is quite faithful to the books, although in the interests of social progress, magical animals replace cannibals as one threat.

9. *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), directed by George Miller, screenplay by Michael Christofer from the 1984 novel of the same name by John Updike. The film and book differ surprisingly in tone, given that both follow the same basic story: three single women in small-town New England discover their witchy powers and summon a male devil, whom they must eventually reject. The book shows more realistic personal growth by the witches, yet also demonstrates their appetite for petty retribution. The movie focuses more on the devil (Jack Nicholson).

10. *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), directed by Hayoa Miyazaki, scripted by Hayoa Miyazaki based on the picture book *Majo no Takkyūbin* (1985) and its sequels by Eiko Kadono. This Japanese film was dubbed in English, changed very slightly, and released by Disney in 1998. A witch in training, Kiki takes her mother's broom and her talking black cat to a new town, in

which she opens a flying delivery company. As in other films by the director, the blend of the supernatural and real is seamless; the magic is charming but never trivial. Also common for the director, this is a coming of age film, as Kiki must learn about commerce, independence, and love.

11. *Practical Magic* (1998), directed by Griffin Dunne, screenplay by Robin Swicord based on the 1995 book of the same name by Alice Hoffman. Both book and film depict the lives of Gillian and Sally, members of a family thought to be witches for 200 years. Their aunts, raising the girls, sell love potions to a town that otherwise rejects them. Both book and film provide both horror and love, but the language and details of the book provide a deeper view of human nature, while in the movie the magic is more undeniable.

12. *The Witches* (1990), directed by Nicholas Roeg, screenplay by Allan Scott based on the 1983 book of the same name by Roald Dahl. A child and his grandmother are staying at the hotel at which the organized, worldwide conspiracy of witches is holding its annual convention, when he overhears their plan to exterminate all children, which smell bad to the witches. Despite being turned into a mouse, the child manages to use the witches' own potion against them. Both book and movie, though intended for children, are enjoyably creepy, as well as funny.

13. *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005), directed by Andrew Adamson, screenplay by Ann Peacock and others based on the 1950 novel by C. S. Lewis. The image of the purely evil witch, not popular in cinema since the early 1960s, reappears here quite powerfully. The movie follows the book, including Lewis's Christian views that evil is deceptive, malefic, but not as powerful as a savior's self-sacrifice. The association of the witch with winter and the glacial malice with which she is played (Tilda Swinton) give an original yet mythic feel to the character.

Witches may be as old as mankind, according to many interpretations of cave paintings such as those at Lascaux, they are with us as we enter the twenty-first century, and they will almost certainly continue to inspire art and real belief in the foreseeable future. Perhaps a witch could prophesy what forms such fiction, drawings, folklore, ritual, music, poetry, drama, and events may take—and even what new technologies may be used to display them—but we ordinary human beings cannot.

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The Zombie

by June Pulliam

In the twenty-first century, the word "zombie" conjures up a familiar figure of a decaying corpse shuffling in a somnambulistic state, eyes glazed and arms held stiffly forward, in the mindless pursuit of human flesh. We owe this iconographic image to filmmaker George A. Romero's 1968 low-budget black-and-white movie *Night of the Living Dead*, which transformed the zombie in much the same way that James Whale's 1931 film *Frankenstein* altered Mary Shelley's creature or Tod Browning's 1931 film *Dracula* changed Bram Stoker's count. Today, writers and filmmakers who take zombie as their subject

must acknowledge Romero's interpretation of the creature, if only to argue within the reality of their own fictional universes that his portrayal was inaccurate. The zombie itself is a malleable symbol—representing everything from the horrors of slavery, white xenophobia, Cold War angst, the fear of death, and even apprehensions about consumer culture—and has become an icon of horror perhaps because it is quite literally a *memento mori*, reminding us that our belief that we can completely control our destiny, and perhaps through the right medical technology, even cheat death, is mere hubris.

The zombie has two basic criteria. First, it must be the reanimated corpse or possessed living body of *one* person (or animal), so golems and creatures similar to what Dr. Frankenstein stitched together from the charnel house do not fall into this category. Golems are not zombies, but instead, corporeal beings created from other forms of matter. Similarly, Victor Frankenstein's creature is not a zombie because it is a crazy-quilt of the parts of *many* people rather than a single reanimated body. Yet a zombie is much more than the walking dead. Mummies and vampires, for example, are also reanimated corpses, yet most are not zombies because they do not have a second essential characteristic: a lack of free will. The zombie must be completely subordinate either to the will of someone else or to some monomaniacal drive, whether for living flesh, violence, revenge, or even resistance of the tyranny of entropy itself. The zombie's lack of volition often makes it a parody of slavery. Furthermore, this lack of free will generally makes zombies flat characters, unable to fully appreciate the wretchedness of their condition, unlike vampires, who frequently wax philosophical about being doomed to hunger for living blood. Thus, zombies are generally not the protagonists of stories about them.

Typical characteristics of the zombie narrative can include an emphasis on the creature's decaying form and extreme gore. The decaying body of the zombie is particularly evident when the creature is represented in visual media, and underscores the horrors of death itself. And in the past forty years, directors starting with Romero have added extreme gore to the list of attributes that are essential to zombie narrative.

The zombie itself is not new, but is a creature with deep roots in literature and cultural practices. Ethnobotanist Wade Davis's controversial monographs *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985) and *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie* (1988) study the zombie phenomena in Haiti. Here an unscrupulous houngan, a type of voodoo priest, can be paid by someone bent on revenge to administer to an enemy a neurotoxin derived from the pufferfish. This neurotoxin very convincingly simulates death. The victim is then buried by the unsuspecting grieving family, only to be resurrected several hours later by the houngan and taken away to become uncompensated unskilled labor. The zombie is kept in "thrall" by the houngan through a combination of physical coercion and malnutrition (and in fact, many legends hold that feeding zombies salt or meat is sufficient to rouse them from their stupor and permit them to realize their abject condition, at which point they will

either kill their master or run shrieking back to their graves). This zombie makes an ideal slave, as higher brain functions such as memory and intellect have been disabled by the toxin, while lower brain functions permitting the body to move and perform simple tasks still work.

Davis's studies were not limited to the biological phenomena of the zombie, but included sociological factors as well. He observed that the houngan would not be able to create zombies were it not for the cooperation of the surrounding community. Often those who become the "walking dead" are disliked by neighbors and even family, so nothing is done to prevent their fate, such as ensuring before burial that they are actually *dead*, either through cutting off the head or driving a dagger through the heart. Others are prevented from interfering with the houngan's plans out of the fear that they too could meet a similar fate should they run afoul of him or her. Finally, community members tacitly agree to see the victims of the houngan as irrevocably undead. On an island as small as Haiti, it is not unheard of for family members to actually *see* their dead, alive, and walking in a state of zombification. However, when these "dead" family members are sighted, relatives make no attempt to reclaim them. While it is possible through careful nursing to somewhat restore the faculties of someone in this state, the zombie is treated as an outcast by friends and family. Indeed, they deny that their family member lives at all, exhibiting an attitude similar to the ones held regarding rape victims in many parts of the world—both zombie and rape victim are seen as fundamentally and irredeemably unclean, and therefore, no longer fit to be a part of the family unit.

In Haiti, zombies are not figures of terror because of what they might do to the living. In fact, these zombies are not capable of harming anyone. Instead, the zombie—a creature between life and death, an outcast, something with no will of its own—is a fearful symbol of human bondage in this former colony where, in the late eighteenth century, the enslaved successfully threw off their oppressors in a bloody struggle with many times their number of British and French soldiers. A mere two decades after this revolution the word zombie first appeared in English, when the British poet Robert Southey in 1819 used it as a metaphor for imperialism in the Americas, indicating that the colonized had been robbed of free will (Fonseca 1240).

While there are mentions of zombies and walking corpses in fiction and journalistic accounts from the nineteenth century, the creature does not fully make its debut into popular culture until the early twentieth century with the publication of W. B. Seabrook's 1929 travelogue *The Magic Island*. Seabrook, an adventurer, traveled to Haiti and lived there with a family, collecting stories about zombies and voodoo practices, even claiming once to see a dead man resurrected. Though stories of zombies were not new to the United States or Europe, Seabrook's book is credited with igniting popular Western interest in the creature. And when the zombie makes its appearance in British and American culture, its most fearsome aspect is its lack of that Protestant human virtue, free will.

The earliest representations of zombies in American culture derive from Haitian folklore and voodoo practices. Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932), starring Bela Lugosi, the first full-length feature film about this creature, was inspired by *The Magic Island*, and by the unsuccessful play *Zombie* (1932), itself based on Seabrook's book. *White Zombie* was mildly successful in the box office, and Lugosi went on to do four more obscure zombie films: *The Bowery at Midnight* (1942), *The Voodoo Man* (1944), *Zombies on Broadway* (1945), a comedy, and finally, the infamous *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1958), in which he completed two scenes before he died.

