Letters

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H.P Lovecraft

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BOOKS



H. P. LOVECRAFT

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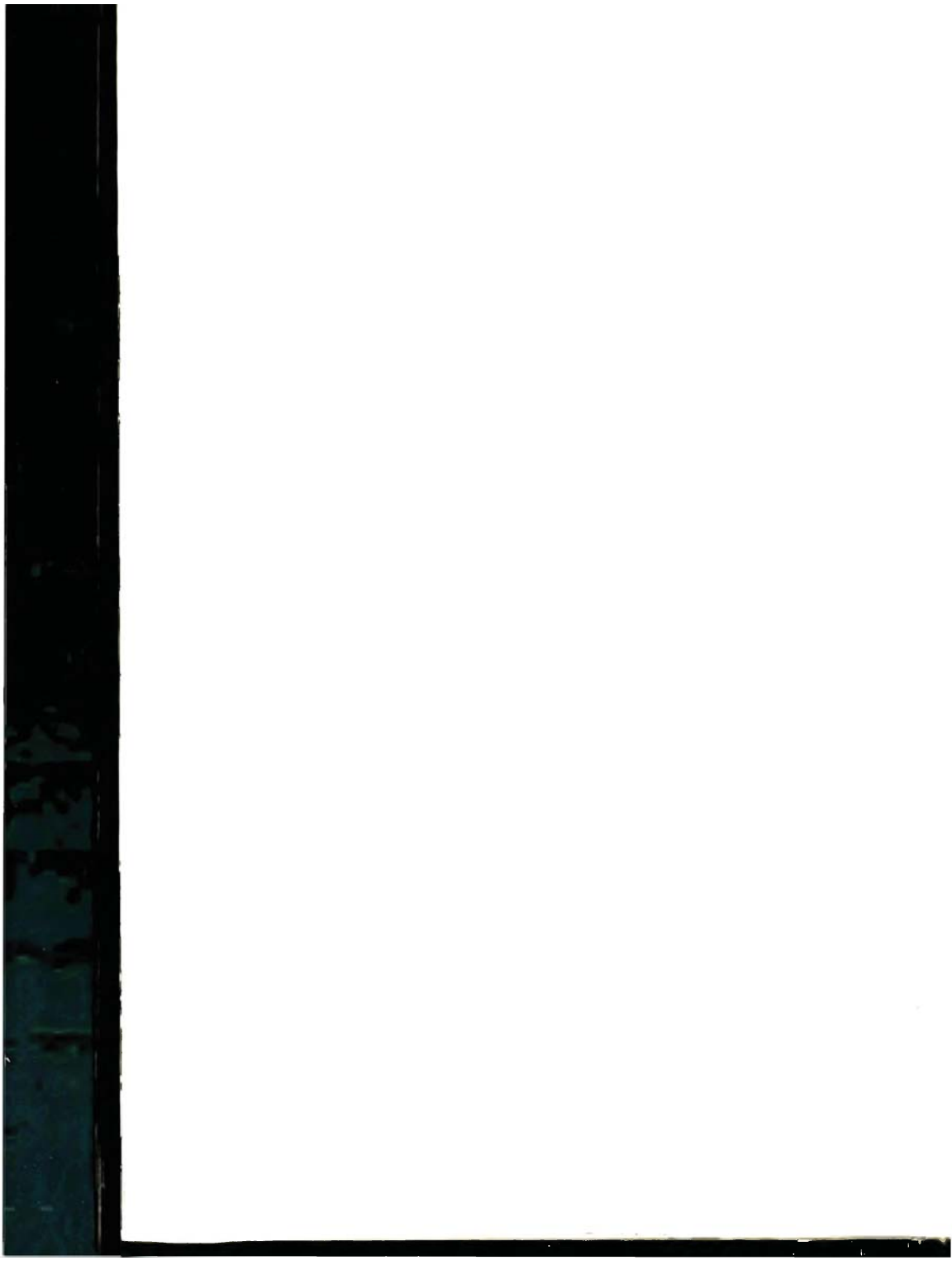

PREFACE

DURING the final period of his life covered by this fifth volume of selected letters, Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890–1937) continued to reside quietly with his aunt in Providence, Rhode Island under circumstances of dwindling finances, deteriorating health, and diminished creative production. Lovecraft completed only two stories during these last three years, although one of them, the 1934 nouvelle *The Shadow out of Time,* unquestionably ranks among his finest endeavors. The other story, *The Haunter of the Dark,* was finished in November 1935, and three months later Lovecraft expressed his sense of artistic enervation in a letter to E. Hoffmann Price: "I don't know that there's much use in further [fictional] experimentation. I'm farther from doing what I want to do than I was twenty years ago. The peculiar faculty which Blackwood and Dunsany possess simply isn't mine." On several previous occasions during his lifetime, H. P. Lovecraft had resolved "to write no more tales"; this time, his worsening intestinal ailment would ensure that the promise be kept.

Despite his own dissatisfaction with past literary efforts, the continuing publication of Lovecraft's later work by *Weird Tales* and *Astounding Stories* merely enhanced his stature as a fantaisiste, even while the discouraged scrivener himself virtually had ceased to compose new stories. Many youthful admirers and aspiring authors began to write to the scholarly recluse in Providence, and as his correspondence increased from five to sometimes ten letters each day, he was forced to expend ever more creative energy simply attempting to accommodate this expanding epistolary program. Lovecraft's extraordinary erudition and fabulous memory made him a legendary letter writer as he corre-

sponded regularly with such old friends as James F. Morton, August Derleth, Robert Bloch, Elizabeth Toldridge, and Robert H. Barlow; with his three peers among contributors to *Weird Tales,* Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, and C. L. Moore; and with such new acquaintances as Henry Kuttner, Virgil Finlay, Fritz and Jonquil Leiber, Kenneth Sterling, and others.

The range of subjects represented in this final group of letters will confirm that to the very end of his life, Lovecraft remained the seeker after truth; his unbounded intellectual curiosity continued to explore realms of literature, philosophy, history, science, and as America entered more deeply into the great depression, economic and political theory. This last category became an insistent epistolary preoccupation with Lovecraft during the 1930s and constitutes a veritable reversal of his early position on such matters. In 1914, Lovecraft had joined the United Amateur Press Association and soon began to publish his own magazine, *The Conservative.* An editorial from the July 1919 issue of this journal will serve to suggest Lovecraft's political and economic attitudes as a young man:

Bolshevism

> The most alarming tendency observable in this age is a growing disregard for the established forces of law and order . . . long-haired anarchists are preaching a social upheaval which means nothing more or less than a reversion to savagery or mediaeval barbarism. . . . The present agitation undoubtedly arises from false belief in the possibility of a radically altered social order. The workers who strike, and the shouters who incite to crime, are obviously possessed of the notion that the property of the wealthy could practicably be shared with them. . . . We need a new Menenius Agrippa to proclaim and demonstrate widely the total fallacy of such an illusion. Our present social order, whilst capable of some degree of liberalisation, is the product of the natural development of human relations. It is not ideal, nor could anything on earth be ideal—but it is inevitable. Just as long as some men are more intelligent than others, so long will there be inequality of wealth. The type of persons who indulge in strikes and socialism seem never to realise how much they depend on the brains of their hated "economic masters."

While Lovecraft at no time during his life advocated a communistic reign of the proletariat, he did become, a mere fifteen years after writing the above words, a confirmed liberal who envisioned a form of fascistic socialism entailing government ownership of industry, arti-

ficially allocated employment, regulated salaries and old age pensions, and similar measures.

Lovecraft's essential character and convictions had been determined through childhood residence with his maternal lineage, the proud Rhode Island Phillips family, which during the 1900s had declined from its position of economic and social eminence to a state of genteel poverty and obscurity. The adult Lovecraft never accepted his resultant status as a member of the working class, however, but instead remained, within the material compromises imposed upon him by the exigencies of his economic circumstances, a staunch defender of the traditional values of his old family. His editorial from *The Conservative* thus reflects a theory of social order involving a "natural aristocracy"—an ancestral group of landed or moneyed gentlemen whose superior intellectual and cultural attainments rendered them fitted to serve in a benignly paternalistic manner as the inevitable leaders of society.

Lovecraft maintained this aristocratic attitude until the economic crisis of the 1930s forced a radical reevaluation of his position: "Being a convinced feudalist [before the depression], I believed that the great industries . . . would have the sense to handle the growing problem of human displacement themselves. I thought they would recognize the revolutionary peril of the unemployed millions of the future, and would *voluntarily* curtail profits enough to spread work among more men. . . . I assumed that the *funded proprietor* of the future would come to feel the same basic responsibilities as those felt by the *landed proprietor* of the past—and that eventually the great accumulations of wealth would once more breed a *real gentry* with non-acquisitive interests and a true ability to use cultivated leisure to advantage. I now see how tragically I overestimated the rationality of the plutocrat. Instead of the benign aristocrat I had looked for, we had only the 'let 'em starve' profit-Shylock of the Hoover era!" His faith in unrestricted capitalism having faltered, Lovecraft proposes instead the comprehensive fascistic control of national resources, administered by a small group of technical experts under the imprimatur of state socialism. "Commercial aims and ideals are the death of rationality and beauty in life. . . . Socialism of some kind is essential to any genuine, profound, and humane civilisation . . . competitive plutocracy must be dethroned. The only decent government is one which keeps economic affairs within its control; assuring a livelihood to all, and preventing the waste of competitive effort. It

ought to be administered by a small board of highly trained executives with centralised power, . . . and chosen by the votes of such citizens as can pass a certain reasonable set of mental, scholastic, and cultural examinations."

Passages such as the preceding pervade the Lovecraft letters of this period as an insistently reiterated admonition; his socialistic vision even receives fictional treatment as Lovecraft thus describes the past history of the transgalactic Great Race of Yith in his nouvelle, *The Shadow out of Time:*

> The Great Race seemed to form a single, loosely knit nation or league, with major institutions in common, though there were four definite divisions. The political and economic system of each unit was a sort of fascistic socialism, with major resources rationally distributed, and power delegated to a small governing board elected by the votes of all able to pass certain educational and psychological tests. . . . Industry, highly mechanized, demanded but little time from each citizen; and the abundant leisure was filled with intellectual and aesthetic activities of various sorts. The sciences were carried to an unbelievable height of development, and art was a vital part of life. . . .

"And art was a vital part of life. . . ." Even more than the capitalistic system of his age, Lovecraft despised its accompanying culture of calculative acquisitiveness, its mercantile mockery of the genteel tradition, its bourgeois debasement of all human endeavor. While Lovecraft's liberal socialism appears a dramatic departure from his cultural background, he in essence was proposing government by a technically trained intellectual aristocracy which would *restore* the old values associated with the world he had lost. "What I used to respect was not really aristocracy, but a set of personal qualities which aristocracy then developed better than any other system . . . a set of qualities, however, whose merit lay only in a psychology of non-calculative, non-competitive disinterestedness, truthfulness, courage, and generosity fostered by good education, minimum economic stress, and assumed position, *and just as achievable through socialism.*" If the dispossessed dreamer had spent much of his life cultivating an autistic existence in the antient New England of his forebears, H. P. Lovecraft at the end had his eyes on the future—to a world paternalistically guided by a new intellectual aristocracy, a world purged of the prevailing obsession with material struggle, and a world in which, once again, "art was a vital part of life."

Although Lovecraft had never been a robust individual, his health gradually declined during 1936, and by the early months of the following year he was seriously ill indeed with chronic kidney disease and intestinal cancer. After being admitted to the Jane Brown Hospital in Providence he continued to keep clinical notes on his terminal illness until he could no longer hold a pencil. On the morning of March fifteenth, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Late Gentleman of His Majesty's Colony of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations, entered the Great Abyss beyond Kadath in the Cold Waste. His lifelong Dream-Quest had reached its ultimate conclusion.

JAMES TURNER

Collinsville, Illinois
30 May 1974

/11. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Home again, and on the old River-Bank.
July 16, 1934

Dear A. W.:—

I found yours of the 25th ult.—together with 28 other letters—awaiting me when I reached home last Tuesday. And what Alpine accumulations of packages and printed matter, and what a monolith of piled-up newspapers! I am only about a quarter straightened out yet, and don't know when I shall ever get readjusted. Had a great week in St. Augustine—seeing all the old sights and inspecting many houses which were not open as museums on my previous visits. Also saw the recumbent skeletons in the Indian graveyard unearthed last spring. Moved north on the 29th—spending 2 days in Charleston, one in Richmond, one in Fredericksburg, two in Washington, and one in Philadelphia. In Washington I inspected the interior of the Capitol and ascended the Washington Monument for the first time. In Philadelphia—besides visiting ancient Germantown and the Wissahickon—I explored the brick cottage tenanted by Poe from 1842 to 1844, and opened a few months ago as a museum and shrine. When I hit N. Y., I found the Longs about to leave for Asbury Park and Ocean Grove over the week-end, and at their cordial invitation went along with them. . . It was good to see the rolling hills, giant elms, stone walls, and white steeples of ancient New England again—though northern scenery seems almost strange after my saturation with palms, live-oaks, Spanish moss, and all that goes with them. As usual, I spend all my afternoons in the open country—though there is an added attraction at home in the form of a coal-black kitten (born last month and just beginning to be playful) at the boarding-house across the back garden. . . . .

Yr. obt. Grandsire,
HP

712. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
July 16, 1934

Dear Helen:—

. . . . . Regarding the sombre reflections of last month—I trust that your present trip, with its constant sequence of external objects of interest & its vivid variety of impressive, mankind-dwarfing landscapes, has done much to dispel them & to relegate their bases to a suitably insignificant place in the background. There is nothing like a combination of engrossing impressions & awesome natural scenery to restore one's sense of harmony & proportion. After all, nothing really matters in the ceaseless round of the limitless cosmos—a cosmos amidst which man & all organic life form only the most trivial incident—except in the most local way; & this local teleology can hardly go beyond the reasonably harmonic adjustment of the individual to the forces within & behind him . . . . a state best achieved through a realistic facing of the conditions of existence, with all their inevitable frustrations & shortcomings, & a philosophic determination *not to expect more than its mediocre pittance of contentment which the cosmos actually has to offer.* Once we cease to maintain the extravagant & often grotesque demands upon life which ill-founded mythologies & ridiculous conventions of sentimentality have unfortunately taught us to maintain, we achieve a degree of resigned tranquility amidst which we are free to busy ourselves with the infinite array of interesting things in the external world—the intrinsic beauty of nature & art, the drama of history & change, the stimulating play of intellect & imagination, & so on! And with these things at our disposal, we generally find (except when oppressed by unusual handicaps such as extreme poverty) that the process of being conscious brings enough rewards to repay us for the trouble of maintaining it. Some, indeed, are probably fortunate enough to derive even *more* pleasure from existence than they would from oblivion. Roughly speaking, I'd tend to say that of all the human race about half are just as well off alive as they would be dead. Another quarter would be better off dead, while the remaining quarter are dis-

tinctly better off alive than they would be dead. In general, the more interested in things *outside himself* a person is, the better time he is likely to have in the world. When anybody becomes introspective—constantly watching himself & his emotions, & constantly worrying about the exact emotions of other people toward him—he is almost certain to become utterly miserable .... & useless to the community, to boot. That is really one of the best defined forms of what we may call *decadence.* It is associated with the spineless & lethargic old age of the race or culture, & crops out continually in the literature & the arts of a feeble or moribund group. There is altogether too much of this decadent introspectiveness in the art & thought of the present western world to make well-wishers of that world feel comfortable—although it is rather debatable just what, specifically, to do about it. I can sympathise with the basic wish of those intertwined with systems—like German Nazism—which try to discourage the neurotic art & literature of introspection & to foster in its place the healthy, extraverted, objective art which characterised our civilisation in its youth. It may be that such efforts to guide art are futile, since the well-springs of art are so deep & so bound up with historic conditions hard to change. Certainly, some of them are tremendously ridiculous & disastrously anti-cultural. But just the same one can understand why vital national regenerators like Mussolini or Hitler or Mustapha Kemal or Stalin try their hardest to promote an aesthetic atmosphere favourable to active objective life, contented social adjustment, & the healthy relative selflessness which encourages group enthusiasm, stamina, & progress toward a given collective end. The greatness of nations, like the happiness of individuals, undoubtably rests on an *objective* habit of mind & emotions.

Concerning the relative merits of epistolary & personally present acquaintances—I fancy it is all a matter of individual temperament. Some people have a psychology which best fits them for first-hand social contacts; while others find that too much gregariousness brings out more of irritation than of interest, hence prefer to limit their contacts to that impersonal exchange of ideas which long-distance correspondence provides. Actually, human beings differ far more than is commonly assumed; so that many things which we popularly regard as simple & universal are in truth highly complex & infinitely varied. This is especially true of the motives & emotions lying behind human relations & acquaintanceship. Unintelligent tradition postulates some single

mystical force called "friendship", & weaves a whole cycle of sentimental myth around it & its supposed properties; whereas in truth there is no such *one* thing—almost every separate case of human acquaintance & liking being due to some separate & individual combination of many dissimilar elements. If one takes any two cases of acquaintance or liking or mutual interest at random, the chances are that the motives & emotions behind each are totally dissimilar if not utterly antipodal. Only the *external* aspect—the fact that *some* sort of congeniality results—is similar, yet from that deceptive similarity any number of absurd folk lore generalisations are made. For the most part, friendship is a device to magnify the ego. People seek others to serve as a sort of flattering mirror or sounding-board, so that they may appear enhanced in their own eyes. The average person acquires a sense of inferiority unless he has an audience to encourage & applaud him—hence much of the gregariousness of mankind. Other causes of human acquaintanceship are more primitive—an instinctive fear of solitude inherited from days when race-survival depended upon a massed defence against enemies, or a diffusive extension of such specialised instincts as the parental, filial, or amative. Still other causes are connected with imaginative inadequacy—a person is so lacking in resourcefulness that he does not know what to do except when supplied with the external suggestions & coöperation of others. Ascending in the scale of intelligence, we find another & wholly distinct source of friendship in the intrinsic pleasure of exchanging ideas & impressions with others capable of understanding & parallelling them. This last is closely connected with the general creative impulse behind art & scholarship, whereby the individual feels a wish to formulate & transmit the impressions & experiences he receives. And so on, & so on—not counting the spurious forms of friendship, whose emotions are purely mercenary or otherwise concerned with direct material advantage, although those are tremendously prevalent. Well—although every separate instance of personal acquaintance usually involves (at least to some extent) *more than one* of these distinct elements, it is probably a fact that in each case some one element does very largely predominate. And it is very natural that some persons should prefer acquaintanceships of one sort, whilst others should prefer other sorts. The more analytical the individual, the more decided will be his preferences—since the undiscriminating person is flattered when anybody notices him for *any* reason, & weaves his own

self-complacent interpretation for his own benefit. The least discriminating persons are the best "mixers"—the likeliest to find congenial friends everywhere in large quantities. Their own motives for acquaintanceship probably centre in imaginative inadequacy—the need for external suggestion—& egotism, joined to a powerful nucleus of instinctive gregariousness & solitude-fear. It is easy to satisfy them. They are not quickly alienated by dulness, overbearingness, or overdemonstrableness in others, & they emphatically prefer personal acquaintance to correspondence. The latter, indeed, since it involves only the idea-exchanging element, is of little or no interest to most of them. At the opposite pole stands the person whose discrimination is very keen, & whose taste in acquaintanceship is limited to certain kinds. He, obviously, cannot find congenial acquaintances as readily as his gregarious brother. There are only certain sorts of persons to whom he has anything to say, & who can say anything which will interest him. Those who force uncongenial forms of acquaintanceship on him qualify as a nuisance. Just where he will find the right kinds of friends—whether in person or in correspondence—depends on just what kind he is looking for. In the case of one whose object is primarily *the exchange of ideas & impressions,* the chances are that he will most readily find kindred spirits in correspondence; since what people put into their correspondence is generally ideas & impressions. Not that he couldn't eventually find such spirits in person—for there *are* many individuals whose chief interest (in conversation as well as correspondence) is the exchange of ideas but that he can find them *quickest & most unonerously* by letter; since a vast lot of people deal principally with ideas *when writing,* yet turn largely to other elements when in face-to-face company. (Thus many are splendid correspondents, yet dull or overbearing as personal companions.) Regarding your own case—I fancy you belong essentially in the category of those who look mainly for idea-exchanging acquaintanceships, & who rather dislike those founded on other elements. This, naturally, makes it harder for you to find suitable friends than as if you were less discriminating; & it also explains why you find & retain epistolary friends more readily than those of the face-to-face sort. The condition is not to be wondered at, & is probably shared by many more persons than you realise. I suppose this discriminating fastidiousness loses one a certain amount of simple gregarious pleasure which more callous persons enjoy, yet I am not at all certain that it is

to be wholly regretted. Probably the rewards of intelligent idea-exchange with the few persons whom a discriminating individual *does* care to know, are measurably greater than the rewards which the bluff "mixer" derives from his wide array of heterogeneous & unselective contacts. The thing to do is merely to jog along quietly & self-sufficiently; seizing opportunities for congenial idea-exchange whenever they present themselves—either epistolarily or conversationally—& not worrying if only a few of the contacts thus established prove worthy of permanent retention. A solid, choice circle of a few friends is every inch as good as a crowd. In the course of time the number of really congenial friends acquired is bound to increase. Perhaps a majority of them will be epistolary—especially since letters give one a world-wide radius to select from, whereas face-to-face acquaintanceship is confined to the comparatively small population of an established geographical area—but a few personal ones will be bound to develop. And you have plenty of time to let nature take its course in the matter—for the very best of friends are those whom one acquires in full maturity, when one's mind & tastes are thoroughly crystallised & conscious of what they want. I myself—with whom idea-exchange is also the only major basis of acquaintanceship—have found this to be very emphatically true. Virtually all my "social" life is that of correspondence, since the local associates of my youth have dropped completely out of my circle of interests & assumed the status of mere nodding acquaintances. Today I don't really know anybody in Providence—& of the various people I do know .... Belknap, Klarkash-Ton, Young Melmoth, Barlow, Morton, Price, & so on ..... the great majority did not appear on my horizon till I was much older than you are. I never heard of Belknap till I was 29, & never exchanged a word with Klarkash-Ton till I was 32! All these friends have come very slowly & gradually—they are the minority who have stuck in the sieve through which scores of casual acquaintances have passed to unknown realms beyond. And that, I fancy, is the way all really congenial & enduring circles of friends are built up. Not merely a matter of years, but a matter of decades.