White Zombie is set in Haiti, and the horror of the creature lies not in its being undead, but rather in its very lack of volition. All the zombies are manipulated by their master, Murder Legendre (Bela Lugosi), a houngan who, through a combination of drugs and black magic, puts the living into a deathlike state, then resurrects their "corpses" as slaves who perform grueling labor on the country's sugar plantations. But Legendre is more than someone whose superior occult knowledge makes it possible for him to enslave others; he is a man of superior *will*. Among his army of slaves are the island's executioner, who once nearly put Legendre to death; a magistrate; and even his own former master, another houngan who gave up his secrets only under torture. Legendre controls his zombies through more than just administering poison to them; he also exerts a sort of mesmerism on his victims. Midway through the film, Legendre makes out of sight of his zombies a gesture where one hand grapples with the other, performing a type of sympathetic magic that transmits his will to the nearest zombie. That Legendre can bewitch those with so much political and occult power bespeaks the superiority of his own mental abilities.

But the film's central horror is not so much that Legendre can enslave relatively powerful people but that his abilities can be used to enslave a *white* woman, Madeline. Legendre and many of his zombies are racially ambiguous, though those who labor in the cane factory are all unmistakably black. However, the wage slavery aspect of the plot, the only thread to involve dark skinned people, is unexplored. Madeline, the only one of Legendre's victims that the film is concerned with, is unambiguously white. Peter Dendle observes in *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia* that "early zombie movies are most obviously concerned with the appropriation of female bodies, and the annihilation of female minds, by male captors" (3). Dendle's observation is accurate regarding gender, but he neglects the significance of race in these narratives.

White Zombie follows Madeline and Neil, a couple engaged to be married. But Monsieur Beaumont, a wealthy planter pretending to be the couple's benefactor, secretly pines for Madeline, and lures her and her fiancé to his estate with the promise that they can wed there in splendor. Moments before the ceremony, Beaumont begs Madeline to be *his* bride. When she refuses, he secretly administers to her the zombie powder acquired from Legendre. Madeline "dies" before consummating her marriage to Neil and is interred,

resurrected, and brought to Beaumont, who now plans to enjoy her. We see Beaumont raptly watching his beloved play the piano for him, but her eyes are dead and her face is unresponsive. Dendle observes that in the zombie film "time and again the villains learn that to possess the woman's mindless body is unsatisfying" (3), and Beaumont is no exception. He soon realizes that not having Madeline at all is better than possessing an automaton, and so he entreats Legendre to administer an antidote to his beloved or just allow her to die. Legendre refuses to do either, and instead attempts to turn Beaumont into a zombie. Meanwhile, Neil refuses to believe that Madeline is dead and searches for her. Legendre tries to use his influence over Madeline to make her kill Neil, but her love for him is too strong and permits her to resist Legendre's manipulation, resulting in his demise. According to Haitian zombie lore, when the houngan dies, his slaves are free, so when Legendre is eventually killed, his undead slaves jump from a cliff to their deaths. Madeline, however, recognizes Neil, and is restored as his virginal bride.

While *White Zombie* is set in Haiti, the film's anxieties about the zombie are those of *white* Americans, especially men, rather than anything that black Haitians would find particularly fearful. However, voodoo and the power to control others are represented as deriving from a dangerous island of savages, in spite of the fact that this power has been appropriated by whites. The message is that Legendre, already corrupted by an insatiable desire for power, is enabled to make his worst dreams come true in this relatively unregulated environment. The result is a perceived threat to white male ability to control the chastity of white women. What is represented in *White Zombie* is not so different from what the Ku Klux Klan feared would occur if blacks were not terrorized into submission after the Civil War.

In the 1930s and 1940s, zombies appeared in the horror pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales* and *Strange Tales* as well as in comic books, a format I will discuss later in this chapter. Thorp McClusky's story "While Zombies Walked" (1939) owes a good deal to *White Zombie*. This story is similar to the film in that its central concern is the chastity of a Caucasian woman. Set in Haiti, here too zombies are made by a white man wishing both to create the ideal slave and to enjoy ultimate power over others. When Tony Kent's fiancée Eileen returns to Haiti to tend to her ailing uncle and uncharacteristically sends him a Dear John letter, he travels to the island to speak with her in person. Almost immediately upon his arrival, he discovers a land of horrors. Tony stops to ask directions of a man on the road, whose refusal to respond makes him appear insolent. Upon closer inspection, Tony discovers the seemingly impossible—the man has a cracked skull, yet labors in the fields. At the plantation, Tony tells Eileen's ill uncle and his large and menacing overseer, Reverend Barnes, about what he has witnessed, but Barnes insists that Tony is suffering from a heat stroke. Wishing to prove definitively to Tony that his eyes have deceived him, Barnes sends one of his workers to fetch the allegedly mortally wounded man, who only has clotted dirt in his hair where his injury

should have been. But before Tony consents to leave, he demands to speak to Eileen in person. Eileen secretly attempts to warn Tony about the threat to her and her uncle, but her communication is detected by Barnes, who has no choice but to capture Tony as well lest he interfere with his plans for Eileen's family.

While imprisoned, Tony learns about the strange influence that Barnes has over Eileen and her uncle, a power derived from the effigies of each kept in a cloth bag around his neck. Soon after, Tony and Barnes have what is to be their final confrontation. In typical melodramatic villain fashion, Barnes confesses everything to Tony, describing how he had been denied success in the church by his superiors, who correctly perceived him as a man of questionable morality, and so dispatched him to the most forlorn of parishes in the hope that he would simply leave the profession. But this assignment only gives the ambitious reverend the opportunity to obtain dangerous occult knowledge that he uses for evil. Barnes intends to "influence" Tony into turning over to the reverend all his wealth, after which he plans to kill his rival and ravish Eileen. Naturally, before Barnes can make good his threats, he is thwarted by those he has harmed. Eileen and her uncle are free of Barnes's influence, and the dead return to their graves. The anxieties represented in "While Zombies Walked" are really not any different from those displayed in *White Zombie*. Here too whites, already morally corrupt to begin with, have greater power to wreak havoc when they come into contact with what is literally black magic.

Two other zombie stories from the pulps, August Derleth's "The House in the Magnolias" (1932) and Manly Wade Wellman's "Song of the Slaves" (1940), are both concerned with how slavery has transplanted to United States something malign that affects master more than slave. Derleth's "The House in the Magnolias" merely transfers the menace of voodoo to the contemporary United States. A female zombie master of mixed race comes to New Orleans after her reanimation and exploitation of the dead have worn out her welcome in her native Haiti. She emigrates with her niece Rosamunda, then a child, and no one else. The two inhabit a huge plantation outside the Crescent City. Amidst rumors of grave robbing, Rosamunda's aunt acquires several "slaves" who do the plantation's work by night. These dark family secrets are discovered by Jordan, an artist who comes to the house in the magnolias to paint, and must stay at the plantation for a few nights in order to complete his work. One night, he is knocked unconscious by the mistress who is not pleased that her niece has allowed a guest into their home. Rosamunda comes to his rescue and confesses all, and the two forge a plot to free the zombies so that she can escape her hellish life, since for some reason she is incapable of leaving on her own. In keeping with Haitian folklore about the zombie, Rosamunda feeds the undead salt. When they taste this substance, the zombies realize they are dead, shriek in terror at their condition, and run to their graves. The aunt dies in the fire that burns the house to the ground, while Rosamunda goes off to marry Jordan. So while anxieties of *White Zombie* and "While Zombies Walked" are located "over there" in Haiti, "The House in the Magnolias" is concerned with how,

seventy years after the end of the Civil War, the curse of slavery still persists. But because these fears are transferred into the early twentieth century and the slave master is of mixed origins, white people are not directly responsible for the evils.

Wellman's story is also in the vein of zombie narratives derived from Afro-Caribbean folklore and has characteristics of Gothic literature as well. The story, set in the decade preceding the American Civil War, has a more contemporary feel in that the horrors of slavery are correctly attributed to the whites who kidnapped Africans and put them in bondage. In 1853, Gender, a greedy South Carolina planter, ventures to Africa to replenish his stock of slaves, in open defiance of recently enacted laws prohibiting the further importation of human chattel. While Gender ferries forty-nine unfortunate souls in the belly of his ship, much to his chagrin they persist in singing their ''curse song'' to get revenge on their captor. Meanwhile, the British are attempting to stamp out the slave trade, and their navy seizes cargos such as Gender's and takes their captains to justice. Gender's ship is about to be overtaken by such a ship when he gets rid of the evidence by throwing overboard his slaves, who are all chained together. The captain of the British ship, however, is not fooled by Gender's ruse, and vows to ruin his reputation in his community. The captain is as good as his word, sending letters to Gender's neighbors about his exploits at sea. Though Gender's neighbors are all slaveholders, they are nevertheless appalled by his actions and snub him completely. But social ostracism isn't the only torment that Gender suffers. In a denouement typical of the Gothic, Gender hears on the final night of his life the slaves' curse song once again just before seeing beneath his window their watery corpses that have come back to haunt him. It is the sight of these decaying bodies brought back to life finally that makes this a zombie narrative rather than a tale of haunting. These are not ghosts come to reproach Gender for his crimes, but the flesh and blood undead.

Jacques Tourneur's 1943 film *I Walked with a Zombie* is one of the two zombie films that owe much to nineteenth-century Gothic narrative. *I Walked* is very loosely based on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. As with other zombie films, it is set in the Caribbean. Also typical of zombie narratives of the time, the dark-skinned natives practice voodoo for good, mainly for improved health and psychological well being, while whites appropriate native practices for their own nefarious ends. Betsy, a Canadian nurse, comes to the island to care for the local sugar planter Paul Holland's catatonic wife, Jessica. In the process, she uncovers the root of her patient's malady. The beautiful Jessica cannot speak and has no will of her own, and so must be led childlike throughout her day. Similar to *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason, Jessica spends her days locked in a tower, and Paul acknowledges her existence only a bit more than Edward Rochester acknowledges the presence of his own lunatic wife in the attic of Wildfield Hall. The Holland family physician is unable to diagnose Jessica's inexplicable state, which resembles an extreme form of neurasthenia. But the

island natives know immediately that Jessica is neither alive nor dead, but a zombie.

Jessica's plight is similar to Madeline's in *White Zombie*: her sexual desirability has provoked the ire of powerful enemies who have the ability to transform her. But Jessica has not been made into a zombie by a houngan who wishes to keep her for himself. Instead, Dr. Rand, Jessica's physician mother-in-law, has arranged her fate as a way to keep her two sons on the island. Before Jessica fell ill, she planned on leaving the island with Paul's younger half-brother Wesley, with whom she had fallen in love. With Jessica ill, both of them remain on the island. However, the war between the two brothers has escalated as Wesley blames Paul for driving Jessica mad. The denouement reveals Dr. Rand's involvement through her tearful confession, but the ending is ambiguous: Dr. Holland openly questions Dr. Rand's sanity, claiming that she has been deceived by her own powerful imagination. The film concludes with Dr. Rand sadly agreeing with this assessment of herself, and an even more ambiguous representation of the power of Voodoo. The final scene juxtaposes a houngan using a doll to imitate Jessica coming to him before she is stabbed to death with a catatonic Jessica leaving the family estate in the middle of the night, only to be put out of her misery by Wesley, who runs her through the back with a spear. The viewer is lead to believe that perhaps Dr. Rand was correct after all.

Similar to previous narratives, the zombie in *I Walked* is a fearful creature because of its lack of will. One of the more horrifying moments in the film, for viewers in the 1940s at any rate, is when this lack of volition makes it impossible for two zombie characters to observe various racial and sexual taboos. In a scene suggesting the possibility of miscegenation, a black zombie comes into Jessica's bedroom in the middle of the night in order to initiate a spell being worked on her by the local houngan. Nothing happens beyond the black zombie sharing briefly the same intimate physical space with Jessica, but the *mise en scène* suggests possibilities that would have been unsettling to the minds of viewers at the time.

A second zombie film loosely based on a well-known Gothic novel is John Gilling's *The Plague of the Zombies* (1966). *Plague* is similar to *White Zombie* in that the undead are created by a white man through the use of voodoo. However, this Hammer studios film, whose story owes much to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, relocates the zombie to nineteenth-century England. Another notable difference between *Plague* and *White* is the method of creation: zombies are not made with any mysterious power, but instead *wholly* through sympathetic magic. Both films have similar rationales for raising the dead. *White* hints that zombies have been made to serve as slaves, while this purpose is expressly articulated in *Plague*.

Before the film opens, Squire Hamilton, the young scion of a wealthy family, has returned from foreign lands to the paternal home in Cornwall to

assume his deceased father's debts. The Hamilton family wealth is derived from a tin mine, which is no longer in operation because of an alarming number of industrial accidents. Since young Hamilton's return, each month a villager has died of a mysterious illness that the local doctor, Peter Thompson, cannot diagnose. Frustrated, Dr. Thompson writes to his mentor, Sir James Forbes.

Soon after Sir James comes to help his former student, Dr. Thompson's young wife, Alice, falls ill. Meanwhile, Sir James and his protégé embark on a scientific investigation to discover what is killing the villagers. They must conduct clandestine autopsies on the newly deceased, since the villagers would see this procedure as a gross violation of their loved ones. The need for secrecy leads Sir James and Dr. Thompson to the cemetery in the middle of the night to find only an empty coffin where the most recent victim should be resting. Meanwhile, Alice leaves home in a trance in the dead of night. This scene is similar to the one in *Dracula* where Lucy Westerna, in thrall to the Count, sleepwalks. But Alice does not make it home alive; instead, she is killed by a villager who died at the beginning of the film.

Alice is buried, and Sir James persuades her husband to assist in exhuming her for an autopsy. This disinterment scene owes a great deal to the passage in *Dracula* where the infected Lucy's eternal slumber is similarly interrupted, permitting her fiancé to give her peace by putting a stake through her heart and cutting off her head. The duo open Alice's grave, only to see her corpse transform before their eyes, from her pale, white almost virginal beauty to the dark, bluish countenance of the zombie. The newly awakened Alice does not recognize her husband or his old friend, and menaces the two before Sir James beheads her with a spade.

Sir James and Dr. Thompson's continued investigation resembles the work of Dr. Van Helsing and his band of vampire hunters. They use the most modern of Victorian technologies to rid England of this foreign-born plague, and they have Christianity on their side as well when the local vicar provides them with books on witchcraft from his own personal library. Eventually, Hamilton's secret is uncovered. His zombies, the male ones anyway, are working in his tin mine. And when the Voodoo dolls that Hamilton uses to control his army of the undead burn, true to Haitian zombie lore, the creatures turn on their master.

The racial politics of *Plague* are also similar to those of *White Zombie*. Whites, not blacks, have appropriated Haitian magic in order to make zombies, and their primary interest, or at least from what we see occurring on the screen, is the ability to possess the bodies of white women. When we do see black characters, they are tangential to the plot. In *Plague*, black characters exist mainly to beat the drums during Hamilton's zombification ceremonies and add an air of ''savagery'' to his decadence.

Plague represents a transition in the representation of the zombie in popular culture. While *Plague*'s zombies are created by voodoo, they are terrifying not

"In a world where the dead are returning to life, the word 'trouble' loses much of its meaning." Quipped by Kaufmann in Land of the Dead *upon discovering that someone blackmailing him for 5 million dollars has the power to break down the fortifications erected against zombie attack.*

simply because they do not have a will of their own, but because they are dead things, who will not stay nicely in their coffins. A good deal of screen time is given to showing the dead Alice transforming from the "beautiful memory picture" she was when placed in her coffin to a rotting hunk of flesh, albeit through very cheap special effects. The fixation on Alice's rotting countenance is similar to Romero's visual representation of zombies, whose terror resides in their being dead yet animated with a force that compels them to attack the living. Also, while *Plague*'s zombies have no drive of their own, they are similar to the more modern version in that their will is completely sublimated to the interests of capitalism. Hamilton's zombies toil in the mines, while Romero's zombies represent the working classes, particularly in the 2005 film *Land of the Dead*.

But before more modern zombie narratives can be discussed, it is first necessary to go back in time to consider a medium that was an outgrowth of the pulp horror and crime magazines, the comic books. In the 1930s, the zombie quickly became a staple of comic books, and by the 1950s, when superhero comics were in decline and horror and crime comics gained popularity, the creature appeared with great frequency. Zombie stories in the comics ascribed their existence to reasons more numerous than those found in either the pulps or film: they were created by black magic, by an irrepressible need for revenge that transcended the grave, or for no "rational" reason at all. And it was in this medium that the zombie was most dependably represented as a visibly rotting corpse. As a story-telling medium, comics had the advantages of both print and film. Of course, comic books had stories, but even more significant was the fact that readers could view an image over and over, something that fans couldn't do with films until the introduction of the VCR in the early 1980s. So, for the price of a dime, children were able to contemplate the lurid horrors of death through the figure of the zombie.

Unfortunately, horror comics in particular had been alarming child development experts, most notably Dr. Frederic Wertham, "a psychiatrist who tried to tie the gore and violence in the comic books of the day to juvenile delinquency in his 1953 book, *Seduction of the Innocent*" (Gatevackes). Congressional investigations led to the formation of the Comics Code Authority, a committee created by and composed of comic book publishers. For the next twenty years, this code put some horror comics out of business, since it prohibited "scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism" (Gatevackes). Still, the zombie did not completely disappear from this medium, in part because compliance with the Code was voluntary, and some publishers, most notably EC Comics, refused to cave into pressure and abide by it.

In 1971, the Code became more lenient, especially toward horror comics. However, while vampires and werewolves would be permitted, zombies were still *verboten*. Marvel, already experiencing great success with its *Tomb of Dracula* and *Werewolf by Night* titles, circumvented the Code to offer zombie comics. This was effected by creating characters called "zuvembies," zombies by a different name, a subterfuge that incredibly satisfied the Comic Code Authority. Eventually the Code changed in 1989, permitting zombies to roam openly through the pages of comics, and Marvel retired the "zuvembie" name.