.....

Yr most obt Servt
HPL

713. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Home again, and on
the old River-bank—
July 17, '34

Hail, Lord of Larnin'!

Your welcome holiday bulletin awaited me as I blew into the home harbour on the morning of July 10th—and amidst what a profusion of neglected tasks, piled-up periodicals, accumulated epistles, and the like did I find it! Aedepol! I'm not half straightened out even now! You last heard from me, I conceive, in antient San Augustin—where I had a delectable week amidst facades and gables half a century old when the first Pilgrim landed on Plymouth Rock. After that came two days in immortal Charleston, one in Richmond, one in Fredericksburg, two in Washington, and one in Philadelphia. . . . . .

In decadent Manhattan I found Sonny Belknap and his parents about to leave for Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, N. J. over the week-end; and at their invitation went along with them—arguing with the child amidst the rhythm of the broad Atlantick's waves. I had not cash enough to stay in N. Y. long, hence looked up no one else save Loveman, with whom I spent a pleasant evening. Fra Samuelus quite overwhelm'd me by making me another gift from his private musaeum—a slim conventionalised bird of carv'd and polish'd horn, with a black lacquer'd surface. It is a typical specimen of the carving of Yankee sailors in the India trade a century ago—made under the influence of Sino-Japanese craftsmanship traditions. It stands as if pois'd for flight thro' gulphs beyond the galaxy—I call it "The Bird of Space", and feel damn lucky to have it. Loveman certainly is a philanthropist!

. . . . . .

Yr. obt. grandsire—
Lo.

714. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I
July 23, 1934

My dear Rimel:—

. . I left De Land June 21st—the Barlows driving me up to St. Augustine, where I secured a room at the same place I stopped in 1931—overlooking the harbour. I spent a week in the ancient town, and certainly enjoyed it to the limit. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . Home at last! I found my aunt in excellent health—going everywhere without a cane. And at the boarding-house across the back garden I found something else of infinite interest and grace—the tiny, coal-black survivor of that last month's crop of kittens of which I spoke in my preceding letter. He was then just a wobbly-legged handful. I borrow him continually, and shall try to snap a picture of him before long. He looks like a bear-cat of paper-weight size. Doesn't purr yet, but probably will before long. He's so venturesome in his exploration of walls and steps that he keeps his mother rather worried! I call him Samuel Perkins—and when he grows up he'll doubtless join the Kappa Alpha Tau and sprawl in state amongst the furry dignitaries of the neighbouring shed roof. Meanwhile the remaining February kitten—Betsey Perkins—has grown to be so big that one can scarcely distinguish her from her black-and-white mother . . . . though she still condescends to seek nourishment from the maternal bosom along with little brother Sam. . . .

. . . . . .

That anecdote in the Wandrei interview about Cthulhu is largely fictitious. I don't recall anything of the kind, although I probably explained to Wandrei as I have to others that the word is supposed to represent a fumbling human attempt to catch the phonetics of an *absolutely non-human* word. The name of the hellish entity was invented by beings whose vocal organs were not like man's, hence it has no relation to the human speech equipment. The syllables were determined by a physiological equipment wholly unlike ours, *hence could never be*

uttered perfectly by human throats. In the story, we have human beings who habitually use the word as best they can; but all they can do is to *approximate* it. This they accomplish by using their throats in a queer way to imitate the original sound as their ancestors heard it from non-human throats. This queer use of the human throat makes a sound something like the original non-human sound, *but it is not like any human speech or sounds that we commonly hear.* It is an alien, unfamiliar sound that human beings can make only with an effort, and that they would not ever think of making if they were not imitating something non-human. The kind of effort or noise made in this way is *not really like speaking,* but is more like the sound a man makes when he tries to imitate a steam-whistle or crowing rooster or howling wind or neighing horse with his mouth. Up to the time of the story, when Prof. Angell became interested in the matter, there had never been any attempt to render the name of the hellish *R'lyeh* monster in our alphabet although Abdul Alhazred made an attempt in Arabic letters, which was repeated in Greek by the Byzantine translator. The Latin translator merely copied the Greek. The letters CTHULHU were merely what Prof. Angell hastily devised to represent (roughly and imperfectly, of course) the dream-name orally mouthed to him by the young artist Wilcox. The actual sound—as nearly as human organs could imitate it or human letters record it—may be taken as something like *Khlûl'-hloo,* with the first syllable pronounced gutturally and very thickly. The *u* is about like that in *full;* and the first syllable is not unlike *klul* in sound, since the *h* represents the guttural thickness. The second syllable is not very well rendered—the *l* sound being unrepresented. My rather careful devising of this name was a sort of protest against the silly and childish habit of most weird and science-fiction writers, of having *utterly non-human entities* use a nomenclature *of thoroughly human character;* as if alien-organed beings could possibly have languages based on *human* vocal organs. Actually, every name supposed to have been originated by non-humans should be painstakingly shaped in such a way as *not* to conform to the principles of human vocalism and language.

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Yrs. most sincerely,
HPL

715. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
July 27-28, 1934

Dear R E H:—

As you know from my card, I duly reached home again and found the spider in excellent condition. This monster now adorns my museum shelf in company with the Florida snake and other exotic bits—including the rattles for which I am indebted to you. I'd certainly rather see him there—safe in a bottle—than crawling around my quarters!

My trip, it is needless to say, was enjoyable down to the bottom line. Since I probably described St. Augustine in detail in 1931, I needn't cover the ground again—except to repeat how potent an imaginative spell lies around those ancient houses and that centuried, brooding fort. Here is a place that was over fifty years old when the first Pilgrim landed in Plymouth! On this occasion I saw an added feature of great interest—an old Indian graveyard just unearthed at the site of the primitive native village north of the town. The skeletons lie side by side, with feet toward the east, and will be permanently preserved in their original positions. The excavation work has been very careful—each skeleton and the earth around it being protected by a low wall of cement. Eventually a large museum building will be erected over the unearthed area. The aspect of the find—which was made only a few weeks before I saw it—is very weird indeed. From the posture of the bodies it is plain that they were buried under the auspices of Franciscan priests—probably around the year 1600.

. . . . . .

As to my ideals of government, you certainly have me wrong. You say you do not hate human development, and yet you sneer at my ideal of a government restricted to men who are properly trained for the job and who know what they are doing! Moreover, you say that if my ideal of government were in force, I would—or could—have you burned at the stake because of your tastes and interests. Now that is *precisely the opposite* of anything which my kind of government would ever do, want to do, or permit to be done! The *absolutely first* requisite of any mature or genuine civilisation is *complete intellectual and artistic*

freedom; so that no restriction whatever would be placed upon any sort of individual thought or tastes. An opinion changed by force is an opinion not really changed at all. No real civilisation wishes to change anyone's opinion except through rational arguments designed to make the holders of error see the error of what they have been holding. Do not judge the sort of fascism I advocate by any form now existing. Every different civilisation needs a different form adapted to its own temperament; and the Italian, Turkish, and German forms represented by Mussolini, Mustapha Kemal, and Hitler are not for us. I would be the last to endorse any of these restrictive systems as applied to Anglo-Saxons.

. . . . . .

. . . . . My object in all arguments is *not to make any preconceived opinion of mine seem right,* but merely *to discover and establish the truth, whatever the truth may be.* . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . I do not think that any part of America has achieved a degree of civilisation equalling western Europe's, and I do not even give my own region first place in comparing types of American civilisation. Instead, going by such evidence as I have received and digested, I would tend to award that distinction to Charleston and the South Carolina low country. I don't favour or oppose any region as a region. I merely recognise and respect certain qualities in life, and rejoice when I find them anywhere. Very often the same region will combine the qualities I respect with those I detest in the most paradoxical fashion. What I admire is human development away from the unicellular stage development of all the powers latent within man, and encouragement of such conditions as give them scope. What I detest is human degradation or retardation in any form—violence, ugliness, ignorance, sensuality, brutality, cruelty, abnormality, filth, cloddishness, rapacity, egotism, encroachment, violations of physical or spiritual integrity, and everything that goes with a dull acquiescence in the animal patterns of the lower part of creation. Any civilisation or way of life which encourages what I respect and combats what I detest gains my endorsement, in whatsoever part of the world it may lie; and vice versa. And I may add that I have tried to found my likes and dislikes on actual cosmic evidence and not on mere caprice. I know how hard it is to talk of external standards in dealing with human preferences, and would

scarcely care to call my criteria infallible ones. On the other hand, I think the long biological, psychological, and philosophical explanations of these *proximate* or *pseudo-absolute* standards which I have made in former letters will convince you that they are not superficial, capriciously-adopted pieces of guesswork and prejudice. You may consider them *wrong,* but you can hardly consider them as *lightly or arbitrarily held.* That is, when I say I believe this set of standards to be profoundly more valid than some other set, it is not merely a question of mood and taste. I have thought about the other sets and tried to see what relation they have to any phase of human existence and differentiation, and in some cases have tried to believe in them. My reason for believing as I do is that all the evidence I can pick up seems, to my mind, to point that way. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Price's visit must surely have been an event. He is the most versatile chap I've ever struck—and could have matched that fencing lecture with one on Arabic, mathematics, Oriental rugs, or what not . . . . . each as ample and scholarly as its fellows. His remarks about foot-fighting must have been interesting. I have heard of this art—which in France seems to be a science somewhat different from the hobnailed brutalities of Maine and Michigan lumberjacks. Price, by the way, is now visiting Clark Ashton Smith again, if he carried out the design mentioned in his latest card. He forms quite a connecting link in the group—being, I believe, the only outside weirdist ever met in person either by you or by the Seneschal of Averoigne. Glad you liked the Silver Key sequel—which somehow disappointed me in print. Collaboration tends to hold my imagination in check, and thus to handicap my inventiveness to a great extent. I need an absolutely free hand in composition.

. . . . . .

I've just written an article on interplanetary fiction at the request of Crawford—of *Marvel Tales*—though it has come out so long that I doubt if he'll want to print it, after all. I try to outline—roughly—the things that could be done to drag this sort of story out of its present appalling rut of banality and conventionality—and incidentally, I venture a few remarks on weird fiction in general.

. . . . .

Yours most cordially—
H P L

716. TO DUANE RIMEL

Out in Roger Williams Park
August 10, 1934

My dear Rimel:—

Little Sam Perkins continues to be an important figure in the neighbourhood of 66 College. He was ill a week ago—languid and drooping but is now quite his dynamic little self again. He purrs off and on, but not very steadily. His eyes are turning out to be yellow, and his face is one of the prettiest I have ever seen. Altogether, he is an unimaginably graceful little piece of the night! I've tried to snap him twice, but shan't know how well or ill I've succeeded till the film is developed. You'll be sorry to hear that his big sister Betsey has suddenly disappeared—a very singular thing, since she never went out of the garden and on the streets where she might be run over. The people at the boarding house are quite disconsolate. As for the name—an old lady at the boarding house started the *Perkins* business last February when Betsey and her two brothers were born. For some reason or other perhaps because "Perkins" has a kind of quaint, old-fashioned sound she named the black and white kitten "Betsey Perkins", though leaving the others (slated for presentation to a family across the city) undesignated. I, however, called the little fellows "Newman Perkins" and "Ebenezer Perkins" after ancestors of my own—for I have a Perkins line. When the black kitten appeared, I went back along my Perkins ancestry and called him Samuel, after a forebear who fought in King Philip's War in 1676. If there are any more kittens later on, I shall probably keep going back along my Perkins line (which is traceable to 1380 in Shropshire and Warwickshire) for names—*John* being the next in order. But I seldom call a cat by any *one* name. When I speak to little Sam I call him all sorts of things—"Little Black Dent", "Old Nigger Man", "Spawn of the Shadows", "Little Piece of the Night", "Old Black Panther". "Little Onyx Sphinx", "Child of Bast", and so on, and so on ..... not excluding the succinct and universal "Kittie"!

Yrs. most sincerely,
HPL

717. TO WILLIAM FREDERICK ANGER

66 College St.
Providence, R.
Aug. 14, 193

Dear Mr. Anger:—

. . . . Regarding the dreaded *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Ab Alhazred—I must confess that both the evil volume & the accur author are fictitious creatures of my own—as are the malign entities Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, &c. Tsathogg & the *Book of Eibon* are inventions of Clark Ashton Smith, wh Friedrich von Junzt & his monstrous *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* or nated in the fertile brain of Robert E. Howard. For the fun of build up a convincing cycle of synthetic folklore, all of our gang frequer allude to the pet daemons of the others—thus Smith uses my Y Sothoth, while I use his Tsathoggua. Also, I sometimes insert a de or two of my own in the tales I revise or ghost-write for professio clients. Thus our black pantheon acquires an extensive publicity pseudo-authoritativeness it would not otherwise get. We never, ho ever, try to put it across as an actual hoax; but always carefully expl to enquirers that it is 100% fiction. In order to avoid ambiguity in references to the *Necronomicon* I have drawn up a brief synopsis of 'history'—the supposed dates of the original writing (under the Ara title *Al Azif*), of its translation into Greek as Τὸ Νεκρονόμικον by Byzantine monk Theodorus Philetas, &c, &c. All this gives it a sort air of verisimilitude. . . . . .

Yrs most cordially & sincer
H. P. Lovecraft

18. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Mosque on the Hill
Aug. 15, 1934

Hail, Malik:—

. . .

Regarding my own stuff—it is a regrettable fact that I am never likely to produce anything of general acceptability. While having the highest respect for the authors of realistic fiction, and envying those who are able to accomplish the successful reflection of life in narrative form, I am sadly aware through actual experiment that this is a province definitely closed to me. The fact is, that I have absolutely nothing to say where actual, unvarnished life is concerned. The events of life are so profoundly and chronically uninteresting to me—and I know so little about them as a whole—that I can't scrape up anything in connexion with them which could possibly have the zest and tension and suspense needed to form a real story. That is, I am incurably blind to dramatic or fictional values except where violations of the natural order are concerned. Of course, I understand *objectively* what these values are, and can apply them with fair success to the criticism and revision of others' work; but they do not take hold of my imagination sufficiently to find creative expression. When I try to think up some vivid sequence of actual events I simply come to nothing. The spark of creation and instinctive dramatic arrangement simply isn't there. I'm not deeply interested, and I can't get deeply interested. What is more—I don't know enough about life to be an effective exponent of it. On account of my early ill-health and naturally retiring disposition my contacts with mankind—and with its varied aspects, folkways, idioms, attitudes, and standards—have been extremely limited; so that there are probably very few people outside the extreme rustic class who are more fundamentally unsophisticated than myself. I don't know what different kinds of people do and think and feel and say—their lives, languages, values, and technical processes are as remote from me as the manners and customs of the Cingalese.

Now it is impossible to write about one's spatial neighbours as one

would write about the Cingalese—as remotely and objectively, that is —so that the would-be realist who does not know life well is perforce compelled to resort to imitation—copying what he picks up from the doubtful and artificial media of books, plays, newspaper reports, and the like. That is what Long does—but I am too actual a realist in psychology to be able to do this. I know so damned well that the picture one gets from books is unreal and distorted, that I *can't* sit down and transcribe those second-hand (and probably erroneous) impressions with all the assumed convincingness of one who really knows about them. I know that I *don't* know about the people I'd be writing about. hence I can't put up a jaunty bluff that their ways and speech and thoughts are familiar to me. Let us say that I'm called upon to portray the way one of your dashing young clubman-detectives responds to a given situation. Now I'm not a dashing young clubman-detective and never was one—nor have I ever been acquainted with any. Obviously, I don't know how the hell one of them (assuming that there are such persons) would react to any given situation. How, then, can I portray any of their deeds? If I copy from other writers I'll probably be copying artificial gestures remote from reality—and knowing this, I can't put any zest into copying. And this is true of so many different types of person—there are so *few* types that I really understand (and I'm not sure that I understand even them)—that I could never piece out the dramatis personae of any well-rounded work of fiction. My handicap is —all apart from the basic lack of interest—really twofold. First, my acquaintance with varied phases of life is too small for effective literary use. Second, I lack the natural faculty of imagination which gives the genuine innate author the instinctive power to understand and portray what different sorts of people would feel and think and say and do in various given situations. Long also lacks this faculty, but he won't admit it. All his characters are little duplicate Belknaps in thought, manner, and speech. But I *realise* my lack and can't go ahead weaving vacuity when I *know* it's vacuity.

However—the crucial thing is my lack of interest in ordinary life. No one ever wrote a story yet without some real emotional drive behind it—and I have not that drive except where violations of the natural order .... defiances and evasions of time, space, and cosmic law ... are concerned. Just why this is so I haven't the slightest idea—it simply *is* so. I am interested only in broad pageants—historic streams—orders

of biological, chemical, physical, and astronomical organisation—and the only conflict which has any deep emotional significance to me is that of *the principle of freedom or irregularity or adventurous opportunity against the eternal and maddening rigidity of cosmic law* .... especially the laws of *time*. Individuals and their fortunes within natural law move me very little. They are all momentary trifles bound from a common nothingness toward another common nothingness. Only the cosmic framework itself—or such individuals as symbolise principles (or defiances of principles) of the cosmic framework—can gain a deep grip on my imagination and set it to work creating. In other words, the only "heroes" I can write about are *phenomena*. The cosmos is such a closely-locked round of fatality—with everything prearranged—that nothing impresses me as *really dramatic* except some sudden and abnormal *violation of that relentless inevitability* .... something which cannot exist, but which can be imagined as existing. Hence the type of thing I try to write. Naturally, I am aware that this forms a very limited special field so far as mankind en masse is concerned; but I believe (as pointed out in that *Recluse* article) that the field is an authentic one despite its subordinate nature. This protest against natural law, and tendency to weave visions of escape from orderly nature, are characteristic and eternal factors in human psychology, even though very small ones. They exist as permanent realities, and have always expressed themselves in a typical form of art from the earliest fireside folk tales and ballads to the latest achievements of Blackwood or Machen or de la Mare or Dunsany. That art exists—whether the majority like it or not. It is small and limited, but real—and there is no reason why its practitioners should be ashamed of it. Naturally, one would *rather* be a broad artist with power to evoke beauty from every phase of experience—but when one unmistakably *isn't* such an artist, there's no sense in bluffing and faking and pretending that one *is*. .... Art is not what one resolves to say, but what insists on saying itself through one. It has nothing to do with commerce, editorial demand, or popular approval. The only elements concerned are the artist and the emotions working within him. Of course, there is a business of magazine-purveying which is perfectly honest in itself, and a worthy field for those with a knack for it. I wish I had the knack. But this isn't the thing I'm interested in. If I had the knack, it would be something performed entirely apart from my serious work—just as my present revisory activities are. How-

ever, I haven't the knack, and the field is so repugnant to me that it's about the last way I'd ever choose to gain shelter and clothing and nourishment. Any other kind of a legitimate job would be preferable to my especial tastes. I dislike this trade because it bears a mocking external resemblance to the real literary composition which is the only thing (apart from sundry ancestral traditions) I take seriously in life.

Although greatly encouraged by the comments on *The Thing on the Doorstep,* I do not think I had better attempt any more writing till my nerves are in better shape. I must finish an especially disagreeable revision job on which I am engaged, and must do more toward getting both the pulp models and my own previous attempts out of my head. Also, I must read more. Then, after a suitable fallow period, I *may* (though one can't tell) have another such creative burst as I had in 1920. If not—that's simply that. It can't be helped. I may be as thoroughly played out as Blackwood now appears to be. I don't know—and there's nothing to do but experiment . . . . and keep as clear as possible of external criticisms and rebuffs. That's why I don't submit the *Doorstep* to Wright. For the present, then, I am a reader and appreciator rather than a writer. God knows I want a job—but I want it to be *anything*—elevator man, pickaxe artist, night-watchman, stevedore, what the hell—*except writing.* Anything except a parody on the only thing in life that means anything to me.

. . .

With all blessings of the Prophet—
Abdul Alhazred

719. TO F. LEE BALDWIN

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Aug. 21, 1934

My dear Baldwin:—

. . . . . As for my newly-acquired *Bird of Space* . . . he looks something like this—standing about a foot tall. He is carved out of a piece of horn—I don't know of what animal, though the colour is black—& highly polished & lacquered on the exterior. Wings & feathers—as well as eyes—are suggested through some very delicate engraving.

The posture of the bird—as if looking into the sky preparatory to a hop-off for unknown trans-galactic reaches—combined with its generally weird aspect to suggest the title *Bird of Space.* I am told that this object represents a type of carving common over a century ago among American sailors on ships trading in the Far East. The Sino-Japanese influence is so strong that there is little doubt who the sailors' teachers were. I've put the Bird on the top of a new low bookcase in company with a Japanese idol & a Kim Ling vase. Loveman was amazingly generous to give me this object. I had admired it for years in his home, but never thought of hinting for it. On the last night of my visit we fell to talking about it, & as I left he pressed it into my hands as a final thunderbolt surprise. That's just like him! Some time I mean to take a photograph of this & other objects in my "museum"—and when I do I'll send you prints. I have an Egyptian ushabti, Mayan images, & other odd & curious things. . . . . .