In the 1950s, zombies in comic books had been assuming that iconic form described in the beginning of this chapter, while during this same period the creature was still undergoing a radical transformation in the media of film and literature. During the 1950s, the zombie lost some of its connections with voodoo and the Caribbean and became a character whose lack of volition instead represented Cold War fears of about Communism's threatened lack of individuality. Richard Matheson plays with this idea in his 1954 novella *I Am Legend*. Set in a post-apocalyptic world of the near future (1975), the story suggests that recent bombings have created a strain of bacteria that kills humans, reanimating them as mindless shells driven solely by a hunger for human blood. Nightly, Robert Neville, the last man on earth, shelters in his suburban home, the final remnant of civilization, desperately trying to drown out the calls of the undead just outside who beckon him to join their ranks. The female zombies are represented as particularly horrifying, shamelessly flaunting their undead flesh in front of Neville, who has been deprived of female companionship for several years.

Matheson's undead are a cross between the vampire and the zombie. Certainly their need for blood and ability to be killed with a stake through the body make them the literary descendants of *nosferatu*. And to further confuse the issue, some of the undead believe themselves to *be* vampires, so that crosses repel those who in life were either familiar with the cultural icon of the vampire or were particularly religious. However, these undead are also slow and shuffling, underscoring their affiliation with the zombie. But it is the extreme mindlessness of these creatures that truly defines them as zombies. The undead who howl outside Neville's door are animated by a monomaniacal quest for blood, unable to appreciate any of the intellectual pursuits that he engages in, within his bomb shelter of a house. And like it or not, Neville will either be assimilated by this group or eliminated from the population. The story concludes with the revelation that there are two types of the undead: those created by the mutated strain of bacteria, and a group who predate this mutation and have learned to live with their affliction, and therefore thrive in this post-apocalyptic universe. Neville, the destroyer of the undead, sees himself as the last great hope for mankind, while this other group only sees him as a terrible legend, like the Bogey Man, something that must be eradicated.

Matheson's novella was made into two films, neither very good. The Italian film *The Last Man on Earth* (1964) by Ubaldo Ragona stars an ill-cast Vincent Price in the title role, and omits the crucial scene where he stakes a creature who crumbles to ashes and thus reveals the fact that there were some undead predated the plague. The 1971 film *The Omega Man*, starring Charlton Heston as Neville, captures the eerie landscape of post-apocalyptic earth, but quickly becomes a silly action/adventure flick with poor production values. In a scene where Neville confronts a pack of undead, it is clear that only one is an actor and the others in the crowd are merely robed mannequins with hoods covering their faces. Another failing was the casting of Heston, who lacked the everyman quality of Matheson's Neville, and instead interpreted the character as more of an exceptional man fated to survive through force of his superior masculinity.

The 1964 film *The Earth Dies Screaming* is another science fiction zombie narrative in which the undead are not created through magical means. Some of *Earth*'s themes also anticipate Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* by four years. Aliens attack England and wipe out most of the population. A pilot lives through the initial invasion and makes his way across the blighted landscape looking for survivors. Searching for news on television and radio, he soon discovers that the airwaves have been affected by some sort of electronic interference. Soon after, alien robots invade Earth and begin bringing to life the dead, who are now perfectly docile and suitable for slavery. Similar to *I Am Legend*, *Earth* posits a post-apocalyptic world. But while *Legend*'s planet Earth is done in by a strange virus, *Earth*'s alien robots that cause electronic disturbances prefigure Romero's nebulous radiation cause that reanimates the newly dead.

The figure of the zombie had been evolving since its appearance in mass culture in the early twentieth century. However, George Romero's watershed 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* crystallizes many of these elements into a form of the zombie that is arguably the most iconic representation of the creature to date. Romero's *Dead* series continues to alter the zombie, completely changing the focus of the creature's horror from its resonance with slavery and its lack of free will to its very existence as something the opposite of human—a dead thing that cannot be erased from the consciousness, since it will not completely die. The visibly decomposing bodies of Romero's undead in the relatively realistic medium of film add yet another dimension to the meaning of the zombie: the horrors of death itself.

Typical of the zombie in previous science fiction films, Romero's undead are created by a vague technology run amok, something about which the layperson knows so little that it too seems to have supernatural capabilities. In *Night*, it is not known with certainty what has animated the recently deceased, but the precipitating cause is thought to be radiation leaking to earth from a satellite. The dangers of radiation are an old familiar theme of science fiction films of the 1950s, causing men to shrink and women to grow into towering colossuses.

However, it is clear that the central horror of *Night* is the ubiquity of death itself. The film begins with Johnny and Barbara, a brother and sister quarreling during a visit to their father's remotely located grave: Johnny bitterly laments their mother's lack of consideration in burying their father in such an inconvenient location, thereby burdening her grown children with a lengthy annual trip to place flowers on his final resting place. Barbara chastises Johnny for his filial disrespect, which causes her brother to launch into an irreverent parody of all the dead interred within the cemetery, and of the events to come in the film. Johnny attempts to frighten his sister with his best Boris Karloff imitation, telling her in a deep voice that "they're coming to get you, Barbara." Perhaps it is his irreverence that raises the dead, who have now *indeed* come to get Johnny and Barbara, and anyone else with a pulse. His mock prophecy is fulfilled when one of the undead shambles up to the duo, killing Johnny. *Night* establishes the zombie as a fearsome creature *because* it is no longer living, with much visual attention paid to the decomposing bodies of the undead.

"They're dead. They're all messed up." Comment about the zombie infestation by a sheriff interviewed by a television news crew in Night of the Living Dead.

After Johnny is killed brutally before Barbara's eyes, she escapes to a local farmhouse, where she tries to survive the night with a group of strangers. Soon all the occupants fight among themselves about the best place in the house for survival: the cellar or the attic. The discussion is reminiscent of the very real debate in the 1950s and early 1960s about how, and where, to hide for the few months thought necessary to survive a nuclear war, and it also introduces the theme of claustrophobic enclosure that runs through the *Dead* series. Of course, this infighting leads to the group's doom.

Romero's *Dead* series also establishes the zombie movie as a genre full of gore, something that will later particularly influence Italian filmmakers. *Night of the Living Dead* was released internationally under the title *Zombi*, which inspired Italian director Lucio Fulci's 1979 graphic film *Zombi II*. The film *Night* shows the zombie consuming living flesh in graphic detail that was fairly disturbing, even given that it was shot in black and white and its special effects were particularly low budget. Later installments in the series continue the tradition of extreme gore when zombies consume the living by tearing flesh and bone asunder amid jets of scarlet blood. A good deal of screen time is lavished on showing the red-mouthed leers of zombies with bad teeth, consuming bits of human flesh as if it were so much uncooked barbecue.

Romero's zombies also pose a critique of consumer culture in that the undead are animated by a single-minded drive for mindless consumption. The spectacle of the zombie feasting without cessation on human flesh is a central image in the whole of Romero's *Night* oeuvre. This idea of mindless consumption is particularly underscored in the second installment in the series. *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) is set in that cathedral of the modern world—the

shopping mall—where the spiritual hunger can be temporarily assuaged by the purchase of just the right accessories.

Still another innovation of Romero's zombies is the establishment of "an indistinct boundary between monster and victim" (Gagne 26), causing the viewer to question the monster's essential difference from humans. This theme is further explored in subsequent entries in the series. *Dawn of the Dead* ponders on both human and zombie identity by juxtaposing flesh eaters outside of the mall with those within, whose habits of consumption of goods are so ingrained that they continue shopping in the face of annihilation.

The third film of the series, *Day of the Dead* (1985), expands this analysis of what it means to be human. An undisclosed amount of time has passed since the conclusion of *Dawn*. It is now clear that the reanimation of the newly dead is not a localized phenomenon, but a worldwide catastrophe. Because zombies now greatly outnumber the living, exterminating them is no longer a feasible solution for human survival. Thus, three research scientists are sheltering with military personnel in a nuclear silo, engaged in experiments to reprogram zombies into complete docility, in much the same way parents trick their children into comporting themselves as civilized adults. And indeed the zombies *do* seem capable of learning. Dr. Logan, the head researcher, manages to teach the zombie Bub to suppress his desire to make his human captors into dinner and instead take pleasure in reading (or at least flipping through the pages of a book) and listening to classical music.

But the military personnel responsible for safeguarding everyone fail to see the merit in the experiments, and when several of their number die procuring fresh zombies for science, Captain Rhodes, their sadistic commander, rebels. The soldiers themselves are mindless, valuing sex, alcohol, and marijuana over anything else, and are indeed difficult to tell apart from the actual zombies, particularly since they too have an insatiable blood lust. Dr. Logan attempts to convince the soldiers that they must be civil, since civility allows for communication, and if civility breaks down, then civilization itself deteriorates. But his pleas fall upon deaf ears. Rhodes is not impressed with Logan's teachable zombie Bub. Because the human Bub was in the military, he automatically salutes Rhodes, recognizing him as a superior officer. But when Rhodes flatly refuses to return the salute, Bub is enraged by his lack of civility. Meanwhile, Dr. Logan embarks on an impromptu experiment: he empties a gun and gives it to Bub to see what he would do. Bub points the gun at Rhodes, who responds by pointing his own sidearm, further illustrating that there really isn't that much difference between the two.

However, for all Logan's claims about how civility is what separates humans from other lower life forms, he himself is not a very good advertisement for civilization. Dr. Logan's gory experiments have earned him the nickname "Dr. Frankenstein": his lab is full of dissected zombies, and he frequently appears among his colleagues without bothering to change his soiled clothing or wash

the blood from his hands. If Dr. Logan represents civilization, then it comes at a very terrible price to humans.

Also, *Day* begins exposing how power structures function to deny the inevitability of death. Rhodes and his unintellecutal subordinates are deeply racist and sexist, and these ideas nourish their fantasy that they themselves, all white men, are uniquely suited to survive. Of course, this is an illusion, and these men die horribly at the end of the film.

''You have no right!'' Bellowed by Mr. Kaufmann in Land of the Dead, *who is in a state of disbelief that anyone living or dead would defy his authority and violate personal property.*

The fourth film in Romero's series, *Land of the Dead*, is set still later, and is the only film of the group to actually envision the new world order to emerge post-zombie. A band of survivors are re-establishing civilization on a peninsula in Philadelphia. The venture, funded by the wealthy Mr. Kaufmann, has kept intact old class structures. Wealthy whites live ''in the grand old style'' in Fiddler's Green, a condominium tower that boasts world-class shopping and dining, while within the barriers of the city but outside of the towers are the other people, a motley assortment of black, white, and brown, who make a living in the various service professions—protecting the city from zombie attack as members of the military; raiding neighboring zombie-infested towns for supplies; cleaning and cooking for the rich; or working in the flourishing prostitution, gambling, and drug trafficking trades that keep lower social orders too occupied to question the unequal distribution of resources.

Tension erupts almost immediately when one of Kaufmann's henchmen, Cholo, decides he has made enough money doing his employer's dirty work, disposing of the bodies of his enemies, and so he is now entitled to purchase his own condo in Fiddler's Green. But class mobility is an illusion in this society. Kaufmann rebuffs Cholo's attempt to move into his neighborhood, and sends one of his other henchmen to dispose of his bitter now-former employee. But Cholo escapes and steals Kaufmann's million-dollar armored truck used for supply raids and threatens to use it to shell the city if he isn't paid a ransom. Another of Kaufmann's henchmen, the more idealistic and revolutionary Reilly, is sent to kill Cholo before it is necessary that Kaufmann pay him. Reilly agrees, not out of any loyalty to Kaufmann, but because if Cholo bombs the city, more than just the wealthy of Fiddler's Green will suffer when the zombies are able to enter through the breached security fences.

Meanwhile, Dr. Logan's theories about zombies in *Day* are proved correct. The zombies *can* learn and work cooperatively. We see this earlier on in *Land* when one of the more intelligent of their number, Big Daddy, is able to communicate with the others through grunts. Eventually, the zombies work together to storm the island, destroying Kaufmann and his property. But even more importantly, this moment demonstrates that zombies are definitively not very much different from humans. As Reilly prepares to leave the city at the end of the film, he remarks on the zombies' similarity to humans in that they just

"That's exactly why we're killing ... to survive. We can't allow the dead to exist beside the living. Their brains are impaired, they exist for only one purpose. They have *to be destroyed." Explained to Robert Neville in Richard Matheson's* I Am Legend *by one of the infected who aren't brain damaged, and who will be reestablishing civilization in a post-apocalyptic world where much of the population has been turned in to bloodthirsty zombies by a mutant virus.*

want somewhere to be. And he is correct on all counts. We see that these zombies are justifiably angry that their own home in Uniontown is continually raided by humans who then harass their numbers. And the zombies in *Land* appear more similar to their human counterparts than they do in any of the other films in the series. When they first appear in *Land*, it isn't clear if we are viewing zombies or humans, as their faces are less distorted by decay than the zombies in previous films, and all wear clothing that marks them as individuals with a particular place in the old world.

Romero's films also definitively associate the zombie with the apocalypse, something done previously in *I Am Legend* and *The Earth Dies Screaming*. Many zombie films after *Night* similarly associate the undead with an apocalyptic world where the bottom rail is on top, so to speak, in that they hunt the living. J. R. Bookwalter's 1988 low budget 8mm film *The Dead Next Door* envisions the zombie as the result of human hubris. A scientist attempting to create a serum to keep people from expiring instead makes the first zombie, ushering in the end of the world as all know it. Now government zombie squads roam the country, attempting to eradicate the living-impaired and discover a cult who believes zombies were created by God as punishment for man's sins. Scooter McCrae's 1994 film *Shatter Dead* similarly posits a world where the existence of zombies spawns the creation of a cult. Here too zombies are sent to Earth by divine fiat, but cannot be killed by the usual means, or at all, since the source of their condition resides in the soul, not in the brain. To some, the presence of zombies is a wondrous thing, signifying that the Rapture cannot be far behind. For others, the presence of the undead is worse than the old way, since this condition has some disturbing drawbacks: these zombies do not crave human flesh, or anything for that matter, and also do not need to sleep, but are eternally imprisoned in bodies that have lost the power of regeneration. Thus, a zombie who is injured or maimed lives eternally as a sort of broken doll, and some of the undead rightfully fear that a caste system will soon develop where unmarred zombies are at the pinnacle, and the more shopworn among them on the lowest rungs of society.

The zombie became popular in Italy ever since the release of Romero's *Dawn* under the name *Zombi*. It is difficult to discuss the Italian zombie film without also describing its sister genre, the cannibal film. The Italian cannibal film is set in an exotic third-world locale and features dark-skinned people consuming in graphic detail the flesh of just about anything that moves. Both Italian zombie and cannibal films are similar to their earlier American and British counterparts in their representation of non-Europeans as violently savage Others.

Also, the Italian zombie and cannibal films are both characterized by graphic scenes of the consumption of bloody flesh. In Italian films, as visual attention is paid to the disturbing eating habits of the zombie as to the spectacle of the creature's own decaying flesh. And similar to the serial killer figure in the American slasher film, the Italian zombie frequently feasts upon scantily clad women, or preys on sexually active couples.

Lucio Fulci's 1979 film *Zombie* is a fairly typical example of the Italian zombie film. *Zombie* (not to be confused with *Zombi* or *Zombi 2*) is set on an unnamed Caribbean island where African drums beat a tattoo whenever anyone approaches the dwelling of the dark-skinned natives. A white doctor remains on the island, attempting to cure the natives of an unidentifiable disease that causes the dead to walk and crave human flesh. While the natives believe the origin of the phenomena is voodoo, the doctor thinks there is a scientific explanation, though he never finds one. The decaying bodies of the zombies get a good deal of screen time, and more often than not, their appearance is made after the camera shows a nude woman in a private setting. This juxtaposition of the zombie with the prerequisite topless young woman so often found in horror films manipulates the phenomenon described by Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasures in Narrative Cinema." The modern audience has become so comfortable with the objectification of female flesh on the screen that the significance of its appearance usually passes unnoticed and it is just another unconscious pleasure. In the Italian zombie film this phenomenon has yet another layer: naked female flesh, presented for visual consumption by the viewer, is juxtaposed with the zombie's very literal consumption of this very body. Not surprisingly, these women also receive the most abuse at the hands of both humans and zombies. The doctor's wife in *Zombie* exists to absorb violence. She goes from getting slapped by her husband to being the recipient of a splinter through the eyeball in one of the most graphic and disturbing scenes in all zombie cinema.

The 1983 Italian film *Zeder* is unusual as a zombie movie in that is more concerned with what happens when the dead are brought back to life than it is with what they eat. The basis of the plot is similar to Stephen King's 1983 novel *Pet Sematary*: special places possess magical powers to reanimate the dead. One such site is a fifth-century necropolis in Italy; in 1959, Paolo Zeder experimented with this ground by having his body secretly interred there. Zeder rose from the dead, but became a mindless fiend who preyed on the living. Twenty-seven years later, a former priest has himself interred in this ground, and a team of paranormal investigators monitors his progress with a television camera placed in his coffin. After a year in his grave, the priest has not decomposed and eventually awakens to wreak havoc on the living. The fearful spectacle of death presented in *Zeder* is not one of decay, but of the dead *living*. In one of the penultimate scenes, the video camera shows the priest's eyes flickering, then opening completely, a wicked smile playing across his lips as he laughs maniacally before rising from his own death. *Zeder* is also similar to *Pet*

Sematary in its assumption that the reanimated necessarily have homicidal intent toward the living.

Other Italian, and Spanish, zombie films are about the ancient, rather than the recently dead, rising from their graves. Perhaps this is to be expected in a continent where ancient history is a tangible presence amidst contemporary life. The Italian film *War of the Zombies* (1964) presents an undead army of Roman legionnaires who threaten the world with the rule of a black magician. The Spanish film *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (1971) takes as its subject medieval Knights Templar, who brought back from their last crusade eastern necromantic secrets of life and death. The order drank the blood of a virgin to make a pact with Satan that permitted them to live eternally, provided they drink more blood and consume human flesh. Soon the outside world learns of their crimes, and the knights are excommunicated and executed, but too late—they can continue their existence beyond death through the consumption of female flesh. The knights thrive well into the twentieth century, and at the end of the film they have escaped the confines of their monastery completely to consume more human flesh for three more sequels. The zombies of *Tombs* are the personification of death itself: their bloated faces filled with maggots, they feast upon the living who, moments before, were having sex or caring for their children.