. . . . It's only comparatively recently that I've realised how many Hollanders have immigrated to the Northwest & North Middle West. When I think of a Dutch-American, I still think first of the old 17th Century New Netherland stock, from which my friend Wilfred B. Talman is descended. I did, though, realise that a more recent Dutch element exists in Michigan & Wisconsin. One of this group now living in Providence (though I haven't met him in person) is the poet & novelist David Cornel de Jong. It is rather singular that members of the different northern European nations have a different appearance (as some undoubtedly do, though others don't), since they all belong largely to the same basic race-stock. I suppose the causes are varied—differences in diet & climate, differences in individual settlement (i. e., by chance, certain types of the many shades of physiognomy prevailing throughout any race predominated amongst the settlers of some specific region), & partial amalgamation with different types of natives found in the respective regions of settlement. The last-named cause is probably the most potent; for in the various realms of its wide wandering & settlement our common Nordic stock has met & mixed with races as far apart as the Mongoloid (Lapp-Finn), Slavonic, & Mediterranean, to name only a few. In the British Isles the Mediterranean element is very strong—giving rise to the "Black Irish" type, & to the dark, short people of Wales & southern England generally. It is curious how much more primitive & persistent the brunet type is than the blond. Introduce

a little blond blood amongst a brunet population, & it is wholly lost in two or three generations—as in the case of Italy, which has swallowed up thousands of yellow-haired Celts & Teutons without leaving a trace of them. On the other hand, a little brunet blood can quickly darken half or ¾ of any vast blond population amongst whom it is introduced. There are extremely few blond Italians, Greeks, or Spaniards—& yet there are as many brunets as blonds in all the Northern races. British blood has had many odd accessions through the heterogeneous followers of the Conqueror. Also—it contains all the varied elements added to the aboriginal stocks by the diversely recruited Roman legions.

The Germans—especially those of the South & East—have vast amounts of Slavonic blood due to the slow westward filtration of Wendish elements. The Prussians are also strongly Slavic—though in their case the Slavonic blood is the original element, the Teutonic coming later. The language called "Old Prussian" is a Slavic dialect. All of the tongues of Europe, however, (except the Lapp, Finn & Magyar descendants of Mongol speech, & the absolutely unclassifiable Basque of the Pyrenees) are more or less remotely derived from the speech of the Nordic or Aryan race, showing how powerful it must have been in ancient times as distinguished from all others. Paradoxically, this original Aryan speech has been retained most closely by a branch whose *blood* has been the most mixed with alien stocks—i. e., the Hindoo. The purest blood representatives of the old race are probably the Scandinavians—especially those of Iceland, where the only mixture has been with Irish Celts of a not dissimilar basic origin. One of the great puzzles of Northern ethnology is the origin of the peculiar facial & cranial type associated with the Gaelic Celt of western Ireland & northern Scotland—the type with upturned nose, long upper lip, heavy eyebrow-ridges, &c. This type has no known analogue anywhere else in the world, & the ethnologist is at a loss to determine how it arose. The races entering into the composition of the Gaels must have been largely Nordic, with a touch perhaps of Alpine (Slav) & Mediterranean. Whence, then, came this peculiar physiognomy? Was there some unknown aboriginal stock in the British Isles of which history has retained no trace? A lesser puzzle—& of a somewhat negative nature—lies within the modern mixture of the Anglo-Saxon race; i. e., why have certain types of physiognomy common in Great Britain failed to reproduce themselves among the purely British stock of the

United States? The key to this riddle probably lies in the marked regional variations in the British population, & in the fact that the East Anglian countries (with a purely Saxon basis) were overwhelmingly predominant in the colonial immigration—thus creating a local American type not representative of the whole of Britain. The Celtic element typical of southern & western England is especially lacking in the typical Yankee—as is also the dark Cockney type derived from urban London. . . .

All good wishes—Yrs. most sincerely—HPL

720. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Nantucket, Mass.—90 miles from 66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
Aug. 31, 1934

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . Glad you liked *Through the Gates of the Silver Key*—which still fails to satisfy me. It is virtually my own work as it stands. Price wrote a crude sequel to my old *Silver Key* (1926), but it was so false to the spirit of the original that I scrapped almost all of it & wrote the present thing in its place. All that is left of Price's work is the mathematical theorising in the middle of the story—plus the scene with the pedestals. And even this has been put into my language. The voyage to Yaddith is entirely my own, in idea & language alike.

Had an enjoyable visit from James F. Morton (curator of the Paterson Museum) August 2-3-4. We visited many local points of interest, & spent the final day at ancient Newport—seeing the U. S. fleet in the harbour, exploring the venerable streets, & walking & resting on the famous ocean cliffs. Morton is getting to be a mighty genealogist, & has just traced the one line which we hold in common (Perkins) back to the year 1380 . . . Chaucer's time! He is now in Maine, & will be circulating around New England till early October.

Of my own recent vacational activities a card & a folder have doubtless apprised you. The visit around Boston was highly interesting despite the anxiety caused by Cook's nervous collapse & sudden return to Vermont; but *Nantucket* of course forms the climax. It would take volumes to describe the place—though pictures may help. I enclose a

few more. More than Salem, Newport, Marblehead, Portsmouth, or any other town I have ever seen, it represents a typical Yankee seaport of 1790 or 1800 absolutely as it used to be. Horses still numerous—main street paved with huge round cobblestones—skyline dominated by ancient belfries & white steeple—old windmill on the highest hill—gardens & picket fences everywhere—95% of the houses built before 1840 in Georgian style, perhaps 80% antedating 1810 & 40% being pre-revolutionary—narrow winding lanes here & there—knockers & doorplates & horse-blocks & hitching-posts ..... the antiquity is complete! A combination of insular isolation, commercial collapse, & artistic appreciation has ensured this felicitous survival. Summer visitors & artists now dominate Nantucket, & have done much to preserve its elder-world charm. The town proper has magnificent trees, but the bulk of the island has lost its forests & consists of rolling grassy meadows. .....

As for little Sam Perkins—you ought to see him *now!* Bless Grandpa's bones, what a little black dynamo of ceaseless sportive energy! Of all little imps of Beelzebub ..... & how he can purr! I have him over at 66 nearly all the time, but his folks don't seem to mind! .....

I remain yr most oblig'd, most obt Servt
HPLovecraft

721. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Ancient Nantucket—
Aug. 31, 1934

Dear Malik:—

And what a place is Nantucket! I *thought* I had seen something of colonial antiquity before—but just wait till I take you and old Jug to this utterly unchanged fragment of early America! Ædepol! There is absolutely nothing else like it—and to think I never visited it before .... a place only 90 miles (6 hrs. by coach and ship) from my own door! Compared with this town Providence and St. Augustine and the Vieux Carré are positively modernistic! Whole networks of cobble-stoned streets with nothing but colonial houses on either side—narrow, garden-bordered lanes—ancient belfries—picturesque waterfront—

everything that the antiquarian could ask! I'm seeing the whole thing in a week's sojourn. Have a 3d story room at the Overlook (an ancient tavern with small-paned windows, etc.), with a splendid view of town and harbour and sea. I've explored old houses, the 1746 windmill, the Hist. Soc. Museum, the whaling museum, etc.—and am doing every inch of the quaint streets and alleys on foot. . .

. . What I know of detailed human activities is very slight—and what I care about them is slighter still, except so far as the element of historic pageantry is concerned. Nothing but the element of *nature-defiance*—especially *time*-defiance—sets off the spring that starts my creative imagination running. Of the crimes and drunken hilarity and inane amusements of modern urban life nothing captivates my fancy. Set the calendar back a century and bring in some event involving old Nantucket or Providence or Charleston life, and my interest grows—since the drama of the time-stream will then figure—but even then my knowledge and technique are insufficient for the task of handling. If I *could* grind out unconvincing hokem to order I certainly *would*—but I know, after repeated experiments dating from 1921, that I can't. The element of *interest* plays a larger part in even the most mechanical hack writing than is commonly supposed. Take that out, and even the most industrious artisan is at least partly stalled. Also—the ambition to write seriously is a handicap to the hack. I think that, as a rule, the most successful hacks are those who stick to their trade with no thought of literary creation. Some can bridge the gulf, but the average plodder can be only one or the other—a pulp-producer or a serious writer. The writer must have no thought for either finances (in connexion with writing) or public demand. To him there are only two elements—what he has to say and how he wants to say it. His only concern is for *intrinsic excellence*—regardless of returns or popular taste. Literarily, the only thing for me to do just now is to keep quiet. I must try to get more leisure from correspondence and revision, and avoid the sort of nervous collapses that I used to have—and that Cook still has. First of all, to dispose of the loathsome prologue-writing and novel-revising job which stares me in the face when I get home. Then more reading and absorption—and then we shall see. I may eventually send Pharnabogus the *Doorstep,* but I don't want the effect of a rejection just now. He is wholly commercial in his outlook—as witness his complaints against my "long" stories when he publishes gallons of utter

drivel .... vast long serials .... by his trashy favourites. At a later period I may have more patience with that kind of thing—but just now my nerves are not in the right shape to confront it. This is the season for me to *absorb* impressions—not put them forth. I'm still revelling in the discovery of William Hope Hodgson—which, as I told you, I owe to the always-accommodating Koenig. Well—we shall see what we shall see. It's curious how the rejection of *At the Mountains of Madness* slowed up my whole writing career. I was the better for a pause between 1908 and 1917, and may be better for one between 1933 and gawd knows when! The more I stand off as a critical non participant, the more avoidable faults I see in my stuff. I shall always make mistakes and perpetrate crudities, but certain specific types of error are not likely to reappear.

Sam Perkins is certainly a great boy—he'll doubtless be a full-fledged K.A.T. member by the time you and Jug get around—although he's got himself in bad with Pres. Randall and Vice-Pres. Osterberg by offering to fight them! I have apologised on his behalf to the old fellows, and they've promised not to blackball him when his name comes up. The brashness of youth must be excused! In Boston I encountered another likely sprig—at my host's home—who can give Sam a run for his money. This young gentleman is named Peter Ivan, and is a tiger angora of just about Sam's age. What a boy! He tears about continually, climbs up and down everybody, and then curls up to sleep in an ornamental basket which he chose and appropriated without asking anybody's permission. Like Sam, he shows fight toward his elders—the elders in question being my host's other two felidae—Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington. Peter was in my lap or around my feet during the bulk of my visit. Here in Nantucket my greatest friends are three coal-black and precisely identical brothers at the restaurant where I eat. They were born last spring, and their perfect blackness and utter similarity caused them all to be retained. One is especially friendly—and jumps in my lap as I eat. He would like to ascend another stage and participate in the repast, but I discourage him from that procedure—preferring to treat him to select morsels where he is.

Peace of Allah upon thee—
Abdul Alhazred

722. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Ancient Nantucket
—Septr. 1, 1934

Dear arechbei:—

. . . . . I am well disposed toward everyone in general, and naturally prefer to contemplate the excellencies of others rather than ferret out and gloat over their mistakes. The only things which really disgust me are cruelty, smallness, and selfish egotism—and even these, I realise, often coexist with highly admirable qualities and substantial gifts. I neither idealise nor hate—but simply observe and accept. I am an enemy only to those who actively injure me or war against things which I believe must be upheld. And even then my enmity goes no further than a wish to frustrate aggression and punish specifically in a way commensurate with the injury inflicted. . .

Yrs. with the Aklo password—
echpiel

723. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

Ancient Nantucket
Septr. 2, 1934.

Dear Helen:—

. . . . . .

I am surely glad to hear what a delightful & inspiring time you have had—& am pleased that the return to every-day life could be tempered by an intermediate seacoast session at Inverness. Your mountain experience sounds arduous & thrilling indeed—especially to one who is apt to be disconcertingly dizzy in high places. And it was fortunate, too, that you could encounter some sound philosophical discussion calculated to dispel the macabre reflections of recent months.

The Unicorn's horn sounds like a vastly hazardous proposition, & I

doubt if I would have followed the party except on a dare. I am a wretched climber & balancer, & had to practice by discouragingly difficult stages before I could hold my own among the young monkeys of my day. Unlike young Melmoth I have no *urge* to jump off high places —but on the contrary am darned afraid I'll *fall* off! It's just as well, I'm sure, that you adopted a milder programme after that Unicorn feat. Your violin-playing must have placed the camp vastly in your debt! Most doubtless realised the handicaps under which you laboured. Mr. Curtis sounds like a most gifted & interesting artist, & you were surely fortunate in receiving one of his sketches. How I envy anyone who can record & preserve his impressions in effective pictorial form!

Yes—Belknap will really have to depend on time & his own maturing attitude to pull him out of his maternal fixation & kindred neuroses. Others can do no more than help to create a general atmosphere favourable to the development. I think the emergence is slowly taking place. The past two years have seen a growing reaching-out after external contacts & experiences, & a gradual groping toward greater independence, which will gain momentum as further time passes. I think that Mrs. Long formerly aggravated the trouble through over-solicitude—not demands for attention, but a protective care which prompted over-attentiveness as a return. Now, however, I believe that she realises the need of fostering independence, & favours more freedom on Belknap's part. But of course such late changes must be gradual. She will still now & then be oversolicitous, & he will now & then be both over-dependent & over-anxious. Time & increased doses of common-sense are what will turn the trick. So far as Belknap is concerned, active *objective* interests are what he needs.

. . . . . Regarding the advantages & disadvantages of a general attitude of detachment—of course one loses considerable pleasure & interest if one feels no kinship whatever to anything human. So extreme an attitude would of course be a mistake. The right idea is to follow a sort of middle course whereby one may take a rational interest in the buzzings of the human hive without being completely dominated by its mechanism. To recognise empirical forms & relationships as *proximately* valid—valid, that is, on the surface & for the moment—& to take from them whatever harmonious pleasure can be taken; but to realise, behind it all, that visible objects & patterns are purely transient & capricious things . . . . . things whose meaning is

not basic or cosmic, & from which too much cannot be expected. Only this *underlying* realisation—a realisation which does not need to be obtruded into all of one's every-day thoughts & moods—can (in the absence of childish soporifics like religion) save one from the extremes of disappointment & painful disillusion. It does not have to be a ponderous or heavily-borne thing--indeed, in many it is purely instinctive, temperamental, & quasi-unconscious. It simply means the extension of one's rational sense of proportion from small objects & issues to great—even universal— objects & issues. In other words, it means a resolution & capability to use one's emotions instead of to be used by them. Thus I do not think it could greatly hamper one's appreciation of the simpler beauties of life, whose appeal is to the most direct forms of sensory perception. Rather would it teach us to accept those simpler beauties as intrinsic ends in themselves—roses to be gathered while we may—uncomplicated by mythical linkages to non-existent eternal things. I have a fairly detached & impersonal perspective myself, but I don't see that it has dulled in any way my appreciation of the drama of history, of the loveliness of the sunset, of the grace of noble architecture, or of the charm of shapely black kittens like little Sam Perkins! . . . .

. . . . . .

New England certainly has a peculiar charm not found elsewhere in America—the charm of a distinctive landscape bearing the evidences of a continuous, well-adjusted life of many centuries' standing; a life expressing itself in architectural forms perfectly suited to the topography & to the prevailing institutions. This is what Europe has in abundance—but which never became transferred to the New World except in New England . . . . though the New Netherland Dutch & Pennsylvania German regions . . . . & perhaps the unspoiled parts of French Quebec . . . . . vaguely approximate it. In Florida & California & the Southwest the Spaniards created isolated buildings of beauty, but produced no instinctive outgrowth from the peculiar local landscapes involved. In the Anglo-Saxon South, too, there were beautiful plantation-houses & beautiful towns; but no general sprinkling of cottages & villages exactly suited to the countryside. On the contrary, the small farms of the South tend to look rather awkward & squalid. Ditto for French Louisiana. And of course the pioneer regions had not the basic conditions needed to develop such a spontaneous folk growth. Thus New England stands alone as a bit of the Old World transferred bodily to

the New—a virtual *extension* of Old England itself. That is really what it is, as we may readily appreciate when we consider the conditions of the great 17th century colonisation. Other parts of the country consisted of vast land areas with a thin & slowly arriving population. New England, on the contrary, was a region no larger than Old England—into which, between 1630 & 1645, poured shipload after shipload of settlers ..... colonists reckoned in tens of thousands. Clearly, the pioneering stage could not last long under such conditions. Among the settlers were representatives of every art, craft, & trade in England—not merely planters & farmers, as elsewhere. Towns grew up thickly from the very first, & in them craftsmen & merchants followed the same pursuits that they had followed in England. Farmers were so numerous that their holdings dotted the whole coastal strip on which they were settled—one farm touching another, till in a single generation the coast was so crowded that some of the young folk had to strike out more deeply into the wilderness—into central Massachusetts, Maine, & the Connecticut Valley. Here was indeed another England on a small scale—& this as early as 1650 or so. Towns with thousands of inhabitants & bristling with mediaeval gables (see enclosed card of John Ward house, Salem), & a countryside as thickly settled as the old world, with European cottage architecture adapted to the local terrain & building materials. And this form of life kept on & on without a break .... unbroken even now in many quiet backwaters ..... piling up traditions, refining hereditary usages & forms, & building gradually on never-changed foundations .... just as in Europe. By the time of the Revolution the country was *old*. The periwigged, knee-breeched men of 1775 could behold all around them houses 100 or 120 or 140 years old—some in long-abandoned styles of architecture, & already falling to decay. And still the pageant rolls on .... the cycle of the years, with slow growth on original foundations. Rolling fields—stone walls—giant elms—winding roads—low-roofed cottages—clustering barns & byres—gnarled hillside apple-orchards—white village steeples rising from clouds of verdure & seen in the distance across fertile valleys—blue streams winding amidst grassy plains—rocks in fantastic outcrops & groupings—deep woods from which a magic twilight never departs—towns with steep hill streets & fanlighted doorways & gleaming-columned court-houses—waterfronts with rambling wharves & clustering warehouse gables—

brick Georgian mansions glowing redly in the sunset ..... all the myriad phases of one homogeneous growth; one coherent whole. That is ancient New England! Of course, this applies only to the *old* New England—the parts where the real population still live in their traditional way. There is none of it left along the great urban trunk lines ..... hotdog stands, factories, bungalows, skyscrapers, garages, & all that .... but these are fungous growths peculiar to no one region. An eruption symptomatic of the disease of a mechanised pseudo-civilisation. In Nantucket, thank heaven, the real thing yet survives! I don't think any amount of familiarity could really satiate one with the subtle, lingering charm of New England. Of course the winters are beastly & barbarous—but I shall feel lost indeed if they ever force me to leave this ancient realm for one more physically habitable.

.....

Yr most obt Hbl Servt
E'ch-Pi-El

724. TO HOWARD WANDREI

66 College St.
Sept. 7, 1934

Dear H. E.:—

..... I have not the cleverness to study herd & editorial caprices & deliberately suit them in a cold-blooded way despite the repulsiveness of the process. Even if I conquered my nausea & attempted it, the result would be lifeless & unacceptable. The very editors who demand the sacrifice of artistic integrity would be the first to object to the stiltedness of the result. Literature & pulp writing can't mix—& only an exceptional person (like Auguste-Guillaume, Comte d'Erlette, for example) can successfully prosecute both at the same time. I, alas, am far from exceptional! I need the cash desperately enough, but don't see how I could possibly get it *that* way. If I could ever be sure of $15.00 per week—or even $10.00 per week—through some honest employment outside the writing field, I'd never think again of the commercial side of authorship. The really lucky guy is the one whose

natural mode of expression happens—through pure chance—to coincide with some form of writing in popular demand. Robert E. Howard is the best example of this I can think of at the moment—his stories sell, but they have a zest & naturalness which at once distinguish them from the listless, synthetic pap of . . . . . all the rest of the hacks. . . . . .

Yrs most cordially & sincerely—
HPL

725. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Sept. 12, 1934

My dear Ryé-mel:—

. . . . . .

. . . . It may surprise you to know that—despite the oft-repeated fact that Rhode Island is the most densely-populated political unit in the world except Belgium—this state *has the largest proportion of woodland of any state in the union.* The secret of this paradox is that our population is all packed into the urban population centres and along the factory-lined river valleys. Beyond these areas there are miles and miles of utterly deserted countryside and deep woods. Some westerners think of the East as completely filled up and without open spaces—yet there is not a New England state in which a person couldn't wander all day without meeting any evidence of human habitation if he chose the right areas. This was less so in 1790 than today, for during the eighteenth century the farming population covered a great deal of ground. As soon as the factories appeared, however, the people began to drift toward the towns and river-valleys; leaving the back country in an increasing state of desertion. Today some of the wild animals are coming back—snakes are more abundant, and deer are frequently seen. Now and then vague rumours of a bear or wolf appear, though there is no real evidence that any of these formidable old-timers are on deck again. But bobcats certainly are on the increase. It

is curious how an age of intensive urbanisation also promotes the return of the primitive wilderness! .....