In the past twenty years, the popularity of zombies has spread to the novel format as well. One of the most original and graphic of these novels is Simon Clark's *Blood Crazy* (1995), set in a post-apocalyptic world where overnight a virus has infected anyone over twenty-one with a drive to brutally annihilate the young by lavishing violence on them. Their juvenile victims, often their own children, are rent asunder, stomped into the earth, even crucified. The surviving youth now have to restructure society without adult guidance. While the adults in *Blood Crazy* are not the walking dead, since they are not deceased, they are zombies in that their higher reasoning has been obliterated, leaving them with nothing more than a drive to kill the young that is so powerful that it wipes out even the need for eating and sleeping. The infected adults are so single-minded in their purpose that they will do things such as make a living bridge of themselves over a river, those on the bottom willingly drowning to permit others to reach the young who must be wiped out at all costs. Other zombie novels include *Pet Sematary* (1983), which will be discussed in a later section of this chapter; Bentley Little's *The Walking* (2002), where the recently dead shamble miles to a lake in the middle of the Arizona desert, the site of a nineteenth-century town eventually flooded by the government to stop the evil located there; and Brian Smyth's *Deathbringer* (2006), where a sorcerer comes to a small Tennessee town and makes the newly dead into a zombie army to menace the living.

Literary zombies are generally flat characters, which is to be expected, since they are typified by the mindlessness of their drives. Notable exception can be seen in Tim Waggoner's hard-boiled dark fantasy *Necropolis* (2004) and Brian Keene's *The Rising* (2003) and *City of the Dead* (2005), novels that feature

intelligent zombies. Waggoner's Necropolis is a newly created subterranean city of supernatural creatures, including werewolves, vampires, and zombies. While most of the zombies are devoid of free will, Waggoner's protagonist, Matthew Adroin, is a zombie *not* under the control of a master. Adroin, a hard-boiled private detective, knows what no one else does: Necropolis's fatal flaw that will destroy the city if not corrected. There is also a touch of humor in Adroin's zombie state. In Waggoner's universe, people are turned into zombies through a series of spells that not only bind them to their master, but ensure that their bodies do not deteriorate. But similar to many pharmaceuticals, these spells lose their efficacy after a while, and unfortunately for Adroin, the magic no longer prevents his own decay, so that he must resort to ''restoring'' himself with bits of his corpus that have fallen into his pockets.

''Every so often in history, there will come this colossal event that splits time in two. You know, like the birth of Jesus Christ. Everything before—B. C. Everything after—A. D. On my way to McDonald's, it happened again. After two thousand years of old Age, Anno Domini, had died a death. Naturally, like everyone else at the time I didn't know it. Any more than a passerby seeing that baby squawking in a manger somewhere in suburban Bethlehem would know that the world was going to change PDQ.'' Observed at the beginning of Simon Clark's Blood Crazy *by his hero Nick Aten about the world the day changed when everyone over 21 became infected with a virus compelling them to murder the young.*

Keene's novels posit an apocalyptic universe where a government experiment with a supercollider has loosed a demon that kills and inhabits humans, and later animals. Jim Thurmond, a construction worker, is one of the few remaining humans, having built a bomb shelter five years earlier to survive Y2K. But Keene's zombies are not the slow and mindless sort established by Romero. Of course, they hunger for flesh and reproduce prodigiously, but they are also fast and intelligent—they can think, drive cars, and even set traps for the living.

Zombies continue their popularity in contemporary graphic novels and comics. Eric Powell's humorous *The Goon* series (2003) pits the title character, a sort of mafia hit man with occult powers, against his arch nemesis, the Nameless Priest, and his army of undead soldiers. Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore's *The Walking Dead* series (2004) is more character driven and less concerned with gory representations of the living dead, and is very heavily influenced by Romero's *Dead* series as well as Danny Boyle's 2002 film *28 Days Later*. Rick, a small-town Kentucky police officer, is shot in the line of duty and put into a coma. He awakens a month later to discover that zombies have taken over the world and destroyed civilization. Rick heads toward Atlanta and is reunited with his wife and child, who have taken refuge outside of that city with a band of other survivors. *The Walking Dead* focuses on the usual struggles that ensue whenever a civilization is toppled by zombies, ranging from petty bickering about who does the laundry to more weighty

"The end is very fucking nigh." Message scrawled on a church wall in 28 Days Later.

matters concerning the best place to be in order to survive. Also, the series is rendered in black and white rather than color, which not only underemphasizes the gore but gives the work the feel of Romero's black and white film *Night of the Living Dead*. And most recently, *The Marvel Zombies* (2006) is Marvel Comics's most recent addition to its list of undead characters. *The Marvel Zombies* series is an arc of an *Ultimate Fantastic Four* story that occurs in a parallel universe where a virus from space turns superheroes into the flesh eating undead.

Zombies have also come into the world of video games, some of which have spawned their own comic books in turn. *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*, produced by LucasArts, is a shooter-style video game where teenaged protagonists must navigate their way through a suburban landscape besieged by a number of classic monsters including werewolves, vampires, and zombies. The game's sequel, *Ghoul Patrol*, however, was rather uninspired and effectively killed off the series. And in the 1996 game *Resident Evil*, a corporation clandestinely conducting biological warfare research has created a race of bloodthirsty mutants who are now out of control. *Resident Evil* has spawned a comic book series and several films.

As the zombie figure becomes more familiar in popular culture, many writers and filmmakers push to extremes the idea of the undead as representative of existential angst. The zombie not only represents a fear of (and denial of) death, but states of existence devoid of meaning and of questionable quality. David Sutton's short story "Clinically Dead" (1993) applies the zombie metaphor to the horrors of medical technology used to prolong life at any cost. When the nameless protagonist's elderly mother becomes critically ill, neither patient nor her only surviving family member is given any say in her medical care. Instead, her unconscious body is kept alive, and she is whisked away to a special hospital that cares for people whose bodies are failing. When her son visits her in this facility, he makes a horrifying discovery: not only do others also seem to have been transformed into the undead through science, but similar to zombies created by black magic, their animated flesh has been filled with a unified will to kill their "creators."

Edgar Wright's comic film *Shaun of the Dead* (2005) offers a similar, if parodic, commentary on modern life. The opening scene shows the film's hero, Shaun, pasty and slack-jawed at the conclusion of another monotonous night of drinking in his local pub. When the zombies appear in the film five minutes later, their presence is redundant among the workaday living, and at first they are barely noticed. If zombies are flat characters, then so are most of the living in this film. Hence, escaping doom involves not merely avoiding the bite of a zombie, but actively becoming a "round character," someone with a varied and meaningful existence.

R. Chetwynd Hayes's comic short story "The Ghouls" (1975) makes light of what is done more seriously with the undead in other works such as *White*

Zombie and *Zombie Plague*. In both of these films, it is hinted at that zombies make ideal workers. Not only is their condition similar to slavery but, better still, they do not attempt to shirk their duties, since they have no will of their own. In Hayes's story, a prime minister oversees a secret government program to convert the dead into productive civil servants who do not even need to be paid. The apparent mindlessness of lower-level civil service makes it completely unnecessary that these employees possess any critical thinking skills in order to do their jobs effectively.

Clive Barker's short story "Sex, Death and Starshine" (1984) likewise blurs the distinction between human and zombie and questions the quality of modern life. The Elysium Theatre, a grand palace of the arts about to be torn down to make way for an office building or big box store, is hosting its final show, a production of *Twelfth Night*. A truly incompetent actress has been cast in the role of Viola because her fame as a television star will guarantee that the public, who would otherwise avoid a production of Shakespeare, will spend money; this demonstrates that the truly crass world has succeeded the one that created the Elysium. One of the elderly trustees of the theater laments that the last show of the Elysium will not be a quality production, and wants to put someone else in the role—his dead wife Constantia, a gifted actress in her day. The zombie Constantia, embalmed soon after her death, has retained her beauty, and was so renowned in life for her thespian prowess that her presence on the stage inspires the deceased to rise from their own untended graveyard to see her perform. When Constantia is on stage with the human actors, it is as if the line between the living and the dead has been seamlessly crossed: the illusion of life created by great art is more compelling and beautiful than the genuine article. But the real irony is that only the dead can appreciate truly excellent theater as the living are all too obtuse.

Les Daniels's humorous story "They're Coming for You" features zombies who return from the dead and are curiously uninterested in taking revenge on their creator. The ironically named Mr. Bliss walks in on his young wife's dalliance with another man in their marital bed, prompting him to kill her and her partner in adultery and bury the two in the back yard. When Bliss finally has the courage to return to the scene of the crime, the two rise from their shallow grave and come to the upstairs bedroom where he waits. But they are not interested in nibbling on his flesh, but only intent on continuing their fairly athletic coitus. Bliss finds himself compelled to watch their performance, since the undead have a more meaningful and interesting existence than his own.