.... About the twin story (*Cassius*—by Henry S. Whitehead) I was divided between two plans of development. One would have had the monster escape as Whitehead had it—but would have had it much more terrible and much less human. I would have had it grow in size, and frighten people much more terribly than *Cassius* did. Indeed, I would have tried to convey the implication that some *Outside* force or daemon had taken possession of the brainless, twisted body—impelling it to strange acts *of apparently deliberate but plainly non-human motivation.* The climax would have consisted of some dramatic and unmistakable revelation of this Outside tenancy—probably connected with the spectacular destruction of the thing in one way or another. My story would have had none of the lightness, suavity, and humour of Whitehead's, but would have been grim and terrible all through. So much for *one* plot. The other plot I had in mind was much more human—not supernatural at all, in fact. This idea was to have the connection of the man and his miniature twin *much more complex and obscure* than any doctor had suspected. The operation of separation is performed—but lo! An unforeseen horror and tragedy results. For it seems *that the brain of the twin-burdened man lay in the miniature twin alone* .... so that the operation has produced *a hideous monster only a foot tall, with the keen brain of a man, and a handsome manlike shell with the undeveloped brain of a total idiot.* From this situation I planned to develop an appropriate plot, although—from the magnitude of the task—I had not progressed very far. I had an idea of having the midget monster assume the guardianship of his handsome, brainless twin and endeavour to hypnotise it in such a way that it could do his talking for him and act as his substitute in the outside world. I meant to have him succeed, so that after about a year there appears in society a handsome, brilliant man *who always carries a satchel, and who displays vast alarm when there is any danger of his being separated from it.* This, of course, is the brainless twin—who now serves as the mouthpiece and exterior facade of the intelligent monster, who rules him by hypnotism from the shelter of the satchel. From then on I had decided nothing. One idea was to have an accident destroy the satchel, causing the idiot to collapse helplessly and perhaps die. Another was to have the man gain fame—but finally to have the idiot body die in

such a way that the death can hardly be concealed. The intelligent twin still lives—but how can he now keep his secret? He may be able to hide bodily, but how can he continue the work which brought him fame (say as a writer or painter or scholar) when the famous man is supposed to be dead? I had not progressed to the point of solving that problem—or even deciding whether I'd have such a problem—when Whitehead began urging the collaboration and I finally gave him the plot to develop in his own way. Hence *Cassius.* Now—after years—*another* alternative occurs to me. I might have the death of the handsome idiot-body concealed, and have the intelligent monster embalm it and display it seated in a chair—ostensibly still alive but paralysed. He could have it appear to speak—in a feeble, alien voice supposedly due to the paralysis—through the clever practice of ventriloquism. Then some awful climax or revelation could occur—any one of a dozen hideous sorts. The embalming could be *imperfect,* so that the supposedly living man would display signs of decomposition. Or notice could be attracted by its failure to age through the passing years. In writing such a story, I'd probably *begin near the end*—that is, have the bulk of the action concern the final phase, when the supposed paralytic begins to arouse suspicion. The antecedent history—the operation etc.—would be subtly worked in as back-flashes. I would make the revelation very gradual and suspense-filled—and at the last might leave the reader in some doubt of what the truth really was. Whether I shall ever do this or not remains to be seen. It certainly wouldn't be duplicating *Cassius*—for the whole spirit and emphasis of my conception is antipodally alien to Whitehead's. Whitehead urged me to go ahead and try—but I thought some time had better elapse in any case. I believe I mentioned that my idea came from seeing an actual case of the undeveloped-twin anomaly in a freak show (Hubert's Museum in in W. 42nd St.) in New York. The man in question—an intelligent Italian who for some reason billed himself under the French name of "Jean Libera"—had a little anthropoid excrescence growing out of his abdomen which looked hellishly gruesome when uncovered. Clothed, he looked merely like a somewhat "pot-bellied" individual. So far as I know, he is still living and on exhibition. He looked so essentially refined and high-grade that I wondered at his willingness to be exploited as a freak, and speculated as to what he would do if a stroke of luck removed him from the need of such an ignominious occupa-

tion. The first thing he would do, I argued, would be to have the excrescence cut off—and then and there the idea of the story came. This was in 1924 or 1925. Now the odd and amusing thing is this. Years afterward—after I had give the idea to Whitehead and was awaiting the appearance of *Cassius*—I chanced to mention the matter to my old friend Arthur Leeds of New York, who has had extensive dealings with freaks and other amusement enterprises. Fancy my surprise when he told me that he knows Libera well—that the man's real name is *Giovanni* Libera, that he is an Italian of great intelligence, that he is interested in everything *weird,* and that (believe this or not—it's actual truth!) he is especially fond of *my* work in *Weird Tales!!!!* Talk about coincidence! Leeds was going to tell him about *Cassius,* but I told him not to, since he might feel some delicacy (despite his occupation) about being used in that way. At the time (1930) Leeds was going to introduce me to Libera; but something prevented, so the meeting never came off. It certainly would have seemed odd to meet one of my plot-germs in the flesh .... the flesh of two bodies, or a body and a half, at that!

.....

Yrs. most sincerely,
HPL

76. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Septr. 17, 1934

Hail, Ius!

. . The element of *pure transportation* on all my trips this year—Florida, Boston, Nantucket—has not come up to fifty dollars combined. . . But alas—it may be that even the 'bus trips—and still more will have to go soon. Outgo persists, income sinks to invisibility! . .

Astaghifir, and all that!
Abdul Alhazred

727. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Septr. 24, 1934

Paramount Pattern of Pater-prying Persistence:—

. . . . . .

. . I was knock'd flat with piled-up work—and on the 12th was bowled over with a hellish siege of indigestion. . .

. . Pain all gone now, though I'm feeling none too rugged, and am still pretty damn careful what kind of stuff I dump into the old belly. Couldn't do any reading or writing to speak of during the worst of the trouble, so that I'm simply knocked down and out now. Shall have to send a form letter to my fifty-two-odd correspondents—or something!

But the saddest news is yet to come. Alas—how can I impart it unmov'd? Little Sam Perkins, the tiny ball of black fur whom you saw in August, is no more! He was ill then—but fully recover'd and was quite his novel dynamick little self. As late as Sept. 7 he spent the day with Grandpa—tearing about the place, shuffling the papers on the old gentleman's desk, and finally stretching out like a little ebony stick in the semicircular chair, sound asleep. On the morning of the 10th, however, he was found peacefully lifeless in the garden—and from no apparent cause. Now he sleeps beneath the shrubbery amidst which he play'd in life. Blessed little Piece of the Night! He liv'd but from June to September, and will never know what the winter's hellish cold is like. The Kappa Alpha Tau is in deep mourning, and President Randall often mews in elegiack numbers—

The antient garden seems tonight
  A deeper gloom to bear,
As if some silent shadow's blight
  Were hov'ring in the air.

With hidden griefs the grasses sway,
  Unable quite to word them—
Remembering from yesterday
  The little paws that stirr'd them.

During his latter days Master Perkins was fully inducted into the K.A.T.—appearing frequently on the clubhouse roof. Eheu—the old place is not the same without him!

And so it goes.

Yrs. for bigger and better forefathers—
Theobaldus Perkins, Gent.

728. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Catacombs of Koth
—Septr. 25, 1934

Dear Ar-Ech-Bei:—

..... Aside from the mechanical routine of professional revision—wherein one cannot do otherwise than perform all jobs on a purely business basis without investigating their outside bearings—I confine my heavy assistance and ghost-writing to *two kinds of cases,* neither of which involves the constitutional parasite. First—I help all genuine *beginners* who need a start. I tell them at the outset that I shan't keep it up long, but that I'm willing to help them get an idea of some of the methods needed. If they have real stuff in them, they soon outgrow the need for such help. If they haven't, I let them drop as hopeless cases as soon as I recognise their hopelessness. In either event, no one of them has my assistance for more than a year or so. Second—I help certain *old or handicapped people* who are pathetically in need of some cheering influence—these, even when I recognise them as incapable of improvement. In my opinion, the good accomplished by giving these poor souls a little more to live for, vastly overbalances any harm which could be wrought through their popular overestimation. .....

Yrs. for the Kynothrabian Dirge,
HPL

729. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Gateway of the Zhirns—
Hour of the Chanting Within.
Sept. 30, 1934

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

..... I used to be a hide-bound reactionary before surrounding events forced me to think -actually *think*—of the political-industrial-economic order and its inevitable trend; but nowadays I realise that the wholesale application of machinery to industry has totally destroyed the old relationships between individuals and the total amount of work to be done—so that laissez-faire capitalism has actually come to the end of its rope. There is absolutely no way in which, under the old order, more than a small fraction of the idle population can ever (even amidst the greatest commercial prosperity) be employed again—since with labour-saving machinery all the possible work of the world (including the supplying of *new* demands such as the blind reactionaries rave about) can be performed by a relatively few persons. As long as the old laissez-faire order lasts, it will never again be possible for any person to be sure of a chance to earn a livelihood, no matter how industrious and willing he may be. There will always be millions (literally not less than that) of capable men, willing and law-abiding, for whom no industrial places can be found, and whose sole alternatives under the present system will be charity or starvation. There is no getting around this. It isn't merely the alien radicals who recognise the state of things, but all the best and soberest American thinkers from John Dewey, Stuart Chase, Glenn Frank, Gifford Pinchot, Pres. Roosevelt, etc. down. It may be said almost dogmatically that *something must be done.* The old system—and even the old kind of business "prosperity" (for a select few while others starve)—leads absolutely nowhere except to a suffering bound to breed violent and disastrous revolution ..... so that today the worst possible incendiaries are those greedy old-time Republicans who fight the New Deal with meaningless catchwords and seek to promote starvation in

the interest of increased profits and more yachts for the shrewd and lucky. Only the blind grabbers and hangers-on of irresponsible private commerce are today sufficiently self-deluded to fancy that the old order will work any more. The real question is not *whether anything is to be done*—but *what is to be done.*

And here, of course, personal opinions differ. Sonny Belknap and other dupes of European ideas want a general upheaval and a new "ideology"—a whole new set of cultural values. This, to my mind, is wasteful and disastrous; since all the real values of life flow from *cultural continuity.* My belief is that the future ought to form a sane and gradual outgrowth of the past—with no *cultural* overturn at all, and with only such economic changes as will restore to the ordinary man the certainty of being able to exchange his services for the necessaries of life. I am, therefore, diametrically opposed to communism and everything else derived from the deceptive pseudo-science of Marx and Lenin. On the other hand, I realise that analysis has revealed our need for adopting many courses which, in our complacent ignorance of yesterday, we once ridiculed and opposed as *socialistic.* We know today that laissez-faire economics will not serve to feed all the population under a regime of mechanised industry; that work for every man no longer *naturally* exists, so that some system of artificial spreading (at the expense of private industry's profits) must be adopted to avert wholesale pauperdom and revolution. This means the strict governmental regulation of all large-scale industry and commerce; the fixing of working hours and wages; the introduction of old-age pensions and unemployment insurance—and other measures which make the old-time business pirate howl. We must have these things or blow up altogether; and it is simply frivolous and irrelevant to complain (as the dupes of the old order do) that this *purely economic* oversight forms a denial of "individual freedom" analogous to the effects of Nazism or bolshevism. Such complaints are merely the fruit of ignorance or of unpatriotic self-interest. Naturally, we do not know precisely what our unprecedented dilemma calls for. There must be infinite experimentation before we can adapt ourselves to the ultra-mechanised regime which has rushed on us unawares. It may be that private industry cannot stand the profit-reductions needed to float the nation as a whole—and in that case public ownership will have to come .... though of course this does

not have to mean the inverted cultural values and silly exaltation of manual over cerebral work which the bolsheviks preach. If achieved through peaceful and gradual evolution it will involve no social overturn at all. Skilled brain work will continue to be rewarded more amply than brute stevedoring—and it will mean nothing to the general culture that the recipients of these rationally graded wages will be working for the nation instead of merely swelling the unnecessary private fortunes of a few lucky individuals. There is absolutely nothing in this probably necessary *socialism* (not *communism*) which need alarm the most socially and aesthetically conservative individual. Indeed, it argues a grotesque and un-aristocratic exaltation of mere money matters when anyone shrieks that a *purely economic* change means a change in our civilisation and traditions! The great problem is *how to start* the sort of evolution we need. It is easy to plan, but abysmally difficult to get any rational measure *actually in motion.* That is why we must go slowly and cautiously, lending our support to *anything headed in the right direction which has a real chance of adoption,* even if it does not suit us as exactly as some other plan which has less chance of adoption. The public is slow and stupid, and would never consider a plan of real boldness and intelligence all at once. They must be led away from the present impossible order by slow degrees—becoming used to contraventions of laissez-faire capitalism one at a time. The New Deal, in spite of its present internal inconsistencies and frankly experimental phases, probably represents as great a step in the right direction as could *now* command any chance of support—hence it is the one and only course now deserving endorsement by intelligent friends of America's future. As the limitations of its measures appear, one by one, the public will probably be ready to remedy them through further departures from the old order; though such departures could never be "put over" without the intermediate step as an emotional solvent. Therefore I may be counted as a friend of the present administration and a welcomer of any such rational socialism as may be needed to keep all the people employed and set the nation once more in a state of decent equilibrium.

Well—so far as I can see, Upton Sinclair is out for much the same thing. It is true that he has held some doubtful political ideas in the past—but are these ideas any more absurd, or even *as* absurd, as the suicidal opposite fallacies harboured by Mr. Hoover and the "respec-

table" business world? Moreover, he has modified many of these ideas under the impact of existing realities. Nor was he *ever* a communist or disciple of extreme European radicalism. He always had his own sort of socialistic thought, stemming from our normal hereditary sources. . . . Therefore, I believe I'd vote for Sinclair (diametrically as I disagree with his theories of aesthetics, and little as I think of his novels) if I were a Californian. I can't see anything Russian in this 100% Anglo-Saxon descendant of Virginia gentlemen—and I believe that he has moved toward middle-course reality from *his* direction as decidedly as I have moved toward it from *my* opposite direction. A decade ago I thought he ought to be chloroformed—today I probably hold largely the same general views that he holds. Such are the mutations and ironies of time and growth!

Well—as you see, I surely have become a premier Hodgson fan! Do you know anything about W. H. H. and his career? Koenig tells me he was killed in the war. All told, I believe that nobody but Blackwood can equal or surpass him in capturing the exact shades of the cosmic horror mood in all their actual details. But he was uneven—again like Blackwood. *Carnacki* is very weak, artificial, and stereotyped as a whole despite the strong points which you justly point out—and the *Glen Carrig* certainly suffered a letdown halfway through. As soon as the castaways have dwelt on the island long enough to become tangible realities employing obvious siege strategy, something of the story's original tension and sense of malign expectancy is lost. Also—the attempt to use 18th century English rings absurdly false to any sincere devotee of the 18th century. I agree about *The Ghost Pirates*—and what a wealth of technical sea lore it contains! I wonder if Hodgson was ever a sailor? But the masterpiece, so far as I can see, is *The House on the Borderland*. Boy—that dim, brooding air of menace! And that stupefying cosmic sweep! I am all on edge to read *The Night Land*. . . .

. . . . . .

Yrs. for the sunken monolith of Gnoph—
E'ch-Pi-El

730. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Octr. 6, 1934.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

I am indeed glad that you found the Nantucket material of interest. My week there ended as pleasantly as it began—& toward the last I explored some of the environs of the town on a hired bicycle .... the first time in 20 years that I had been on a wheel. Riding was quite as easy & familiar as if I had last dismounted only the day before, & it seemed marvellously exhilarating & rejuvenating to be spinning along just as in the old times. The place is certainly all that the folders show —& more. Never had I realised that so fascinating a haven of the past could exist only 90 miles away. The secret of its distinctiveness & preservation is, of course, its insular isolation. It is a little world in itself— Daniel Webster once called it (when he went there to try some cases in the 1830's) "The Unknown City in the Sea". Nowhere else do the actual feel & substance of the past exist so perfectly & unbrokenly. I enclose a couple more cards, plus a map of the town & island which may prove interesting. The names & details on these maps can be well brought out by a reading-glass of moderate power. It was pleasant to be able to see Saturn through a good telescope. I have an astronomical telescope with 3″ object-glass myself; but its portable mounting is crude, & its performances leave much to be desired. I have, however, looked through the 12″ telescope of the local Ladd Observatory—an adjunct of Brown University. .....

Cold weather appears here off & on now—but the steam is going idyllically 24 hours a day! During the transition period I depended on my oil stove. Sunsets still blaze—& through a framework of foliage incipiently autumnal. Getting too late for outdoor reading & writing— my last trip of that sort was Septr. 26, when I cleaned up some revision in 2 places—first on a stone wall at a high point of the Breakneck Hill Road (in my favourite countryside N. of Prov.), & then atop a rocky

cliff beside a glassy tarn in the midst of deep woods. From the first site I had a marvellous vista of verdant valley & distant steepled hill. The leaves had just begun to turn—but despite the pallor of the sunlight the landscape was still predominantly aestival. Yes—the Morton who visited me in August is the one who contributed to the Washington anthology, Gabelle is a great friend of his. Cook is, I think, rather better, though not feeling rather energetic. Haven't seen anybody lately, though I expect a call from the brothers Wandrei as they pass through Providence in the course of their present motor tour. They are now in Montreal. Also, my host of last August in Wollaston—E. H. Cole—may come down some week-end for Rhodinsular exploration. No—I haven't come across any interesting Providence literati, though there are such without doubt. I seem to find the most interesting persons scattered about from Vermont to Florida, Texas, & California!

Nearly sunk with a wretched job of novel revision—but I'm shifting the worst of it on to someone else in sheer self-defence. Haven't had a chance for any original fiction. The only recent thing I've written is an elegy for a recently deceased member of the amateur journalist circle—a rather stilted & mediocre composition which would have been not quite so bad if I had not written it to order in a hurry for C. W. Smith. I'll enclose Smith's booklet containing it—which you needn't bother to return. The bad typography & misprints are lamentable. . . . . .

. . . . . By the way—some time ago, in answer to a request, I prepared an article for one of the amateur papers which may interest you when it comes out—an account of each of the houses in which Poe ever lived, with a description of those still standing. I'll send you a copy when it appears. Naturally, the most extensive descriptions are of the Fordham cottage & the newly restored Philadelphia house which I visited last July.

With all good wishes,

I remain

Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

731. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Eve of the Sabbat
Oct. 8, 1934

Dear Malik:—

. . . I myself couldn't handle that kind of work at present—for collaboration is a tremendous handicap to me. I can do good work only when wholly independent—and working with my own ideas. I'm too near a nervous smashup to attempt anything with as much strain and forced labour as collaboration . . . . that is, in the fictional field. If I ever expect to attempt anything of my own again, I must cut off all external influences fictionally. . .

Old 'Dolph is a queer cuss. His original name is Gustav Adolf Danziger, and he was born somewhere along the Baltic (I don't know just where) in a German-speaking region belonging to Russia. . . . Some years ago he went to Mexico and tried to get data on Bierce's disappearance, and in 1928 he wrote a life of Bierce which consists largely of subtle self-advertising. Long revised it and wrote the preface—after I had turned down the job. He undoubtedly capitalises his acquaintance with Bierce. He changed his name during the war, when everything with a Germanic suggestion was unpopular . . . . de Castro being the name of a remote Spanish ancestor. He has dabbled in Republican politics for 40 years, and once drew as a reward the really important post of American consul at Madrid—under McKinley, I think. I've revised several tales for de Castro—you may recall *The Last Test* and *The Electric Executioner.* . . . .

As for further news of Randolph Carter—I'm afraid that'll be darned hard to supply, unless you have special advices from Yaddith or Thok or any of the places where a bird in his odd position would be likely to hang out! If I ever use him again, I fear it'll have to be in my especial way—with the mystical and dream elements emphasised, and with no technical mathematical skeleton to stick to. The idea you propose is infinitely clever, but it really ought to be developed by someone capable of appreciating the mathematical background. That is the only way it can be really spontaneous. To me, mathematics is a field too

remote and abstract to form a basis for fictional imagination. Using it under external instructions, I find it a dead weight obstructing the free flow of fancy instead of a nucleus for the growth of fancy. It is a tool too large and complicated for me to work naturally with. Weird fiction, to have significance, must form an authentic symbol or picture of some genuine mood—and I can't interpret any mood mathematically. But there certainly is a great field for anyone who *can* translate these bold mathematical concepts into fiction without retaining the air of the classroom in the result. Why can't that pioneer be yourself?

I don't believe I could tackle any collaboration at present—for I'm saving all possible energy for experiments in original expression which will be miles away from anything externally determined. Collaboration is the most exhausting of all work for me, since it entails the almost intolerable hardship of conforming my imagination to some predetermined plan which chokes off all creative energy. The process is really wasteful—for with the same outlay of energy I could achieve infinitely better results if working alone and imaginatively unchecked. What I want to say is so infinitely different from anything that anybody else wants to say! That is why I absolutely could not collaborate with good old Whitehead on *Cassius*. With me, collaboration tends to spoil both what I have to say and what the other fellow has to say! Clearly, it is something which can be truly successful only with writers much more objective than I. But, as I said before, that mathematical idea ought certainly to be used—and by someone to whom mathematics is a vivid emotional reality. Better tackle it independently unless you know of someone who is both a fluent fictioneer and a mathematician. If you don't want to try it as a Randolph Carter yarn you don't have to. It will be easy enough to get Randolph back to earth if he's needed—a bit of enlarging on the final phase of the *Silver Key* sequel would turn the trick. But I have my doubts about the real value of a repeated character. Such a being tends to grow deplorably hackneyed unless one has a clearly envisaged line of development to put him through—as in a novel—or unless one keeps him as a very subordinate element in the different episodes. The more I look over my old stuff the more disgusted I get with it—and with my efforts as a writer. Only once in a while do I approach what I am really trying to do. I need to make a clean break with whatever I have been doing, and start afresh after a rest—harking back to actual dreams and impressions as in 1917. My

first attempts will probably have certain resemblances to my earlier stuff as distinguished from my later, although many typical crudities of the early period can be avoided. Adjectival extravagance will be restrained, but there will be an effort to present clouded pictorial effects rather than to indulge in prosaic pseudo-scientific explanation. Roughly speaking, I shall try to do with greater skill what I did crudely and half-accidentally around 1920 and 1921. My work of that period was—except for the Dunsanian pieces—especially my own, because I had no idea of publication. Once more I must forget that beings like Satrap Pharnabazus exist. Just as long as I think of anyone but myself, I shall never write. Any gains of mine since 1921 have been wholly *technical*. I can write better, but I have not so much to write. Therefore I am going to take my added technical knowledge and go back to 1921, emotionally speaking. It may be that I cannot regain the lost ground—that I am definitely written out—but the only way to find out is to try. I shall not exhibit to anyone the more unsuccessful attempts—of which I expect there will be a great number. But first I must arrange for leisure in which to make my attempts. I am accordingly being quite ruthless in pushing my way free of other obligations. It will, though, probably be quite a while before I can embark on any serious experimentation.