Don Coscarelli's witty film *Bubba Ho-tep* (2002), based on a Joe R. Lansdale story of the same name, likewise employs the zombie to explore existential angst. In an East Texas nursing home live an aging Elvis Presley and John Kennedy. The staff naturally believe that Elvis and the President are not who they say they are, but instead, like the other inmates of the home, grossly out of touch with reality. After all, Elvis's "real" identity is Sebastian Haff, an Elvis impersonator, whose career-ending fall from the stage broke his hip and forced

A Chronology of Important Zombie Films

1932   *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin)

1943   *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur)

1958   *Plan Nine from Outer Space* (Ed Wood)

1964   *The Earth Dies Screaming* (Terence Fisher)

1964   *The Last Man on Earth* (Ubaldo Ragona)

1964   *War of the Zombies* (*Roma contra Roma*) (Guiseppe Vari)

1966   *The Plague of Zombies* (John Gilling)

1968   *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero)

1971   *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagil)

1973   *Return of the Evil Dead* (Amando de Ossorio)

1973   *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (Amando de Ossorio)

1974   *A Virgin among the Living Dead* (Jesus Franco)

1979   *Dawn of the Dead* (George A. Romero)

1979   *The Fog* (John Carpenter)

1979   *Zombie* (Lucio Fulci)

1979   *Zombi 2* (Lucio Fulci)

1980   *The Gates of Hell* (Lucio Fulci)

1981   *The Evil Dead* (Sam Raimi)

1982   *Creepshow* (George A. Romero)

1983   *Zeder* (a.k.a. in the United States as *Revenge of the Dead*) (Pupi Avati)

1985   *Day of the Dead* (George A. Romero)

1985   *Re-Animator* (Stuart Gordon)

1985   *Return of the Living Dead* (Dan O'Bannon)

1987   *Evil Dead II* (Sam Raimi)

1987   *I Was a Teenage Zombie* (John Elias Michalakis)

1987   *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (Wes Craven)

1988   *Return of the Living Dead, Part II* (Ken Wiederhorn)

1988   *Zombi 3* (Lucio Fulci)

1989   *Pet Sematary* (Mary Lambert)

1990   *Night of the Living Bread* (Kevin S. O'Brien)

1990   *Night of the Living Dead* (Tom Savini)

1991   *Bride of Re-Animator* (Brian Yunza)

1991   *Night of the Day of the Dawn of the Son of the Bride of the Return of the Revenge of the Terror of the Attack of the Evil Mutant Hellbound*

him into a nursing home. And the man claiming to be President Kennedy is black. But each man has a perfectly "reasonable" explanation for his seemingly improbable situation. In the late seventies, Elvis, tired of fame and fortune, changed lives with an impersonator who could be his twin and liked drugs even more than he did. When the impersonator soon expired, the world believed the King was dead. And Jack Kennedy did not die after being shot in Dealey Plaza, but was whisked away to a secret hospital where his enemies dyed his skin brown, modified his memory, and placed him with some African Americans they said were his family so that he would forget he was ever the leader of the Free World.

Now each man suffers the daily indignities of living in a nursing home, an existence that is itself a sort of living death. But as improbable as Jack's and Elvis's situations seem, they are downright sensible compared to the explanation behind what is killing off residents in the home. An ancient mummy, Bubba Ho-tep, formerly part of a traveling road show attraction, has "escaped" when the bus carrying him ran off a bridge and into the creek below. Bubba Ho-tep's makers eternally cursed him by burying him without any of his names, depriving him of the identity he would need to move on to the next world. Now Bubba Ho-tep is doomed to roam the earth, sucking souls from people in order to continue to animate his hideously desiccated corpse. For Bubba Ho-tep, the nursing home is like the proverbial nest on the ground— the prey can't escape easily, and no one will believe an outlandish tale of a mummy running in the halls. Only when Jack and Elvis team up to rid the world of Bubba Ho-tep can they regain their sense of purpose and feel alive once more.

Bubba Ho-tep is not your typical zombie film, however. As stated previously, generally mummies *aren't* considered zombies, because they are usually not devoid of will or completely controlled by one basic drive. But this is not the case with Bubba Ho-tep, who is compelled to suck souls in much the same

way Romero's zombies crave human flesh. Another important factor is Bubba Ho-tep's appearance, something that Lansdale is unable to convey fully through his story, since he is not working in a visual medium. While mummies share the shambling gait of the zombie, they are generally covered in bandages. But Bubba Ho-tep is very obviously and disturbingly a decaying corpse. And his decomposition is as terrible a spectacle as the visible aging of the nursing home residents. Also, Bubba Ho-tep's countenance and behavior are reminiscent of the figure of Death, sans black robe and scythe, come to harvest those who aren't really "living" much any more.

Some zombie narratives treat the inability to accept death. In Stephen King's novel *Pet Sematary,* residents of a rural main town use the Micmac Indian burying ground as a way to cheat death because this place's supernatural powers allow the bereaved to be reunited with their loved ones. But the Micmac burying ground, once a hallowed resting place for the tribe, has been corrupted by whites into a site of dangerous magic. Those buried in this space are physically regenerated, but lack a soul. Thus, while their bodies return to their loved ones, they no longer possess any memories of affection or attachment, but instead are animated only by an irrational desire to kill whoever was responsible for their resurrection.

William Sleator's young adult novel *The Boy Who Couldn't Die* (2004) explores the inability of adolescents to accept mortality. Sleator writes about a sort of zombie not seen often in Western popular culture, the astral zombie. Astral zombies, also derived from Haitian folklore, are individuals who still walk among the living, but have either sold their souls or had them stolen by a houngan who can then use them to carry out his or her wishes. This is the case for sixteen-year-old Ken Pritchard, who initially believes himself to be invulnerable. After all, he is a white male from a wealthy family that can give him things such as a private education and spring break vacations in exotic countries. His youth and privileged position have presented him with little opportunity to see misery, let alone death, first-hand. But all this changes when his best friend is killed in a plane crash, his body so mangled that an open casket funeral is out of the question. Ken, still at that age where he cannot imagine old people as ever having been young, naturally has difficulty accepting that a member of his cohort is mortal, and his friend's death precipitates an existential crisis.

Looking for something to placate his fears, Ken is attracted to an obscure ad in the back of a magazine that promises to make him safe from death. The ad leads Ken to Cheri Beaumont, whose appearance bespeaks the pedestrian nature of mortality more than it does exotic powers from another land. Cheri is a sagging and wrinkled middle-aged woman whose apartment reeks of cigarette smoke and is decorated with tacky ballerina ornaments. For the price of a concert ticket, she promises she can hide Ken's soul and make him immortal. But there is a catch. Nothing can be gained without sacrifice, so to live eternally, Ken must be willing to die a little first, and once his soul is hidden, it won't be easy, let alone cheap, to get it back.

Sleator's novel is remarkable in that his zombie is actually a round character capable of questioning the quality of his existence and ultimately changing things. This is in part due to the nature of the astral zombie, who is a good deal more similar to the living than more traditional types of zombies. Ken explores his newfound immortality by doing suicidal things such as provoking a fight with the school bully and swimming with sharks while on a family vacation. But Ken soon learns that immortality isn't all he thought it would be: food is no longer appetizing, and even kissing the most attractive girl in school after "winning" her from her bully boyfriend is uninteresting! Ken eventually comprehends the horror of his condition. After a vivid nightmare in which he knifes a stranger, he awakens to find himself in the family kitchen, clutching a butcher knife from which phantom blood disappears before his eyes. The next night, Ken discovers that a man was found stabbed to death in the vicinity where his dream was set and realizes that he is no longer in control of a vital part of his self; instead, his soul has been hijacked to accomplish someone else's will. Ken's ensuing struggle to regain control of his soul causes him to understand how truly special it is to be mortal and vulnerable.

The films *Ed and His Dead Mother* (1993) and *Braindead* (1992) also treat the inability to accept the death of loved ones. Both deal humorously with socially inept mama's boys unable to sever the parental relationship, even after the death of their mothers. *Braindead* is the more traditional of the two. In life, Lionel's mother is a demanding shrew who desperately tries to keep her son all to herself, even going so far as to spy on him while he takes an attractive young woman on a date to the zoo. It is here that Lionel's mother is bitten by a Sumerian rat monkey, turning her into a flesh-eating zombie who infects others with her bite. Worse still, Lionel's mother is ever more demanding dead than she was alive, and he must spend all his waking hours ensuring that she doesn't escape and harm anyone else, particularly the woman he loves. *Braindead*'s over-the-top gore further parodies the more recent incarnations of the genre.

Ed and His Dead Mother is less traditional in that Ed's inability to get over his mother's death derives from his almost unnatural affection for her. As with Lionel, Ed's relationship with his mother prevents him from having an adult relationship with a woman his own age, and his inability to get over her death further prevents him from maturing. Not surprisingly, Ed is easy prey for a slick-talking salesman who promises to return his deceased mother to him for a nominal fee. Of course, Ed's mother comes back as a zombie, but her reappearance among the living isn't as disturbing, at least at first, since her lust for flesh is more subtle, and if one didn't look too closely, it wouldn't be possible to detect any difference between Ed's undead mother and her formerly alive self. The zombies in both these films represent the idealized parent that we all create as children, the one who must be symbolically killed if we are to emerge as autonomous adults. Thus, both men must ultimately kill their zombie mothers if they are to become successfully heterosexualized and able to have adult relationships with women their age.

After the zombie narrative was firmly established as a subgenre with its own rules, parodies appeared. Parodic zombie narratives are particularly illuminating in that, to be effective, they must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the genre. One of the earliest of these parodies is Sam Raimi's film *The Evil Dead* (1981). The plot is fairly simple. A group of college students drive to a remote mountain cabin for a weekend of partying. Instead, they discover the reason the cabin was so cheap. In the basement is a copy of the *Necronomicon*, a magical book that can raise the dead. And just in case the hapless finder of this tome is unable to read it, there is also a helpful version of the book on tape, which one of the group plays, thereby raising a demon who possesses each of the cabin's inhabitants and makes them into the walking dead who hunger for flesh.

The Evil Dead, with its cheesy special effects and gore so over-the-top that it can only be a parody of itself, questions the conventions of the genre. Ash, the film's hero, cannot seem to figure out if he is in a zombie film or a possession story. When his girlfriend's body is inhabited by the demon and her face is subsequently distorted into a bluish death mask with glassy eyes, he cannot quite bring himself to kill and dismember her (one of the few things that can stop a zombie), perhaps because he himself isn't quite sure if she is not just possessed. And the demon takes advantage of Ash's confusion about what rules apply. At one point, when Ash is prepared to dispatch the thing that was his girlfriend with a bullet to the head, the trickster-demon restores her pre-dead appearance and voice, causing him to vacillate long enough to be menaced further. But even when Ash finally realizes that he is in a zombie movie, ordinary human sentimentality prevents him from doing what is necessary. As Ash prepares to cut off his zombified girlfriend's head with a chainsaw, he is stopped cold at the sight of the necklace he gave her, dangling around her neck. This hesitation allows the demon to do still more damage. But in the end, it really doesn't matter how soon Ash realizes he is in a zombie movie, since the rules he has learned from this genre do not apply either, since they never really made logical sense. After all, how can you kill something that's already dead? You can't, which is why the film ends with the demon chasing Ash. *The Evil Dead* spawned two sequels: *Evil Dead II* (1987) and *Army of Darkness* (1993).

The Return of the Living Dead (1985) similarly plays with the conventions of the zombie narrative. *Return* is an explicit parody of Romero's *Dead* series. John A. Russo, who co-wrote the script for *Night* with Romero, was also one of the writers for *Return*, which poses the question asked by many fans: "How do you kill something that's already dead?" *Return*'s premise is this: the events depicted in *Night* really happened, but the directors had to change the story in order to avoid litigation. Inside a Louisville medical warehouse are stored the bodies of the reanimated dead, part of a vast government cover-up from events in 1968, after an experimental chemical developed by the military for killing. Marijuana came into contact with the newly dead, bringing them back to life with an insatiable desire for consuming brains. One of the zombies "safely"

contained in an allegedly impervious container crafted by the Army Corps of Engineers escapes, contaminating a cadaver in the warehouse. Now two zombies are on the loose, and hapless people trapped in the warehouse rely on what they learned in *Night* to neutralize the undead menace. But alas, *Night* is not a source of factual information, and indeed, it is difficult to "kill" what is already dead. Burning the zombies in the incinerator of a mortuary next door at least gets rid of the individual undead, but causes a new problem when the ashes are borne aloft just before a rainstorm brings them down to earth, saturating the ground of the nearby cemetery and reanimating the dead interred within.

The zombies in *Return* are also capable of learning rapidly in order to adapt to their new environment. One zombie, a Confederate soldier, has no trouble operating the radio in an abandoned police car in order to convince the dispatcher that he is a police officer in need of reinforcements. The dispatcher obliges, and more officers are sent to the scene of the disturbance, only to be consumed by the waiting zombies as if they were nothing more than a pizza delivery. The zombies in *Return* are also articulate: they are able to tell their victims clearly that they are after brains—apparently their voice boxes didn't deteriorate.

There is also irony in where the besieged living has been forced to take shelter—the mortuary. The modern funeral industry has encouraged us to believe that death is not a part of life, transforming the corpse so that it appears that the deceased is only sleeping rather than beginning to decompose, and conveniently permitting us to forget this horrible reality. But death is with us always, no matter how hard we strain to deny this fact. Hence, the zombies' wish to eat brains (rather than the more general human flesh that other zombies consume) can be seen as attempting to reacquaint the conscious mind with the disturbing knowledge of death.

Another comic zombie film that is conversant in the conventions of the genre is *Re-Animator* (1985), which is loosely based on H. P. Lovecraft's 1922 short story "Herbert West—Reanimator." Lovecraft's tale of a mad scientist in the vein of Victor Frankenstein is arguably a zombie story. West, obsessed with the desire to isolate the mechanical processes that permit life, experiments with keeping alive humans who are soon to expire. This causes great suffering to his subjects, as the dead tissue is not anxious to return to life, and does so only with great pain. The story concludes with West's most recent and horrible experiment—keeping alive, separately, the head and body of a major killed during World War I. The "preserved" soldier makes a spectacular return with some of his fellow reanimated dead to take vengeance on their creator. *Re-Animator* emphasizes the humor in Lovecraft's story, taking what is told with tongue in cheek in the original to its most absurd extreme. Dr. Herbert West, a medical student at Miskatonic Medical School, has discovered a serum that can reanimate dead things, and one of the school's directors, Dr. Carl Hill, attempts to steal this secret from him. Instead, Hill becomes one of West's more

horrifying experiments, suffering a fate similar to that of Lovecraft's Dr. West's major. Hill's torso shuffles around, his head tucked underneath his arm. While this scene in Lovecraft's story is merely horrifying, translated into a visual medium it becomes absurd. Hill's torso flails comically and finds it necessary to hold his severed head above his shoulders so that he can see. One of the film's more humorous, and graphic scenes, involves the headless Dr. Hill attempting to ravish the supine object of his affection, holding up his severed head in order to perform an obscene act upon the unwilling young woman.

The zombie also appears in more recent narratives incorporated with other more traditional folklore. Peter Tremayne's 1993 short story "Marbh Bheo" is an example of this type of story. "Marbh Bheo" tells of the Irish myth of the living dead. During the days of the Potato Famine, a greedy British landlord turns out his tenants to starve because they are unable to pay their rents. Wishing to change their minds, the parish priest gathers with the tenants to protest, only to be cruelly cut down by the lord's henchmen. The local cunning woman finds a corpse that is in relatively good condition in that it has lost no limbs and uses her ancient wisdom to reanimate it. Similar to the golem in Rabbi Lowe's tale, this creature is then controlled by the cunning woman to protect her people. But the marbh bheo goes further than Rabbi Lowe's golem: it actually seeks vengeance against not only the landlord, but his descendants many generations down, tearing them into pieces.

Other more recent works renew an interest in the zombie as genuine phenomena. Lisa Cantrell's novel *Boneman* (1992) returns the zombie to its Haitian roots through her story of a Haitian drug dealer who is also a houngan able to turn his rivals into zombies.

The zombie has also been subject matter for more mainstream directors. Danny Boyle's film *28 Days Later* is a modern version of Romero's dead. Boyle's zombies are neither bewitched nor the reanimated dead, but instead are irredeemably infected with a virus known as rage that causes perfectly docile humans to transform into red-eyed shells of their former selves, now animated by nothing more than the single-minded desire to tear asunder other humans. The virus has the same "magical" quality in Boyle's universe that radiation had in Romero's, in that it is capable of rapidly transforming everything in its path. And the nature of the virus itself, rage, is the *Zeitgeist* of the modern era, where everything is so impersonalized and moves so rapidly as to provoke constant and consuming impotent fury. The single-minded need to destroy other humans is the only thing that qualifies these creatures as zombies as they aren't dead. Also unlike Romero's undead, Boyle's zombies are fast, sweeping down upon their hapless victims with preternatural speed.

The zombie has become such a cultural icon that it has come full circle as a metaphor for someone who has no will, similar to the way poet Robert Southey used the term in the early nineteenth century. Joyce Carol Oates's novel *Zombie* (1995), a serial killer narrative loosely based on the life of Jeffery Dahmer, attests to this phenomenon. Dahmer experimented with making some

of his victims into zombies by giving them a home lobotomy with a drill. Similarly, Oates's psychologically immature sex offender Quentin Q. is obsessed with making the perfect zombie, a beautiful young man who can be transformed into a willing sex slave that he can keep hidden indefinitely for his private enjoyment. Brad Gooch's novel *Zombie 2000* (2000) uses the zombie as a metaphor for his protagonist's lack of assertion and unnatural ability to be swayed by the desires of others much to his own detriment. And most recently, the term zombie is used by computer geeks to describe a terminal that has been maliciously taken over by a remote host.

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