. . . . .

Bismillah, etc.—
Abdul Alhazred

732. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Oct. 8, 1934

My dear Rhi'-Mhel:—

. . . . . .

I guess I have *Rye'mal* down pat now, and I always pronounced *Duane* right . . . if *DWAIN* is such. Proper names often present unexpected pitfalls when one has known them only on paper. Take

Koenig for example. I called this *Coin'-ig* and Belknap (whose name, incidentally, sounds like *Bel'-nap*—with silent k) called it *Cō'-nig*. Then somebody supposed to be a German scholar corrected us and said it ought to be *Kēr'-nig*. At this point I first had occasion to get in touch with Koenig himself by telephone. Calling up his office—and keeping the latest tip in mind—I asked the clerk for Mr. "Kēr'-nig", and met only with the telephonic equivalent of a blank stare. Then light dawned at the other end. "Oh! You mean Mr. *Kay'-nig!!*" Well, that was that. When the gentleman came to the instrument I hailed him as *Kay'-nig* and received no correction, nor did he demur on a later evening when I met him face to face. So Kay'-nig I suppose it is—though I was long enough in getting to it. Belknap– who is slow to learn new ways—still says *Cō'nig* quite unashamedly! Wandrei's name is pronounced *Wan'-drĭ* (rhyming with *eye* and *pie*), though several (including myself) called it *Wan'-drey* (rhyming with *pay* and *day*) until instructed. There are many names in my own ancestry which—knowing them only from genealogical charts—I probably pronounce all cockeyed. Only lately did I learn that *Rhys* (on my Welsh side) is *Reez*. I had called it *Rĭss*. Local usage often varies the pronunciation of both personal and place names. Rhode Island is very conservative, and elsewhere in the U. S. We pronounce *Greenwich* as *Grinn'idge* (in N. Y. and Conn. they call it *Gren'-itch*), *Norwich* as *Norridge, Thames* as *Tems* (in Conn. *Tames*), *Berkeley* as *Bark'ley, Warwick* as *War'ick, Olney* as *O'ney*, and so on. I was utterly astonished to learn about a decade ago that the statesman Richard Olney (of Mass.) pronounced his name *Ol'-ney* instead of *Ō'ney*. Such a thing would be unheard-of in Rhode Island, where the Olney (Ō'-ney) family has flourished for three hundred years, giving its name to Olneyville (Ō'-ney-ville), now a part of Providence. Charleston, S. C. has some very odd name pronunciations, especially among the Huguenot descendants. Off hand, how would you pronounce *Huger, Legare, Hassell,* and *Manigault?* Well, in Charleston the respective sounds are *You-jee', Le-gree', Hā'zel,* and *Man'-i-go*. And the Dutch name *Vander Horst,* early naturalised in Charleston and repeatedly appearing in the local geography (creek, street, row, block, etc.), is rendered as a dissyllable, *Van-Drorst* or *Van-drawst,* with the syllables about evenly accented. Dialect and accent certainly vary widely in America, though not so much as in the different parts of England. Have you heard of the scientific survey of local dialects now being made

by Prof. Hans Kurath of Brown University—to be incorporated into a *Linguistic Atlas of North America?* All of the U. S. and Canada will be covered eventually, and even now some surprising differences within small areas have been found. Rhode Island alone has seven or eight local speeches, varying in intonation and exact verbal usage—all these hereditary, and not including any foreign dialects. East of the bay, Block Island, South County, North of Providence, near Connecticut line, etc. etc.—all these regions show variations. Such are, of course, most marked among the old rustics. Uniform compulsory education, radio, etc. are fast ironing out these individualities, so that the large linguistic survey has been undertaken none too soon. In another generation many historic idiosyncrasies will have disappeared. All islands have strong local peculiarities. Nantucket, for example, provides a whole glossary of unique words and word-usages and pronunciations. As a whole, the speech of southern New England is closer to the ordinary cultivated speech of Great Britain (*not* the Oxford drawl and clipped speech fashionable in London for the last two or three generations) than is any other native American speech. We do not sound the *r* in words like *farm* (= fäm or fahm), *water* (= watta), *course* (= coahse), *car* (= cää or cah), etc., any more than it is sounded in London and the south of England generally. This is also true all the way down the Atlantic coast (except for Pennsylvania) and throughout the South (E. of the Mississippi). The *r* in these words *is* sounded in *inland* northern New England (Vermont, inner part of New Hampshire) and in northern and central N. Y. State. Also Pennsylvania, Ohio, and the West generally. The typical drawl of the South begins in southern Maryland and extends down to Florida, although it does not appear in the newer and Yankee-settled Florida towns. In Georgia it has a curious thickness not found elsewhere, and west of the Mississippi it acquires Western characteristics. It has never existed in Charleston, S. C. because of the close relations of that city with England, together with its isolation from the rural hinterland. Charleston speech is much like that of Providence. Another city with a recognisable local dialect different from the surrounding country is Boston, with its broad vowels. New York City has an atrociously ugly patois of its own, with blunted vowels and an interchange of the *-er* and *-oi* sounds (thus—"the *Oil* of *Joisey* bought Stan-*Erl* stock" . . . or "the critic Oinest Bird () Ernest Boyd () and explorer Boid () Byrd ()"). It is comical to hear

a New Yorker say *coil* when he means *curl,* and *curl* when he means *coil!* They also have difficulty with the *-ph* sound after *s*—saying *spinx* for *sphinx* and *spear* for *sphere.* In my opinion the harshest and least likeable American dialects are those of New York, Pennsylvania, and the Middle West. In California (and I suppose in Oregon and Washington also) there is less of the *grating* quality than there is in Ohio or Michigan or Iowa. In Illinois there are regions where New England dialect exists untainted—little linguistic islands marking places where Yankees migrated en masse around 1830. One of these is the small city of Delavan in Tazewell County—settled largely by my Phillips relatives (two of my great-grand-uncles, James and Benoni Phillips, went there with large families a century ago) and other Rhode Islanders (Greene, Lawton). After more than three generations the speech of Delavan is still indistinguishable from that of Providence and Newport. Decadent idioms and corrupt pronunciations usually begin in the West or South and work East, or else in New York City, spreading in all directions. Thus the use of *like* where *as* or *as if* ought to be was first southern only. Then the West got it—and only in the last five years have the less careful people of New England picked it up. A decade ago the corrupt pronunciation *cär'mel* (like *Mt. Carmel*) for the candy *căr'-a-mel* was never heard East of the Mississippi. It is now heard in N. Y., but never in New England. In another decade our slipshod elements will get it. On the other hand the atrocious barbarism *kew'pon* for *coupon* probably originated in New York, as did *add'ress* of *address'*. I don't know where the very recent barbarism *coop* for *coupe'* arose, but it has reached New England.

Yrs. most cordially,
Ech-Pi-El.

733. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Oct. 25, 1934

Son:—

Am I still delighted in my colonial dwelling? Excellent example of needless enquiry! Not only does the charm not fade, but it actually

increases. This is due in part to the greater degree of orderly settledness attained since the relative recovery of my aunt—who is now all around on a cane, taking strolls in the nearby college grounds and getting even farther afield with my assistance. . . . . .

Yr. most obt. hble. Servt.,
Grandpa.

734. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Octr. 28, 1934

Dear Helen:—

. . . . . I offer no apologies for my devotion to these scenic survivals of other days, since to my mind "progressiveness" is a thing absolutely meaningless in itself. The whole notion of continuous "progress" toward a presumably "superior" goal is a mere post-Renaissance innovation, & is already losing some of its charm for thoughtful analysts. What most benefits mankind is *not constant change, but satisfactory adjustment*. When a race has achieved a certain settled harmony with itself, its way of life, & its geographical setting, it is not only very foolish but actually criminal to wish it any change. Change is the enemy of everything really worth cherishing. It is the remover of landmarks, the destroyer of all which is homelike & comforting, & the constant symbol & reminder of decay & death. It is change which makes one old before his time by snatching away everything he has known, & substituting a new environment to which he can never become adjusted. Happy is the man who can grow up & flourish in the midst of an unchanging countryside. For him half the terror & tragedy of aging does not exist, for he never loses the visible world of his youth. Never does he face the hideous alienage of one whose eyes wander vainly for the sight of some familiar thing. And so I deplore all needless change, & feel no shame in my love for all that is old & stable. The only sort of opposition to change which is culpable, is that

which insists on the retention of such old forms & institutions as have become really harmful through their conflict with a new (& inevitable) environment utterly different from that which evolved them. Even in this case the culpability does not imply that the environmental change is necessarily desirable. Such changes are generally mere matters of sheer, uncontrollable drift, which we have to face whether we will or no. But when they *do* occur it is of course needful to bring practical institutions into harmony with them, in order to restore the same degree of approximate equilibrium which we had before they occurred. Thus the inevitable growth of the machine age has rendered our system of *laissez-faire* economics obsolete & unworkable, so that we can never have peace till we replace it with some fresh system fitted to the new conditions & restoring to the average man the power to earn a living. Yet a preaching of this need of replacement does not argue the desirability of change in itself. Rather is it an attempt to recapture a harmony which is lost. And side by side with this recognition of *necessary* change, there can exist an equally strong mood of protest against *unnecessary* change. Indeed, the more landmarks we *have* to lose, the more tenaciously do we need to cling to those which we *don't* have to lose. Thus the same thinker who urges a change of property-allocation or industrial regulation to fit an inevitably changed economic trend, may simultaneously —& with perfect logic—give zealous battle to any proposed change in folkways, art forms, or philosophic assumptions, which he may feel to be unjustified, or essentially unrelated to any genuine environmental mutation. We must save *all that we can,* lest we find ourselves adrift in an alien world with no memories or guideposts or points of reference to give us the priceless illusions of direction, interest, & significance amidst the cosmic chaos. Hence the natural function & social value of the antiquarian & cherisher of elder things. To them we owe much of our sense of comfortable continuity & appropriate placement. It is surely a tragedy that so many things *needlessly* change. The east as well as the west suffers from the desecration of the tourist—the wide, straight cement roads, the garages & filling stations, & all that. But at least there are a few mercifully unspoiled backwaters left, where one may see the visible forms known to his forefathers, & absorb a trace of that sense of place & permanence without which all life above the primitive level would form a meaningless & maddening vortex. I can certainly

sympathise regarding the burning of your home & the loss of all your familiar possessions. I was altogether disorganised when I lost my original home in 1904, but I have at least managed to hang on to the books, furniture, pictures, & other objects most vital to me. When *those* have to go, it will be about time for the old man to follow them into nothingness! Still—with a fair amount of cash, anyone can even now find havens remote from the visible evidences of change & decay. Some of the old coast towns & mountain villages of New England linger to this day as they were when the republic was young. And even in the larger places there are oases where a good deal of the cherished & the accustomed can yet be found. The same is true of the South. He who dwells in Charleston—say in Legare or Tradd or Laenhall or Gibbes St. —has little immediate reason to think that the world has changed since 1800 or 1820. In such a place even the Civil War & the machine age & the depression have produced only minor dents. Yes—& I think parts of Quebec would afford the same sense of continuity to anyone able to derive it through French cultural symbols. This is especially true of the Isle d'Orleans.

This autumn I have had some very refreshing glimpses of traditional scenes, notwithstanding the general inclemency of the present month. On warm days I have taken many pedestrian jaunts to rustic realms north of Providence—while on Oct. 19-21 I paid a brief visit to my host of last August in the Boston region—Edward H. Cole—& was taken on some magnificent scenic rides in his well-heated Chevrolet. Oct. 20 we visited north central Massachusetts & enjoyed some superlatively fine vistas of autumn foliage, distant hills, steepled villages, rocky glens & waterfalls, & everything that goes with inland New England at its best. We lunched in the ancient & unspoiled village of West Townsend—of which the enclosed card gives only the very faintest suggestion —in a rambling tavern built in 1774. Here, also, we found a quaint "general store" precisely like those of a century ago. On the 21st Cole & his wife took me back to Providence, picked up my aunt, & continued onward into Rhode Island's famous Narragansett country—the region where E. Hoffmann Price & I did so much exploration just before your passage through Providence. This is the most distinctive region in New England—where the social order departed furthest from the pattern of Puritan yeomanry. Here, as in the South, there were large plantations

with many slaves before the Revolution—with an agricultural & patriarchal life in full swing. Dairying & horse-breeding predominated—Narragansett cheeses & Narragansett pacers being known over half the world in the 1750's & 1760's. The Church of England predominated (with Quakerism as its main rival), & houses of worship were situated in lonely woodland regions, as in Virginia, whither congregated the planters each Sunday in their coaches or on horseback. Life was predominantly rural, despite such attractive villages as Updike's Landing (now Wickford) on the coast, & Little Rest (now Kingston) somewhat inland. The great plantation-houses had gambrel roofs, & were usually vastly enlarged specimens of the New England farmhouse model. Only one or two of these can be found today—so tragically complete was the passing of the old life after the revolution. The scenery is of especial loveliness—in places closer to Old England than anywhere else in America. Well—on this occasion we explored ancient Wickford with its crumbling wharves, great elms, & centuried white houses, & continued southeast to the sprawling old snuffmill on the Narrow River where the great painter Gilbert Stuart was born in 1755. The mill—built in 1750—has lately been restored in every detail, & the obliging caretaker set the great wheel going for our benefit. The adjacent river & meadow & woods & stone-walled road held an autumnal beauty altogether too poignant for adequate expression except by a poet—& twilight brought a violet magic parallelled only by the glimmering vistas of dream. I could scarcely bear to think of leaving—though a return to the city had to be made in the end. Cole, however, was so captivated by the region (which he had never before seen) that he attempted some pioneering which got us momentarily lost! Since that day I have had one pedestrian outing, but the season is getting late for such things now. The leaves are beginning to fall, & desolation & chill will soon be upon the land. Then the long hibernation, relieved only by hopes of returning spring!

..... Speaking of music—I enclose an account of a highly interesting lecture which my aunt & I heard the other night. You doubtless know all about the lecturer & his work. I enjoyed it immensely—even though to me the historical side may have appealed more strongly than the purely musical. The selections were rendered with what I would call supreme skill—& just to make the cast an all-

star one, the music-turning was accomplished by Prof. S. Foster Damon, eminent poet & authority on Thomas Holley Chivers. With Mr. Howard's thesis I found myself in as much agreement as is possible for a layman with no real right to an opinion. He deplored the laboured, conscious efforts to create a purely autochthonous American music, when as a matter of fact no really authentic, spontaneous body of melody could exist apart from the continuous stream of European heritage. How naive to fancy that our European stock could express itself (as some moderns believe it can) in the musical traditions of the Indians or of the plantation negroes! And more—it is equally absurd to fancy that conscious, cold-blooded striving can ever create a tonal type of aesthetic expression. That is not the way art grows. What is authentic must be unconscious & spontaneous—something produced not to fulfil certain formal technical requirements or to prove certain abstract theories, but simply because the producer naturally feels like doing things that way. This is of course just as true in other arts as in music—& ought to be remembered by the architectural modernists who so painfully strive *to express our current machine civilisation* by means of abhorrently ugly concoctions of restless steel & glass construction. These fellows *think* they are representing the present as Ictinus represented classic Greece & as Wren represented Queen Anne's England—but if they would stop to think, they would realise that Ictinus & Wren achieved their effects not by grimly resolving to *express their periods*, but merely by creating such forms as appealed to them, without any thought of time or place. Moreover—Ictinus & Wren did not exclude all elements from the past. Instead, they built upon & modified the mainstreams of art which they inherited. Hence to my mind all these anti-traditional radicals are up a blind alley. Their products are not art, because they come from theory instead of from feeling. And they do not represent this age, because they do not embody those attributes of the European mainstream which this age has inherited. But I digress.

Your argument regarding the modesty or egotism of genius must have been interesting indeed—& I presume you were right, in the long run, in maintaining that great aesthetic creators tend to have an overdeveloped ego, while persons eminent for pure intellect preserve a realistic sense of proportion & are more interested in their work than in themselves. At first—so absurd is the egotistic attitude—one feels

tempted to say that *no* truly great person can be self-centred; but after examining concrete cases one has to change one's opinion. The secret is, I suppose, that art is almost wholly non-intellectual—& in many cases anti-intellectual. The supreme artist usually has no chance to cultivate a sense of proportion or scale of philosophic values; & is so wrapped up in the process of emotional expression that he cannot take a clear objective glance at himself, the whole human race, & the universe. Retaining much of the narcissism of infancy, he continues to think of his own moods & caprices as the central facts of existence & the most important things in the world. It is unfortunate that such a defect has to accompany the greatest creative skill—but, if the skill be truly great, we can afford to excuse its concomitant drawbacks. The most exasperating spectacle is that of the inferior pretender who, without any of the skill or substance of greatness, possesses all the coxcomb vanity & coddled neurotic egotism commonly associated with artistic eminence. These pathetic clowns fancy they are great because they have the weakness which great persons sometimes have—as if all club-footed people were as great as Byron because Byron had a club-foot! Actually, egotism is simply a result of the absence of thought. It is not absolutely universal among the foremost artists—Virgil, Milton, Wren, Copley, Wordsworth, Galsworthy, & scores of other front-rank creators have been thoroughly normal & modest—because the moment one starts to *think,* he cannot help dropping it at once .... & there is nothing about great art which utterly forbids its practitioners to use the frontal lobes of their brains. Scientific thinkers, of course, are modest; since the primary requirement of a sincere observer & interpreter is a clear perspective & sense of coördination. The really analytical brain perceives from the start that the mysteries of the external world are a million times more dramatic & interesting than the limited round of its own local phenomena, or the totally irrelevant question of how it is regarded by the meaningless crowd of other brains around it.

.....

I remain

Yrs most sincerely—
HPL

735. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Bottomless Chasm of Zhun—
Hour of the Green Shining Below.
Oct. 28, 1934

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

. . . . . .

Well—I've read the Sinclair opus with keen interest, and have likewise gone over the wealth of cuttings you so thoughtfully sent. . . He has his weak spots and extravagances, yet his general orientation is in the direction toward which all western civilisation is inevitably moving. On the other hand, the Republicans who hate and fear him represent a thoroughly exploded order of things, based on long-vanished modes of industry, which can never hope to keep more than a fraction of the population fed and clothed, and which leads directly to a desperate revolution. The *Chronicle* (speaking frankly, of course, for capitalism) presents many interesting arguments, but in many ways shows that its concern is for *economic institutions* rather than *people*. Some of the parallels it draws are open to question, and Prof. Kreps reveals his limitations when he naively says that

> "Plans to be successful must not only be based upon facts, but should be capable of execution without disrupting established institutions."

Now this is merely a plea for a static worship of dead words, mouldy documents, and vanished dreams. Certainly we do not wish to disrupt any really vital *social and cultural institutions;* but none of these is involved in the sort of disruption demanded by reasonable economic change. Established *economic* institutions must constantly be disrupted as modes of industry and distribution change, and it is both asinine and suicidal to fancy that a set made to fit a bygone agricultural age can be preserved in a mechanised age like that of the present and future. The whole relation of the individual to industry has been altered—and the whole relation of resources to the community is equally revolutionised. All this is excellently treated in Stuart Chase's recent *Economy of*

Abundance. The empty catchwords of "initiative", "opportunity", "individualism", "enterprise", "stamina", "American spirit", "self-sufficiency", etc., etc. currently slobbered by Republican politicians have no more bearing on anything in today's machine world than have the meaningless taboos of Eoanthropi or the hieratic precepts of Egyptian priests. Every condition on which they were founded is absent from the interrelated welter around us. We *must* disrupt existing institutions *so far as they pertain to the control and distribution of resources.* But only a disingenuous pleader for plutocracy would try to confuse *this* kind of "disruption"—or economic rearrangement—with the total *cultural* disruption attendant upon violent upheavals like the Russian revolution.

The more I reflect on the present economic crisis in relation to all the forces involved, the more I am forced to repudiate the whole fund of economic and political folklore on which the reactionaries base their plea. It is dead material—words—attitudes—illusions—prejudices—without any bearing on existing things and existing needs. I never fully appreciated all this before, because I never really *thought* about economics prior to 1930, when world events began to compel thought in this field. Formerly I was an arch-conservative; all for a royalist, aristocratic order. My conversion has by no means been hasty; but has come step by step, as facts have driven me. For of course you realise that no reputable thinker today (you can't call people limited to business thinking, with the profit motive held paramount, such) endorses unsupervised capitalism. Virtually *all* the *disinterested* world of philosophers and historians recognises the absolute need and inevitability of change. John Dewey—Bertrand Russell—H. G. Wells—Stuart Chase—the late Thorstein Veblen—indeed, the list is too long to complete. Laissez-faire capitalism is as dead as feudalism or trial by the ordeal of iron or water. It no longer offers more than *part* of the people *any chance* of earning food and shelter—and any attempt to restore its full provisions in the United States would be the signal for a really justified uprising of the starving and the desperate. Change of some sort is not a theory but an arrived and inescapable condition. The question is merely one of *what* change, and *how rapid* a change, we shall have.

I don't doubt but that Sinclair wants to move too fast—yet I really think that is better, just now, than trying to sit on the safety-valve. Some of his extreme plans will doubtless become modified as he sees the obstacles which stand in their way—this being indeed already ap-

parent, as you yourself point out. Others may not be as bad as they sound. There is, for example, no need of preserving private banking if the people's funds are generally transferred to state banks before any lapse occurs—and the same is true of those private utilities (light power, transportation, etc.) which some have hitherto used as investments. These investments were anti-social to start with, for no one has any right to expect private profit from widespread services whose only object should be to perform certain functions for the community. It is only according to a false and obsolete system of values that the destruction of large-scale private industry is to be deplored. It must come some day anyhow—and the only question is how fast it shall come. I would prefer a fairly gradual evolution, but it may well be that the New Deal as a whole is too slow for immediate needs. There are millions to be fed, and some way must be found to deliver to them the unused wealth hoarded uselessly by the graspers of private profit. If it can't be managed legally, it will be managed by violence. The world is going to see a period of continuous upheaval until some fresh condition of fairly stable equilibrium can be worked out—some fresh balance between human needs and available forces, whereby the average individual may again have a chance to obtain food and shelter in exchange for his services. Naturally we can't go through such a period of readjustment without much discomfort on the part of many—but all that has to be reckoned with and borne. It won't do any good for the few beneficiaries of the dying order to try to hang on to their yachts and extra cars by throwing monkey-wrenches into the wheels of inevitable change. They might just as well shut up, face facts, and help to make the inevitable change less uncomfortable through the use of their technical skill. But of course they won't! Instead, they'll join Jim Beck and Bainbridge Colby and Al Smith and Reed and all the rest of the archaic yappers in sabotaging any intelligent attempt at necessary experimentation. That's human nature! If the people turn from the moderate New Deal to the extremes of Sinclair, Huey Long, Bilbo, and their congeners, it will be largely because the reactionaries have hampered moderate measures in every possible way. And so it goes. Schools of thought as moderate as that of the *New Republic* consider Sinclair a lesser evil in spite of his obvious drawbacks, and I doubt if I could conscientiously be on the other side considering what the only real other side is. So many of the current objections are based purely on *words* and popular



August Derleth



Henry Kuttner, Clark Ashton Smith and E. Hoffmann Price

prejudices. Suppose, for example, Sinclair *does* advocate many measures practiced in Soviet Russia? Is that necessarily against him? As a matter of fact dozens of *individual features* of the Soviet programme are well worthy of emulation and adaptation by the nations of the western world. That would not mean a full reproduction of the Russian upheaval. It would merely mean a sensible recognition of certain intrinsically wise and useful measures, considered without prejudice and irrespective of their source. Naturally, each one would be tremendously altered in its adaptation to an highly industrialised Anglo-Saxon milieu. But to exclude and condemn some sensible idea merely because the Soviets happened to think of it first, is positively childish. There's plenty in Russia that we don't want—but what has this to *do* with what we do perhaps want? Sinclair is far enough from the alien New York communists who yearn for another Moscow! Probably the least desirable feature of the Sinclair programme is that involving an influx of indigents—but even this may perhaps be exaggerated. If the plan in any way succeeds, its duplication in other states would probably serve to keep such a migration within bounds. Of course I can see how alarming the whole thing looks to anyone on the spot—but the fact is that all change must begin somewhere some time .... and the need of legal change, if we are to avert a revolution, is pretty manifest today! We were pretty close to a revolution just before Hoover was kicked out.

Well—that's the way I look at things. Of course I'm the rankest of laymen, and wholly unable to estimate the effects of given causes; but just now even a layman can appreciate the lack of any future in laissez-faire capitalism. *That* can almost be counted out of any argument. The question is one of a suitable substitute or modification—and here we are all at sea. It seems to me that the first thing is to break up the existing deadlock and start *something .... anything.* Until capitalism is really shaken, it will make no concessions, but will simply wait till a revolution blows the whole civilisation up. It is our job, then, to shake it—to shake it until its upholders are willing to think and plan for some alternative order yielding them less profit. They won't start thinking and planning until they're booted in the behind—hence it is now necessary to boot 'em! Undermine their foundations, and then they'll *have* to use their practical ability for some purpose other than personal purse-stuffing!

In some ways I differ sharply with the conventional philosophy to

which you still profess allegiance—these differences arising partly from my strong sense of a tremendously and permanently altered balance of forces and resources in the modern machine world, and partly from my lifelong and directly anti-Marxian conception of *cultural* values as distinct from *economic* values.

For example—even before I gave thought to these matters I always despised the bourgeois use of *acquisitive power* as a measure of human character. I have never believed that the securing of material resources ought to form the central interest of human life—but have instead maintained that *personality* is an independent flowering of the intellect and emotions wholly apart from the struggle for existence. Formerly I accepted the archaic dictum that only a few can be relieved of the engulfing waste of the material struggle in its bitterest form—a dictum which is, of course, true in an agricultural age having scanty resources. Therefore I adopted an aristocratic attitude; regretfully arguing that *life,* in any degree of fulness, is only for the fortunate few whose ancestors' prowess has given them economic security and leisure. But I did not take the bourgeois position of praising struggle for its own sake. While recognising certain worthy qualities brought out by it, I was too much impressed by its stultifying attributes to regard it as other than a necessary evil. In my opinion, only the leisured aristocrat really had a chance at *adequate life*—nor did I despise him because he was not forced to struggle. Instead, I was sorry that so few could share his good fortune. *Too much human energy was wasted in the mere scramble for food and shelter.* The condition was *tolerable only because inevitable in yesterday's world of scanty resources.* Millions of men must go to waste in order that a few might really live. Still—if those few were not upheld, no high culture would ever be built up. I never had any use for the American pioneer's worship of *work and self-reliance for their own sakes.* These things are necessary in their place, but not ends in themselves—and any attempt to make them ends in themselves is essentially uncivilised. Thus I have no fundamental meeting-ground with the rugged Yankee individualist. I represent rather the mood of the agrarian feudalism which preceded the pioneering and capitalistic phases. My ideal of life is *nothing material or quantitative,* but simply *the security and leisure necessary for the maximum flowering of the human spirit.* To my mind no other supreme ideal is sound—and if this is "un-American", then so much the worse for what the politicians

call "American". Actually, I believe that my ideal has flourished naturally in many parts of America—Virginia, South Carolina, and even my own New England before the cursed revolution of 1775-83. It is by no means a supine or decadent one—for it involves points of honour, inviolateness, responsibility, and courage fully as arduous (and in many cases more so) as any brought out by the fight for worldly resources. It is that of the gentleman as distinguished from that of the tradesman —and is to my mind especially worthy of upholding because of its repudiation of that *calculativeness* and *ulterior motivation* inseparable from the acquisitive character. That everyone could not feasibly pursue it in the agricultural age of scarcity was a source of genuine regret to me.

Well—so much for the past. Now we live in an age of easy abundance which makes possible the fulfilment of all moderate human wants through a relatively slight amount of labour. What shall be the result? Shall we still make resources *prohibitively hard to get* when there is really a plethora of them? Shall we allow antique notions of allocation —"property", etc.—to interfere with the rational distribution of this abundant stock of resources among all who require them? Shall we *value hardship and anxiety and uncertainty* so fatuously as to *impose these evils artificially* on people who do not need to bear them, through the perpetuation of a set of now irrelevant and inapplicable rules of allocation? What *reasonable* objection is there to an intelligent centralised control of resources whose primary object shall be the elimination of want in every quarter—a thing possible without removing comfortable living from any one now enjoying it? To call the allocation of resources something "uncontrollable" by man—and in an age when virtually *all* natural forces are harnessed and utilised—is simply infantile. It is simply that those who now have the lion's share don't want any fresh or rational allocation. It is needless to say that no sober thinker envisages a workless equalitarian paradise. Much work remains, and human capacities differ. High-grade service must still receive greater rewards than low-grade service. But amidst the present abundance of goods and minimisation of possible work, there must be *a fair and all-inclusive allocation of the chances to perform work and secure rewards*. When society *can't* give a man work, it must keep him comfortable without it; but it must give him work if it can, and must compel him to perform it when it is needed. This does not involve interference with *personal* life and habits (contrary to what some reaction-

aries say), *nor is the absence of insecurity anything to deplore.* If "stamina" and "Americanism" demand a state of constant anxiety and threatened starvation on the part of every ordinary citizen, then they're not worth having! Better far to be "decadent" than to tolerate such a brutish waste of human energy! All this feverish complaint about the "dependence" of the modern citizen is simply a savage echo of the old petty-bourgeois concept of *acquisitive power* as the only ultimate measure of human quality. I spit upon this concept today from the standpoint of a rational socialist, as I spat upon it yesterday from the standpoint of an agrarian feudalist. I regard it as something fundamentally hostile to all that is best in mankind and the human spirit.

But of course the real need of change comes not from the mere fact of abundant resources, but from the growth of conditions making it impossible for millions to have any chance of getting *any* resources under the present outworn set of artificial rules. This development is no myth. Machines had displaced 900,000 men in the U. S. *before* the crash of '29, and no conceivable regime of "prosperity" (whereby a *few* people will have abundant and flexible resources and successfully exchange them among one another) will ever make it possible to avoid the permanent presence of *millions* of unemployed, so long as old-fashioned laissez-faire capitalism is adhered to. The feeble argument that new machines create new jobs has no serious standing. The ratio is wrong. For every ten men employed in some *new* industry, one hundred or more are displaced in *all* industries. Every day sees the development of some new device which makes every sort of work performable by fewer and fewer men. Even if the *proper* supplying of the *entire* population *would* keep everybody naturally busy (which is unlikely in view of the ease of duplication. The technocrats of 1932 brought out some profoundly significant truths!), laissez-faire capitalism offers no way for the entire population to get purchasing-power enough to demand proper supplying. The whole dying system is self-defeating. Really, it is not the Sinclairs, but its own dead weight and unworkableness, that are killing it!

Without wishing to boast, I must remark that I recognised this matter of technological unemployment long before the depression, though I then (in the depths of my thoughtlessness) advocated a wholly different solution. Being then a convinced feudalist, I believed that the great industries would eventually come out into the open and *visibly* instead

of secretly control the government. I advocated *letting them do it*—believing that they would have the sense to handle the growing problem of human displacement themselves. I thought they would recognise the revolutionary peril of the unemployed millions of the future, and would *voluntarily* curtail profits enough to spread work among more men, and provide old-age pensions and unemployment insurance. I assumed that the *funded proprietor* of the future would come to feel the same basic responsibilities as those felt by the *landed proprietor* of the past—and that eventually the great accumulations of wealth would once more breed a *real gentry* with non-acquisitive interests and a true ability to use cultivated leisure to advantage. I now see how tragically I overestimated the rationality of the plutocrat. Instead of the benign aristocrat I had looked for, we had only the "let-'em-starve" profit-Shylock of the Hoover era!

And so I have readjusted my ideas. I fancy you can see that, with me, the process has not been any wild emotional jump like Sonny Belknap's plunge into Russian bolshevism. I have gone almost reluctantly—step by step, as pressed by facts too insistent to deny—and am still quite as remote from Belknap's naive Marxism as I am from the equally naive Republican orthodoxy I have left behind. I am as set as ever against any *cultural* upheaval—and believe that nothing of the kind is necessary in order to achieve a new and feasible *economic* equilibrium. The best of culture *has always been non-economic*. Hitherto it has grown out of the *secure, non-struggling* life of the aristocrat. In future it may be expected to grow out of the secure and not-so-struggling life of whatever citizens are personally able to develop it. There need be no attempt to drag culture down to the level of crude minds. That, indeed, *would* be something to fight tooth and nail! With *economic opportunities* artificially regulated, we may well let *other* interests follow a natural course. Inherent differences in people and in tastes will create different social-cultural classes as in the past—although the relation of these classes to the holding of material resources will be less fixed than in the capitalistic age now closing. All this, of course, is directly contrary to Belknap's rampant Stalinism—but I'm telling you I'm no bolshevik! I am for the preservation of all values worth preserving—and for the maintenance of complete cultural continuity with the Western-European mainstream. Don't fancy that the dethronement of certain purely economic concepts means an abrupt break in that stream. Rather

does it mean a return to art impulses typically aristocratic (that is, disinterested, leisurely, non-ulterior) rather than bourgeois. There is nothing in *bourgeois* culture which need be mourned. It was cheap and contemptible from the start. I can sympathise with the anti-commercial attitude of the classical Greek as distinguished from the essentially bourgeois Phoenician.

. . . . . .

Whether any real decadence has indeed overtaken the Aryan race is another matter demanding separate consideration. It so happens that the last few generations have witnessed profound changes of thought and custom through the progress of human knowledge and mechanical technology; and some of these changes have undeniably tended toward the breakdown of traditional inhibitions. Absence of religious restraints has operated adversely on those lacking aesthetic standards and practical sense, while the multiplication of material luxuries (we must not confuse this growth of *luxury* with the possible future growth of *security*. It does not hurt a man to know that his old age is provided for, but it *may* soften him to ride on cushions where he used to walk—and so on) has certainly promoted a trace of softness and effeminacy in the race. On the other hand, I do not regard the rise of woman as a bad sign. Rather do I fancy that her traditional subordination was itself an artificial and undesirable condition based on Oriental influences. Our virile Teutonic ancestors did not think their wives unworthy to follow them into battle, or scorn to dream of winged Valkyries bearing them to Valhalla. The feminine mind does not cover the same territory as the masculine, but is probably little if any inferior in total quality. To expect it to remain perpetually in the background in a realistic state of society is futile—despite the most feverish efforts of Nazis and Fascisti. However—it will be some time before women are sufficiently freed from past influences to form an active factor in national life. By the time they do gain influence, they will have lost many of the emotional characteristics which now impair their powers of judgment. Many qualities commonly regarded as innate—in races, classes, and sexes alike—are in reality results of habitual and imperceptible conditioning. . . . .

Yrs. for the Horned Guardian—
E'ch-Pi-El

736. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Oct. 30, 1934

Dear Rhi'-Mhel:—

About pronunciation—here's something I overlooked last time. How do you pronounce the name of your town? I had taken *A-sō'-tin* for granted, but the other day someone looking at an envelope on my desk pronounced it *Ass'-o-tin*. Neither side could show any real authority, so I pass the question along to one qualified to answer it. Many place-names are very hard to pronounce. I don't know yet the really proper way (as recognised by natives) to pronounce *Los Angeles*. In New Orleans the educated classes say *New Aw'l'ynnz*, while the ignorant say *New Ore-lēānz'*. A similar class difference exists in Cincinnati—where the educated say *Cin-si-nah'-ti* while the ignorant say *Cin-si-năty*. In St. Louis there seems to be a tendency of natives to sound the final *s*, while educated non-residents hesitate to do this. In *Chattanooga* the *ch* should be given the sound it has in *chat* or *chew* or *cheese;* not the French *sh* sound. The word is Indian. Certain state names present odd paradoxes. *Iowa* is called *I'-o-wah* by the educated and *I'-o-way* by the uncultivated—and yet there is reason to believe that the latter may actually represent the real name of the Indian tribe from which the name was derived. In the pioneering age crude Yankees always rendered an *-a* termination as either *-y* (Ameriky) or *-ā* (Floriday) ; hence when they encountered an Indian name never before put into English letters, they naturally followed this plan. Probably the Iowa Indians had a name that sounded like *I-o-way*. The pioneers spelled this *Iowā* because they thought this form conveyed the sound. But it didn't convey the sound to educated people, hence the common educated pronunciation *I-o-wah*. This theory has been *disputed,* but it has much in its favour—notably the analogy of the name *O'-jib-way* . . . . thus spelled and pronounced. *Arkansas* should be *Ar'-kan-sah* (or -saw)—the name being a French transliteration of the Indian sounds, hence subject to French rules of pronunciation. (cf. Dumas, Degas, etc.) Curious about

Koenig—evidently my academic informant (who said *Kĕr'nig*) was really right from a linguistic standpoint—the trouble being a gradual though partial Anglicisation on the part of H. C. K. I fancy he represents the second or third generation of American birth—he had to study German in high school, and doesn't read it readily. That linguistic atlas will certainly bring out some curious facts. I don't think it will cover any but *English* dialects, hence will have to omit the interesting variants of French in Canada or of Spanish in the Southwest. In Canada it will have plenty of material, though, for local English accents vary greatly. Newfoundland has a curious brogue—probably of Scottish origin. In the maritime provinces a certain vocal quality derived from current British speech is manifest. In Montreal the speech approximates that of northern N. Y. State—and I believe that the Western prairie provinces largely resemble the American western states above which they lie. Regarding the New York City patois—I don't think any slangy usage or playful interchange of sounds can be held responsible. That isn't the way dialects grow. The reasons are generally far subtler and deeper. This case is a particularly baffling one, but some day a plausible explanation may be devised by etymologists. "Youse" is evidently a variant of the "yeez" common among the ignorant in the British Isles —especially Ireland and the north of England. I think this especial variant did develop in the N. Y. slums. The basis of this and its parent form is evidently a reluctance of the ignorant to think of a *plural* without an *s*. When the forms *ye* and *you* supplanted *thee* and *thou* in the *singular,* simple people thought they'd have to tack on an *s* to get a *plural!* Later on, an opposite *corruption of the corruption* set in, whereby *yez* or *youse* came to be used as a *singular* pronoun! Your mention of "Chinook" reminds me of the large number of Northwestern Indian words which have entered the *colloquial* speech of Washington—or at least, of the Seattle region. One often finds them in the amateur journals of the *United Amateur Press Assn. of America,* whose chief local centre is Seattle. "Skaskum", "tillicum", and "potlatch" are the examples which most readily occur to me. This, however, does not affect the standard literary language so far as I know.

Yrs. most cordially,
Ech-Pi-El.

737. TO F. LEE BALDWIN

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Novr. 2, 1934

Dear Eph-Li:—

. . . As for old de Castro—he hasn't been away from New York, but had somewhat dropped out of sight until this autumn. He never succeeds with his various financial ventures, & is now really badly off. What is more, his eyes are in dangerous shape, & his wife is an advanced tuberculosis sufferer. Now he wants Long & me to collaborate with him on various projects—to take half the profits if they succeed. Neither of us can do so just now, though we'd like to help the old boy. He is a curious character—a bit of a poseur & charlatan, though perfectly honest financially. In his life of Bierce he drops himself in rather egotistically, & perpetuates several unmistakable myths. But he is really a profound scholar—graduate of Bonn & master of 7 languages—& has had published work of undoubted importance. Some of his unpublished books are probably of real value—& I surely hope he can get a collaborator even if I can't tackle the job. He is 74 years old. In the matter of Bierce's disappearance—de Castro lived in Mexico from 1922 to 1925, & had interviews with Villa & his generals in 1923. He claims to have received an account of Bierce's end from these revolutionists—but there is no reason to think this account any more correct than the other two accounts now current. In a way, all three reports are alike—so that it is pretty likely that Bierce was somehow shot by the Villistas in 1914. Bierce was 72 years old, & bored with everything. He wanted to get into some military excitement, so went to Mexico where revolution was raging. His plan, as stated to friends, was to mix in the row a bit & then go on a trip to South America. The last letters ever received from Bierce came from Chihuahua City late in 1913. My friend Samuel Loveman last heard from him in September—from Washington, D. C., where he lived. He wrote: "I am going away to South America in a few weeks, & have not the faintest notion when I shall return." As for the end Villa told old de Castro that Bierce did *not* join any army, but

that he was in Chihuahua when the rebels took it. He got drunk & criticised Villa very harshly—praising Carranza in contrast. Villa didn't like this, & ordered Bierce to leave town. As he expressed it to de Castro—"*Lo hemos hecho fuera.*" Later an officer told de C. that Villa really arranged to have him shot outside the village—leaving his body to the vultures. This account is believed by the well-known editor R. H. Davis.

Another account is that of a newspaper man named George F. Weeks. He met a Mexican in 1918—a Dr. Malero—who claimed to have known Bierce. According to Malero Bierce joined Villa's army but got disgusted & went over to Carranza. Later he was captured by one of Villa's generals—Urbina—& was shot after his refusal to answer questions. This is the account accepted by the late George Sterling. The third account is given by a roving character named O'Reilly. He says that Bierce was treacherously murdered by some Mexican associates & buried at Sierra Mojada. And so it goes. Wildcat legends about Bierce have persisted to this day—including accounts of his participation in the World War. It is, however, almost certain that he was killed in Mexico before the middle of 1914. In September of that year the formal search for him began. I am inclined to favour the Weeks-Malero account. De Castro is an inveterate myth-maker & embroiderer, & had quarrelled with Bierce. It would be just like him to doctor an account subtly enough to place Bierce in a less favourable light. But there's no telling. It will take radically new evidence to settle the fate of Bierce. De Castro's original name is Gustav Adolf Danziger—he changed it during the World War because of the unpopularity of German names—taking the name of a remote Spanish ancestor. He came to America in 1886 & was a dentist for a long period. He also dabbled in politics, & was American consul at Madrid for a time. The piece of work he did with Bierce was translating the German novel of Richard Voss—*The Monk & the Hangman's Daughter*. He was German-speaking & (in 1889) could not write even passable English. Bierce, on the other hand, was a master of English but knew no German. De Castro—or Danziger—admired the Voss novel & made a very crude translation into such English as he knew. Then Bierce took that crude translation & made the present admirable English novelette of it. It is rather amusing to reflect that Bierce & de Castro always quarrelled over the chief credit for this production—both forgetting that the real author was neither of them.

Undoubtedly, the *real* power in the poignant drama & stirring descriptions is that of Herr Voss of Heidelberg—neither Bierce nor de Castro being anything more than an adapter. Certainly, the book as it stands is a curious three-man job! It is not a weird tale. . . .

Yrs most cordially—Ech-Pi-El

738. TO ADOLPHE DE CASTRO

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Nov. 14, 1934

Dear Dr. de Castro:—

. . . . . Permit me to wish you, with much sincerity, the traditional many happy returns. For most persons I imagine that being born is neither a calamity nor a boon—it is just an event. They are about as well off alive as dead—it doesn't make much difference. A smaller number are definitely worse off alive than they would be had they never been born. And a still smaller number are perhaps actual gainers in pleasure by being alive. To the universe it makes no difference whether or not organic life happens to exist on any of its planets. The incident is too trivial to be of importance—& indeed, life cannot exist for more than the briefest fraction of a planet's total existence. It is a mistake to regard the cosmos as either favourable to life or unfavourable to it. It is simply indifferent & unconscious. However, that forms no occasion for sorrow on man's part. Whether he has a fairly good time or a wretched time being alive depends greatly on his own skill & good sense in adapting himself to the environment within which accident has thrown him. Barring unusual external misfortunes, a man of sense can generally gain enough contentment to make existence at least no worse than non-existence. There is always pleasure in artistic expression, the acquisition of ideas, & the trace of vague expectancy inherent in any experience whose future stages are beyond fathoming.

. . . . . .

Yrs. most sincerely,
H.P.Lovecraft

739. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Mosque of Eblis—
Novr. 18, 1934
"Queen of the Lilin"

Dear Malik:—

Your remarks on phantasy in general, and on the quality of my attempts therein, proved most interesting and encouraging. Definitions of real weirdness or phantasy are almost impossible to establish. All one can say is that the weird tale or poem must form an authentic crystallisation or objectivisation of some deep and genuine human mood connected with the illusion of unseen worlds and the revolt of the emotions against the limitations of time, space, and natural law. . .

. .What I am looking for is the best way to illustrate and embody the moods and visions which demand to be set down, and as yet I frankly don't know what that way is. All my knowledge is purely *negative*. I have learned a few things *not to do,* but which of the countless remaining courses is the best one to follow .... or whether *more than one* ought, on diverse occasions, to be followed .... I really have not the slightest idea. All is experimental. I have a feeling that many typical features still persisting in my tales belong in the category of things not to be done, but so far I've not been able to discover what they are. When I do, I'll drop them overboard. One point concerns an occasional plethora of *visibly explanatory* matter. I feel sure that I ought to get rid of this—to substitute *brief implication or suggestion* —but at this stage I don't know how to make the substitution. Another point is the conveyance of shades of mood, and the presentation of events, in such a way as to give a full-bodied picture and *justify* the central weird assumption or climax .... that is, make this assumption or climax seem quasi-real or emotionally important rather than trivial, irrelevant, and unmotivated. At this stage I am unable to accomplish such a purpose without plenty of space for detail and "building-up". A better artist might do it through brief but potent symbolism or suggestion—but if I try that, the result is thin and hollow. Just now I am

experimenting with an old plot idea of mine which I may have described to you—that of a man who, in excavating ruins palpably of incredible antiquity, comes upon (as an unmistakable part of them) *a specimen of his own handwriting in English.* The explanation is that these ruins belong to a pre-human race of organic entities, infinitely above man in mental powers, who in their day ranged the whole gamut of time through mental transference. To learn of a future age, they would have one of their number project his mind ahead and displace the consciousness of somebody in the chosen period. Then the voyaging mind in the body of its victim, would absorb all the information possible—and finally fly back through time to its original body, while the displaced mind returned to the vacated future body. In the meantime the displaced mind had occupied the body of the pre-human voyager, hence had had a brief life and consciousness in the immemorial past. And of course it could then leave a *record* which, in its proper body millions of years later, it could discover during the excavation of blasphemously ancient megalithic ruins. Well—I developed that story *mistily and allusively* in 16 pages, but it was no go. Thin and unconvincing, with the climactic revelation wholly unjustified by the hash of visions preceding it. So I've torn the whole damn thing up and am re-writing it in my usual latter style—with gradual hints and slowly built-up stages of unfolding. Am now on page 27, and fear it will run to 40 before I'm through. Naturally, I know what the majority will say if I decide to type it and show it around. "Verbose—long-winded—slow—nothing happens—novelette length for short-story idea—etc., etc., etc." But the fact remains that it represents the best I can do with the given idea. The shorter treatment was wholly inadequate—not even scratching the surface of the many bizarre implications involved in the central assumption. And so it goes. Possibly I'll never succeed in what I'm slowly fumbling for, but only experiment will decide.

Benedictions of the faithful—
Abdul Alhazred

740. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Nov. 19, 1934

Dear Rhi'-Mhel:—

I dream of cats very often—did I ever mention any curious dreams about the ancient black sage who used to greet me daily at the entrance of one of the quaint colonial archways on the hill? He died in 1928 at an age substantially over twenty years. Dwyer once had an idea of weaving a story around him. I've dreamed several times about little Sam Perkins, and was pleased to see his name in your new story! The Kappa Alpha Tau are still eloquent in expressing their appreciation of your verses. As for the ill-fortune attending the feline population this autumn—it is really getting to be quite uncanny! The latest victim is the faithful tiger companion of my revision-client Mrs. Heald—who ate some Paris green in the cellar, was seized with a sort of frenzy, and dashed out of the house, never to be seen again. No further reports concerning Doodleby or Gen. Tabasco—alas! But the K. A. T.'s original elders are still flourishing. Owing to the lateness of the season Pres. Randall (whose climatic tastes are like mine) is visible only on exceptional days, but Vice Pres. Osterberg is a fixture at all times. Of late I've seen a stranger about—grey, plump, and rather youngish—but don't know whether he'll be voted in or not. Another new friend of mine—who I think is connected with the University Club at Benefit and Waterman Streets—is quite young and all black except for a small white star on his chest. He follows me quite a way up the hill when I pass his presumable abode, and is the most effusive and amicable of ankle-rubbers. But I haven't lately seen my huge tiger friend John Quincy Adams at the grocery next the Art Club. He had an accident a year ago, but was supposed to be recovering very nicely from it. Glad to hear that Crom continues to prosper! May he have as long and peaceful a life as Messrs. Randall and Osterberg appear to be having!

. . . . . .

Dialect is surely a fascinating study, and leads to all sorts of research. A decade ago I was greatly interested in tracking down some of the idioms I encountered in New York. For example—the phrase "store cheese"—which my palate preferences caused me to run up against continually. In southern New England the expression is—or at least was in 1924—unknown. Our principal cheeses are the large traditional sort—about a foot thick and two feet in diameter—and the modern tinfoil package or process cheeses run second. Thus the word "cheese" without any trimmings suggests to our mind one of the large ordinary old-fashioned sort. When we allude to the new sort we usually say "process cheese", "package cheese", or (in the case of the long tinfoiled loaf) "loaf cheese". Well—in New York it is just the other way around. The word "cheese" in itself suggests to New Yorkers the modern tinfoil brands, and if you ask for "a pound of mild white cheese" a Manhattan grocer will begin to chop you off a section of a Kraft tinfoiled loaf. These process cheeses (they are artificially cured and not aged) are the principal kinds used in the metropolis, and in many shops no others are obtainable. And where they *do* keep the standard old-fashioned sort, they call them "store cheeses". Thus when I was in Brooklyn I used to have to ask for "medium white *store* cheese" if I expected to get my usual kind. The usage rather puzzled me, so I tried to track it down. I had assumed that it was purely a New York City form, so began enquiring about its use in circles extending gradually outward from the metropolis. I found it common in Newark, Paterson, Yonkers, Stamford, Elizabeth, Perth Amboy, etc. But when I investigated beyond the immediate metropolitan penumbra I felt puzzled. While it gave out in New Jersey and Connecticut, it persisted steadily *up the Hudson*—in Poughkeepsie, Kingston, and even Albany, Troy, and Rensselaer and Washington counties. And to cap the climax, I found it in full blast in *Vermont*—of all places, the *least* likely to be influenced by New York City ..... and the least likely to be overrun by process cheese! Well—this wholly changed my theory. Obviously, the phrase was *not* a Manhattanism, but something from the north which, escaping southern New England, had reached the metropolis through the Hudson River trade route. And so it turned out to be. "Store cheese" originated some one hundred to one hundred fifty years ago in the zone of colonisation embracing both Vermont and up-state New York. The phrase sprang from a local custom which arose soon

before central dairies began to supplant the home making of cheeses—
that of making *small* cheeses for private domestic use, and *large* one
to export to shops in the cities and towns. Thus the standard *larg*
cheese was a *store* cheese; and if a farmer's home-made supply gav
out, so that he had to buy a few pounds from a "gin'ral store" a
Schuylerville, Perkins' Four Corners, Newfane, or West Brattleboro
he would know that his order would be cut from one of the grea
cheeses sold to stores. Therefore he would be apt to say to the rustic o
village shopkeeper—"Wal, Zeke, I guess I'll hev to git a couple c
pounds o' yer best yaller *store* cheese, seein' as haow M'randy used u
the last o' what we hed in th' haouse fer supper Thusdy." And so th
expression "store cheese" arose; inextricably associated with the larg
two by one foot cheeses of retail commerce. Since Vermont and uppe
New York traded but little with southern New England, we neve
acquired the expression; but because of the Hudson River—along whic
trade and population flowed, and which brought many up-staters t
New York City—the metropolis acquired it early . . . even before th
age of tinfoil cheese. It was at first used to distinguish the *then* com
mon large cheeses from the choice potted brands which came in glas
or porcelain jars. And so the puzzle was solved. It may be added tha
the phrase is *very gradually* filtering into southern New England fro
New York City—aided by the growing prominence of tinfoil cheese
and by the presence of chain store clerks transferred from shops in th
areas where it flourished. Where tinfoil cheese is securing the ascer
dancy, there is a trend toward giving (heretofore) common chees
some distinguishing name—and in areas untouched by New Yor
influence I have heard such amusing forms as "*cut* cheese" (Haverhil
Mass.) and even "*cooking* cheese" (A. and P. store in Providence)
I have given this small matter in detail as a typical sample of the wa
dialects are formed and diffused. The small-scale research which
applied to this case must be fairly similar to much of the large-scal
research prosecuted by Kurath's continent-wide survey.

Yrs. under the Black Sea
Ech-Pi-El.

741. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
Novr. 22, 1934

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

. . . . . Wiggam, like Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, believes that much will be done in future toward the artificial development of Homo sapiens; but I doubt very much whether such development can ever reach more than a tiny fraction of the extremes they postulate. In the first place, the *complexity* of the laws governing organic growth is enormous—so enormous that the number of unknown factors must always remain hopelessly great. We can discover & apply a few biological principles—but the limit of effectiveness is soon reached. For example—despite all the advances in endocrinology & all the experiments in glandular rejuvenation, there is no such thing as a permanent or well-balanced staving-off of senescence & dissolution. And in the second place, the fact that human beings live by emotion & caprice rather than by reason will probably prevent the widespread application of any unified plan of eugenics. Resistance to organised effort will be tremendous—& can be overcome only in a few instances . . . . mainly in strongly centralised fascist nations. In the United States, for example, the silly & criminal sentimentality arrayed against any rational racial discrimination is of appalling magnitude. What is more—there really is no *one* idea of racial excellence. Even if the *principle* of eugenic control were accepted by a nation, there would remain a constant struggle among various factions advocating different *goals* of development. One group would advocate the cultivation of this or that group of emotions, or the establishment of this or that blood mixture, while another would campaign ceaselessly for a directly opposite result. Thus the Nazis in Germany want to get rid of every trace of Jewish blood, while other groups believe that the highest intellectual qualities in all races come through prehistoric & forgotten infusions of Semitic blood! Amidst such a confusion of objects, what single policy could ever gain an effec-

tive ascendancy? However—this is not to say that eugenics will remain utterly neglected. There are, of course, certain lines of action where virtual unanimity exists; & along those lines considerable progress may be expected. It is, for example, agreed that hereditary physical disease & mental inferiority ought not to be transmitted—hence within the next half-century the sterilisation of certain biologically defective types will probably become universal throughout the western world, thus cutting down the prevalence of idiocy, epilepsy, haemophilia, & kindred inherited plagues. The Nazis have already put such a policy into effect. There may, too, be *local* efforts (like the present anti-Semitism of the Nazis) to direct the ethnic strain . . . in cases where a certain approximation of unanimousness exists within single nations. The rise of the inferior stocks at the expense of the superior is becoming so obvious & alarming, that some countries may be veritably scared out of their mawkish equalitarian idealism. Some way of checking the increase of alien elements within nations ought to be devised, & the multiplication of the sound stock ought to be encouraged through a planned economy making it practicable for persons with civilised living standards to rear larger families. As it is, the only persons who can rear large families are either a negligible sprinkling of millionaires, or—at the other end of the scale—low grade proletarians (in America, mainly negroes & foreigners) who do not care what squalor they live in. Under unsupervised capitalism, it is absolutely impossible for the average citizen of good stock to rear more than one or two children with the social & educational advantages which he himself enjoyed, & which are necessary for the maintenance of the great tradition of civilisation. The result in four or five generations is obvious—a complete engulfing of the high-grade stock by the fertile & squalid masses. Regarding the negro—I don't know what the outcome will be. But I greatly doubt whether any general assimilation will occur in the United States. Fortunately the American people seem to have no wavering in their determination to keep African blood out of their veins, so that *nothing* could precipitate such a mongrelisation as occurred in Egypt, & in later years in Brazil & the Caribbean nations. It is no novelty for Aryans to dwell as a minority amidst a larger black population—such has been the case in Alabama & Mississippi for decades, & the upper part of South Africa is having a similar experience. But the effect of this condition is generally to

heighten rather than relax the colour-line. The white minority adopt desperate & ingenious means to preserve their Caucasian integrity—resorting to extra-legal measures such as lynching & intimidation when the legal machinery does not sufficiently protect them. Of course it is unfortunate that such a state of sullen tension has to exist—but anything is better than the mongrelisation which would mean the hopeless deterioration of a great nation. Naturally, the negro resents his relegation to inferiority—but I doubt if he can do anything dangerous about it. Much as he may increase in the United States, his numbers will never be enough to give him a military advantage over the united white population. And his intelligence could never be equal to a contest with the strategic skill & experience of a massed Caucasian nation. Tragic overturns like that of Haiti could occur only in isolated & ill-protected colonies. All that could make a negro uprising succeed, would be the ardent coöperation of a large faction of the white population itself—& in America there is no white element aside from the numerically insignificant fringe of Marxian communists which advocates complete racial equality. The second generation of European immigrants seems to share the anti-negro attitude, while substantial sections of the Indian population—such as the Osage nation—are beginning to put up the bars against the black blood which has measurably tainted the so-called "civilised" tribes of Oklahoma—Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, &c.—& the pitiful aboriginal remnants (like the Seminoles of Florida, or our handful of Niantics & Narragansetts in southern Rhode Island) of the Atlantic coast. The Osages inflict the most drastic penalties on all members of the tribe forming alliances with Africans. Even if some desperate social crisis were to sweep America into communism, I doubt if the racial-equality plank of the Marxist programme would survive. Blood is thicker than doctrine—the reason the Russians can accept an equality programme with equanimity is that they are already largely mongrelised with Mongol blood, & also that they are not faced with the practical problem of dealing with vast hordes of beings as widely & utterly aberrant as the negro. Of the complete biological inferiority of the negro there can be no question—he has anatomical features consistently varying from those of other stocks, & always in the direction of the lower primates. Moreover, he has never developed a civilisation of his own, despite his ample contact with the

very earliest white civilisations. Compare the way the Gauls took on the highest refinements of Roman culture the moment they were absorbed into the empire, with the way the negroes remained utterly unaffected by the Egyptian culture which impinged on them continuously for thousands of years. Equally inferior—& perhaps even more so—is the Australian black stock, which differs widely from the real negro. This race has other stigmata of primitiveness—such as great Neanderthaloid eyebrow-ridges. And it is likewise incapable of absorbing civilisation. In dealing with these two black races, there is only one sound attitude for any other race (be it white, Indian, Malay, Polynesian, or Mongolian) to take—& that is to prevent admixture as completely & determinedly as it can be prevented, through the establishment of a colour-line & the rigid forcing of all mixed offspring below that line. I am in accord with the most vehement & vociferous Alabaman or Mississippian on that point, & it will be found that most Northerners react similarly when it comes to a practical showdown, no matter how much abstract equalitarian nonsense they may spout as a result of the abolitionist tradition inherited from the 1850's. If a Russian-inspired communist dictatorship ever tried to force negro equality on the U. S., there is scant question but that the descendants of Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, & William Lloyd Garrison would stand side by side with those of Jefferson Davis & John C. Calhoun in fighting its ultimate implications to the death. *Other* racial questions are wholly different in nature —involving wide variations unconnected with superiority or inferiority. Only an ignorant dolt would attempt to call a Chinese gentleman—heir to one of the greatest artistic & philosophic traditions in the world—an "inferior" of any sort .... & yet there are potent reasons, based on wide physical, mental, & cultural differences, why great numbers of the Chinese ought not to mix into the Caucasian fabric, or vice versa. It is not that one race is any *better* than any other, but that their whole respective heritages are so antipodal as to make harmonious adjustment impossible. Members of one race can fit into another only through the *complete eradication* of their own background-influences—& even then the adjustment will always remain uneasy & imperfect if the newcomer's physical aspect forms a constant reminder of his outside origin. Therefore it is wise to discourage all mixtures of sharply differentiated races —though the colour-line does not need to be drawn as strictly as in the

case of the negro, since we know that a dash or two of Mongolian or Indian or Hindoo or some such blood will not actually injure a white stock biologically. John Randolph of Roanoke was none the worse off for having the blood of Pocahontas in his veins, nor does any Finn or Hungarian feel like a mongrel because his stock has a remote & now almost forgotten Mongoloid strain. With the high-grade alien races we can adopt a policy of flexible common-sense—discouraging mixture whenever we can, but not clamping down the bars so ruthlessly against every individual of slightly mixed ancestry. As a matter of fact, most of the psychological race-differences which strike us so prominently are *cultural* rather than *biological.* If one could take a Japanese infant, alter his features to the Anglo-Saxon type through plastic surgery, & place him with an American family in Boston for rearing—without telling him that he is not an American—the chances are that in 20 years the result would be a typical American youth with very few instincts to distinguish him from his pure Nordic college-mates. The same is true of other superior alien races including the Jew—although the Nazis persist in acting on a false biological conception. If they were wise in their campaign to get rid of Jewish cultural influences (& a great deal can be said for such a campaign, when the dominance of the Aryan tradition is threatened as in Germany & New York City), they would not emphasize the separatism of the Jew but would strive to make him give up his separate culture & lose himself in the German people. It wouldn't hurt Germany—or alter its essential physical type—to take in all the Jews it now has. (However, that wouldn't work in Poland or New York City, where the Jews are of an inferior strain, & so numerous that they would essentially modify the physical type.) As for Japan—that is still a third kind of problem . . . . not that of inferiority, & not merely that of difference, but that of *difference plus tremendous military power & ambition.* None of the other alien race-stocks involve this factor of aggressive physical might. The Chinese are hopelessly divided, & the other dark races have no coherent national fabric behind them, but the Japanese form one of the greatest & most influential nations in the modern world. Indeed, Japan would probably form a major international problem *even if no racial angle existed.* As a *nation* —aside from all ethnic aspects—Japan represents a first-rate power hitherto balked in its quest for a field of expansion. To sustain its own

economic life, it has got to overflow & dominate lands with necessary raw materials, & has got to participate in foreign commerce as freely as the other great powers. Coming late on the international scene, it finds colonial domains & trade routes all preëmpted—so what is it to do? Here is a case of logical ambition opposed by the equally logical ambitions of the western powers. Not a *race* question at all. And I fear the solution will have to be a military one sooner or later . . . . unless the western nations will give Japan an absolutely free hand in the Far East. This they are reluctant to do for two reasons: concern for their own Far Eastern interests, & fear of the upbuilding of Japan as the supreme nation of the world. Of these two reasons I deem the first invalid (for commercial tentacles are not worth defending at too high a cost) but believe the second is sound. Therefore I would advocate acting on the second reason alone—giving Japan all she wants on the Asiatic mainland, but blocking all attempts on her part to secure the highway of the Pacific. That would postpone the final showdown for generations—perhaps for centuries—for if Japan had China to exploit, she would not be thinking about Australia & New Zealand & California for a long while. But the integrity of Australia & New Zealand & California as parts of the Anglo-Saxon would most always be maintained—as long as Western civilisation has the strength to maintain it. In the end—as we grow weak & decadent & self-indulgent —Japan will probably dominate the world; but I'm hoping that that period will be thousands of years in the future. She will probably fight Russia again in the next few years—but if the western world is wise, it won't get drawn into that mess.

With all good wishes—
Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

742. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Dec. 22, 1934

Dear Rhi'-Mhel:—

So I hadn't spoken about "Old Man" and my dreams of him! Well —he was a great fellow. He belonged to a market at the foot of Thomas Street—the hill street mentioned in *Cthulhu* as the abode of the young artist—and could usually (in later life) be found asleep on the sill of a low window almost touching the ground. Occasionally he would stroll up the hill as far as the Art Club, seating himself at the entrance to one of those old-fashioned courtyard archways (formerly common everywhere) for which Providence is so noted. At night, when the electric lights make the street bright, the space within the archway would remain pitch-black, so that it looked like the mouth of an illimitable abyss, or the gateway of some nameless dimension. And there, as if stationed as a guardian of the unfathomed mysteries beyond, would crouch the Sphinxlike, jet-black, yellow-eyed, and incredibly ancient form of Old Man. I first knew him as a youngish cat in 1906, when my elder aunt lived in Benefit St. nearby, and Thomas St. lay on my route downtown from her place. I used to pat him and remark what a fine boy he was. I was sixteen then. The years went by, and I continued to see him off and on. He grew mature—then elderly—and finally cryptically ancient. After about ten years—when I was grown up and had a grey hair or two myself—I began calling him "Old Man". He knew me well, and would always purr and rub around my ankles, and greet me with a kind of friendly conversational "e-ew" which finally became hoarse with age. I came to regard him as an indispensable acquaintance, and would often go considerably out of my way to pass his habitual territory, on the chance that I might find him visible. Good Old Man! In fancy I pictured him as an hierophant of the mysteries behind the black archway, and wondered if he would ever invite me *through* it some midnight .... wondered, too, if I could ever come back to earth alive after accepting such an invitation.

Well—more years slipped away. My Brooklyn period came and went; and in 1926, a middle-aged relique of thirty-six, with a goodly sprinkling of white in my thatch, I took up my abode in Barnes Street—whence my habitual downtown route led straight down Thomas St. hill. And there by the ancient archway Old Man still lingered! He was not very active now, and spent most of his time sleeping—but he still knew his fellow-elder, and never failed to give his hoarse, friendly "e-ew" when he chanced to be awake. About 1927 he took on a sort of final second youth and began to be awake more. He had been sticking rather close to the market, but now I met him farther and farther up the hill, and very often at the old archway. Good Old Man! In 1928 he seemed a trifle feeble, but his purring friendliness was unabated. Not long before my thirty-eighth birthday I saw him—him whom I had known at sixteen! Then in August I began to miss him. Always when turning the corner on to the hill I used to look down ahead and see if I could discern a familiar lump of black by the archway or at the market. Now I failed to see the graceful old furry lump. I feared the worst—but scarcely dared to enquire at the market. At last—September—I did enquire, and found that my fears were all too well founded. After more than two decades Old Man had gone through the archway at last, and dissolved into that eternal night of which he was a true fragment—that eternal night which had sent him up to earth as a tiny black atom of sportive kittenhood so long ago! Assuredly, I felt desolate enough without my old friend—without any black lump to look for on the ancient hill! I had dreamed of him—and the mysteries of the archway—before; but I now began to do so with redoubled vividness. He would greet me in sleep on a spectral Thomas Street hill, and gaze with aged yellow eyes that spoke secrets older than Aegyptus or Atlantis. And he would mew an invitation for me to follow him through the archway—beyond which lay (as saith Dunsany) "the unreverberate darkness of the abyss." In no dreams up to now have I actually followed him through—but I have often wondered what will happen if ever I do ..... whether, in such an event, I shall ever again awake in this tridimensional world? When I mentioned these dreams to Dwyer he wanted to make a story about Old Man, but he has not yet done so. If he doesn't, I may myself some day. Good Old Man! But I am sure that no world he would lead me to would be a world of horror. He is too old and true a friend for that! When Little Sam Perkins appeared

on the scene last summer I decided that he must be a great-great-great-great-great-grandson of Old Man—perhaps a messenger despatched from the Abyss by my old friend. As soon as his great violet eyes began to turn yellow, I occasionally addressed him as Old Man, and fancied I could sense a spark of recognition! Perhaps he was my friend himself in a new body! But, alas, he did not remain long. He, too, returned to that eternal Night of which he and all his kind are inalienable fragments! .....

.....

Yrs. most sincerely—
E'ch-Pi-El

743. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Dec. 29, 1934.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Glad little Bobby Barlow has been dropping in. He mentioned in a note how much he enjoyed his calls. His photographic work is surely remarkable in the extreme. Has he shewn you any of his reproductions of Howard Wandrei's weird drawings? Indeed, he is astonishingly clever in every way—drawing, painting, clay modelling, writing, & general craftsmanship. His bookbinding jobs—in which he sometimes uses the skins of snakes he has shot—are masterpieces in their way. .....

Yes—the gang surely are migratory by nature. Donald Wandrei has been out to California visiting Clark Ashton Smith, & is now in New York again—for how long, I am not yet certain. Price is still in Oakland, & is thinking—at the moment—of buying a lot in San Carlos (south of San Francisco in San Mateo Co., east of the bay) & building a very cheap house on it. If you still receive the *Fantasy Fan* you've doubtless noticed the interview with Price. (If not, I can send you recent issues—one dedicated to me.) .....

Early this month I attended an unusual number of lectures—closely grouped together as part of the local observance of "Art Week". One

of them was a demonstration of painting by two of the city's foremost artists—a landscapist & a portraitist—who executed a picture apiece in full view of the audience. It was really a fascinating thing to watch. Another feature was a display of the choicest of the 717 Japanese prints just acquired by the local museum. As you know, these things form quite a hobby with me—& I enjoyed the exhibit enormously. This acquisition puts Providence more or less in the running with Boston, whose museum of Fine Arts specialises in Japanese art. Still another "Art Week" feature was an exhibition of the new aesthetic form—the correlation of shifting projected colours with music. It must have been highly interesting, but I had to forego it—since the weather was too cold to permit of my going out. . . . . .

My aunt & I had an exceptionally pleasant Christmas, & I hope the same is true of yourself. We had a *tree* for the first time in over a quarter of a century. All our old-time tree ornaments were long ago dispersed; but I laid in a new & inexpensive stock at Woolworth's & Kresge's—tinsel star & rope, globular baubles, set of lights, stand, & abundant shreds of tinsel to hang from the branches like the Spanish moss of the far south. The result was really delightful & impressive, & I've spent considerable time admiring & gloating. We had numerous though inexpensive presents—my best one from my aunt being a picture of the oldest house in Providence (the Stephen Hopkins house—1742 —only a block & a half from our door), drawn by a local artist & simply framed. We began the day most auspiciously by listening to the great British Empire broadcast—which I hope you did not miss. Etheric conversations between London & the uttermost reaches of our Dominions—Australia, Tasmania, Canada, India, South Africa, & so on—with other area sages from Scotland, Ireland, Liverpool, & a country place in the Cotswolds . . . & finally an address by the King. I don't know when I've ever had a greater imaginative stimulus. After it was over I turned face down the dollar bill that was tied on top of one of my gifts . . . . . I couldn't bear to see the features of one who was instrumental in the cruel tearing of these colonies from the Empire in whose fabrick they rightly belong! Later in the day came a turkey feast at the boarding-house across the back garden (home of the late Sam Perkins), a general unveiling of gifts, & a session of conversation & contemplation by candlelight & tree-light. At the boarding-house Mrs. Spotty (little Sam Perkins's mother) received a catnip mouse as a

Christmas gift, & seemed very well pleased with that traditional feline delicacy. I couldn't locate any of the members of the Kappa Alpha Tau —the weather being inauspicious for sessions atop fence & clubhouse —but trust they all partook of ample Yuletide cheer.

Well—unless something goes wrong, the New York convention season will open Monday morning—the last day of 1934. Barlow hit the metropolis Christmas Day, & is staying at a rather luxurious hotel in 102nd St. which Long found for him. His tastes in lodging are so sumptuous & sybaritical that he couldn't get about the country as cheaply as I do! He & Long find each other tremendously congenial, as I knew they would. On Thursday Wandrei put in his appearance— & tomorrow night I shall myself take a stage coach for Manhattan, arriving at the Long headquarters in time for breakfast. It certainly ought to be quite a gathering—with other local gang-members likewise on hand. Don't know how long I'll stay—probably a week or more. The weather will be a troublesome factor, but in N. Y. the subway system forms a convenient way of getting around without much exposure. Barlow has not seen N. Y. since his infancy, so that all the museums, bookshops, &c., will be new to him. Doubtless Long will be taking him about this week—& what he doesn't show him, I will next week. . . . . .

Yr most oblig'd, most obt Servt—
HPLovecraft

144. TO EMIL PETAJA

66 College St.
Dec. 29, 1934

Dear Mr. Petaja:—

Regarding the settings for tales—I try to be as realistic as possible. The crumbling old towns with winding alleys & houses 100 to 250 or more years old are realities on the New England coast. Providence has my number of houses dating back to 1750 & thereabouts—the one I live in was built 130 years ago. Boston's oldest house dates from 1676; Haverhill has one built in 1640, & so on. My fabulous "Kingsport" is

a sort of idealised version of Marblehead, Mass.—while my "Arkham" is more or less derived from Salem—though Salem has no college. "Innsmouth" is a considerably twisted version of Newburyport, Mass. I hope you can see some of these old towns some time—they are my principal hobby. . . . . .

Best Wishes
Yrs most sincerely
HPL

745. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Old 66
Dec. 30, 1934

Dear Malik:—

This new thing—a second version—fails to satisfy me, and I don't know whether to finish it as it is or destroy once more and start afresh. Pressure of other duties has for the moment made any original writing impossible. The incomplete effusion is about ¾ done. It will probably mark my last attempt in the vein of recent years.

Bismillah, etc.—
Abdul Alhazred

746. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Garden of Hassan
Jany. 13, 1935

Dear Malik:—

. . . .

. . Another thing with an Oriental touch which might interest you is the exhibit of Cambodian stone sculpture and Javanese works and puppets at Faunce House—on the Brown campus a block from here. I'll chuck in a catalogue which you needn't bother to return. This, of

course, isn't in your Islamic line—but at least it has something to do with the general region represented by Pawang Ali. I don't care for Indo-Chinese, Malaysian, or Hindoo art, but the whole epic of the Khmers, with their brooding, deserted city of Angkor, has always fascinated me. It is curious to note the elongated ear-lobes of Cambodian statues—a link in common with the baffling colossi of Easter Island. I fancy a wave of Indo-Chinese culture spread all the way across the Pacific—entering Central America and giving many characteristic touches to Mayan and Aztec art. This would account for the puzzling resemblances to old-world forms noted in certain American antiquities. The idea of an "Atlantis" is really quite cockeyed, for all the evidence is against the existence of such a bridge to Europe during the age of man. Whatever European-Asian-African cultural influences reached America undoubtedly came by way of the Pacific—in which large land areas may or may not have subsided during the human period. A curious thing about these Cambodian statues is the archaic way of depicting hair—by thickly studded raised dots. This is characteristic of *archaic* Greek art, but disappeared in Greece by 500 B. C. In Asia, on the other hand, it kept right on through the centuries.

Benedictions—
Abdul Alhazred

747. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Jany. 22, 1935

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Curious that the *FF* no longer reaches you. If you paid a dollar at the outset, you ought to have received the magazine for 18 months according to Editor Hornig's special offer of Sept. '33. ... I'd advise you to drop him a line anent the matter—or I will. Meanwhile I enclose the issue dedicated to me, plus the Dec. issue with the reprint of my Poe chapter. These need not be returned, since I have duplicates. I also enclose a catalogue of a rather interesting

exhibit at the college which my aunt & I have just been to see. The Japanese puppets are of the most grotesque aspect conceivable—much like some of little Barlow's drawings. Another interesting current exhibit—at the art museum—is of 18th century French wallpaper—much of which adorned the Georgian houses of colonial America. There was an interesting lecture on this last Sunday.

. . . . . I've just indulged in a rather badly-needed extravagance—bought 2 dark-walnut sets of drawers for filing purposes. My files have been getting almost out of control. Expect delivery today —but haven't quite decided how I'll arrange them. I may pile one atop the other & thus have a single tall cabinet. The total of 10 drawers will do much toward bringing order out of my present chaos. Got the cabinets at a fire sale—$14.44 each. Long recently acquired something similar.

All good wishes—

Yr most obt hble Servt
HPLovecraft

748. TO ROBERT BLOCH

Hellish Sabbat-Night
January 25, 1935

Hail, O Ludvig Prinn!

. . . . If Prinn's immortal work is in Latin, you ought to give the title in that language—hence my change in two places (in yr ms.) to DE VERMIS MYSTERIIS (Concerning / of the worm / the mysteries). Also, since knowledge of elementary Latin is so universal, I've modified the statement concerning your limitations in that tongue. Still more, I've supplied just a tantalising fragment of that hellish invocation: "Tibi, Magnum Innominandum, signa stellarum nigrarum et bufoniformis Sadoquae sigillum . . ." (To thee / great Not-to-be-Named / the signs / of the stars / black / and / of the toad-shaped / Tsathoggua / the seal . . .) . . . . . .

Luve-Keraph

749. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
Jany. 26, 1935

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

As to writing—there is never any need of hurrying about it. Practise and experiment are as useful as complete story-writing—all these processes aid in the development which one seeks. . . . . Congratulations on the sales—but I don't believe you need regret not having framed your first cheque. Such a thing never occurred to me when my first literary remuneration came—in August, 1906, nearly 30 years ago. The fact is, I have never been interested in the commercial side of writing—& am even hostile to it. It is the ruination of sincere artistic expression, & has cut off the literary development of more than one writer of splendid endowments. . . . . I absolutely refuse to make compromises—editors can either take what I want to write, exactly as I write it, or go to the devil. Naturally, I can't make original writing pay—but if I can't keep afloat through other ways I'll cheerfully starve. So, in general, the matter of literary remuneration is not one about which I am apt to wax enthusiastic.

****

Yes, indeed—voodoo, black magic, the history of the witch-cult, & everything of that sort is surely of the keenest interest to me. I continually borrow the standard classics on this subject from the ample library of the generous H. C. Koenig. . . . . African witch-doctors (& their West Indian descendants), following tribal customs of incalculable antiquity & working on the minds of ignorant devotees trained from infancy to believe in the wildest forms of magic, do indeed create effects of the greatest marvellousness. They are masterly unconscious psychologists & hypnotists; & when we understand how profoundly the human mind can be influenced by suggestion, we need not wonder at the baffling & startling results they are able to secure. Of course, tales of their deeds become heightened through repetition & through sensational newspaper exploitation. Strange as are the things

they *do* accomplish, they never accomplish even half of what they are popularly credited with! By the way—if you ever find any books hard to get in K. C., both Koenig & I would be glad to lend you anything we have. So many promising & deeply interested weird fans live in places where bizarre books are unobtainable—places like Milltown, Mont., Asotin, Wash., Auburn, Cal., West Shokan, N. Y., &c. &c.—that we feel we ought to give them the benefit of whatever volumes of the sort we may chance to possess. Hence a rather active programme of borrowing is carried out among "the gang". And it is not only the small-towners who need to borrow—for even the largest city libraries are sometimes devoid of the most important weird items. Thus Koenig & I lend to each other as much as to any third & fourth & further parties .... right now I have his copy of the famous old *Mallens Maleficarum.*

I remain

Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

750. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Jany. 28, 1935

Dear Rhi'-Mhel:—

.....

My visit to Long—as you've doubtless learned from a postcard of a fortnight ago to Eph-Li—was a highly enjoyable event. The whole business acquired something of the atmosphere of a convention through the presence of Barlow and the arrival of *both* the Wandrei boys—Howard unexpectedly coming on from St. Paul as Donald landed from San Francisco. The brothers have taken a very attractive four-room flat in Greenwich Village—at 155 West 10th St., above a rather well-known "bohemian" restaurant called Julius's. The building is about a century old, but made over into apartments with all conveniences. Well—Barlow reached the metropolis Christmas morning, and Belknap took

him in charge and found him an hotel six blocks north of the Long place. Young Bobby is rather hard to suit, since he demands especially good neighbourhoods and will not consider anything without a private bath. I am not so exacting—so the Longs always get me a room in one of the flats over theirs. These rooms have running water—but unlike Barlow, I am willing to dodge around to the bathroom for my matutinal tub! This was Bob's first visit to New York since infancy, so Belknap was kept busy showing him the various museums, galleries, art shops, and bookstalls. What fascinated him most was the great Metropolitan Museum with its priceless paintings, Egyptian and classical collections, and everything else under the sun. We all agree that if any sudden holocaust were to engulf Manhattan Island, and if the gods were to allow only *one* object or institution on it to be saved, the Metropolitan Museum is what we would choose for preservation. I reached Belknap's on the morning of Dec. 31, and from then on the events developed rapidly. On Jan. 2, the gang held a monster meeting at Long's with fifteen present—Morton, Loveman, Barlow, Leeds, Kirk, Kleiner, Koenig, both Wandreis, Talman, etc. etc. It was the most enjoyable event I've attended in years—even if Talman did take surreptitious snapshots of the guests with a new German camera which works in ordinary electric light .... catching me in an especially awkward pose, with my mouth looking as if I were about to whistle a tune or expectorate! Two evenings later a smaller gathering met at Loveman's Brooklyn apartment, our host showing us his magnificent collection of almost four hundred Clark Ashton Smith drawings ... mostly in colour and all tremendously impressive. This is undoubtedly the finest array of Klarkash-Ton's work outside Auburn—and Loveman has only recently brought it to New York from his old home in Cleveland. I had seen it in 1922 in Cleveland, but it was wholly new to Belknap, Ar-E'ch-Bei, and the two Wandreis. On another occasion Koenig showed Barlow, Belknap and me through the Electrical Testing Laboratories, in which he holds an important executive and engineering position. This is a fascinating place, with all sorts of bizarre devices (suggesting space-rockets, bathyspheres, atomic projectors, and every kind of scientifictional standby) for gauging the safety and durability of various household electrical appliances—lamps, cords, plugs, refrigerators, flatirons, heaters, etc. etc. As a climax to this exhibition, Koenig gave us a demonstration of *artificial lightning* caused by the passage through the air—

betwixt two metallic poles—of a current of tremendously high voltage. A good deal of our time was taken up by the book stores, art shops, and art department of the public library. During the course of the visit Ar-E'ch-Bei bought a copper-plate and dry point stylus, and began experimenting with the engraver's art. In the bookstalls we encountered several attractive bargains. Barlow—lucky little rascal—stumbled on a fine old copy of George W. H. Reynolds' *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf* for only *fifteen cents!* My own chief bargain was a good modern edition of Lewis's *Monk* for a dollar. I now have all three of the most famous Gothic novels—Mrs. Radcliffe's *Udolpho* (1785), *The Monk* (1795), and Maturin's *Melmoth* (1820) ... all in modern editions. Other sessions of the gang were at the Wandrei brothers' flat. We didn't get a chance to look up old de Castro although we half started out for his place at least twice. There was so little time—and so darned many things to do! The breakup began Jan. 7th, when Barlow set off for Washington at eleven-thirty a. m. He cannot stand night travelling as I can, hence had to forfeit a day in N. Y. I stayed on till midnight, when the Wandreis saw me to the Providence coach. ....

Yrs. most sincerely—
E'ch-Pi-El

751. TO WILLIAM FREDERICK ANGER

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Jany. 28, 1935

Dear Anger:—

..... As for Wright's acceptances & rejections—I've long ago given up trying to find any central thread of reason in them. They are clearly governed by caprice, pure & simple. One of his favourite tricks is to reject a tale & then recall it for acceptance. As to the work of C. L. Moore—I don't agree with your low estimate. These tales have a peculiar quality of cosmic weirdness, hard to define but easy to recognise, which marks them out as really unique. *Black God's Shadow* isn't up to the standard—but you can get the full effect of the distinctive quality

in *Shambleau* & *Black Thirst.* In these tales there is an indefinable atmosphere of vague *outsideness* & *cosmic dread* which marks weird work of the best sort. How notably they contrast with the average pulp product—whose bizarre subject-matter is wholly neutralised by the brisk, almost *cheerful* manner of narrative! Whether the Moore tales will keep their pristine quality or deteriorate as their author picks up the methods, formulae, & style of cheap magazine fiction, still remains to be seen. A. Merritt fell for the pulp formula, hence never realised his best potentialities. Miss Moore may do the same. But at present she certainly belongs in the upper tier of *W. T.* contributors along with Smith, Howard, &c. . . . .

I've never been able to understand the psychology of drink—just why people consider it desirable to spend most of their time in the clutch of a poison which sends them back several million years along the evolutionary scale! I'm 44, & have never touched alcoholic liquor. Somehow or other, my imagination seems to function in its humble way without external aid! . . . .

Blessings, & the Peace—
Abdul Alhazred

752. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Kadath in the Cold Waste—Epiphany of Nug.
(Second week of February, 1935)

Invincible Ar-Ech-Bei:—

. . . . . .

Now as to the aesthetic value of certain things which certain persons cannot "enjoy"—as typified by my attitude toward Dreiser—I rather think that the apparent dilemma comes from a too subjective attitude—aggravated perhaps by a confusion of mere *names* as distinguished from underlying realities. After all, what *is* "enjoyment"? How is the *sense of power-recognition* inherent in certain forms of aesthetic appreciation to be distinguished from the general quality of "enjoyment" also manifest—under other circumstances—in the sensation of sheer

superficial pleasures? In all these cases there is a sense of exaltation—of ego-expansion—which must in the strictest sense be regarded as *enjoyment*. The *kind* of recognition of truth inherent in a genuine work of art is infinitely different from that involved in the reading of a reliable newspaper. The paper presents only *specific facts;* which—although they may be correct—are not selected with any view of *illustrating universal truths of human nature* or exercising the deeper emotions of the reader. They are conveyed through the medium of direct and unproportioned statement—with basic and irrelevant matter unseparated. What we get is no more and no less than we would get from first-hand observation. Drama and emotion may impress us, but only to the degree they would in real life. On the other hand, art *is* selective. A great realistic novel, while not representing events as other than what they would be in real life, *chooses what aspects of these commonplace events to emphasise,* and therefore *throws into high relief such elements of universal experience and emotion as may reside in those events.* That is the great difference between life at first hand (seen visually or through prosaic reporting) and life as seen through the medium of authentic realistic art. Art imposes a diaphragm or pattern or colour-filter which enables us to pick out the really moving and significant and universal elements in any given glimpse of life—*but if it is good art it will not distort or falsify the given section to be examined.* You can easily see the difference between *picking certain elements out* of an undistorted section of life, and actually *distorting a section of life.* The latter is what *romantic* fiction habitually does—and that is why I do not consider romance to be art in the truest sense.

But to get back to the question of *pleasure*. Really, we've been arguing about nothing—for as I've said, the recognition of universal truth through the medium of art—a different thing from the mere perception of isolated facts through the window or in the daily press—involves definite emotions of expansion which cannot be distinguished from *enjoyment* in its highest sense. That is what aesthetic appreciation is .... and if anyone is insensitive to these emotions, the fault is in him rather than in the kind of art involved .... assuming, of course, that the art is indeed genuine as tested by a representative number of properly sensitive and qualified persons. Now as a matter of fact almost all of us are very unequally developed—emotionally even more than

intellectually. Very few persons are sensitive to all forms of art in equal degree—so that one man's meat is another man's poison. If we refused to call anything art unless it pleased *everybody,* we would not be able to recognise any such thing as art. Therefore we must, as a matter of common sense, recognise as art anything which brings the sense (enjoyment) of universal truth or harmony *to any representative number of generally high-grade and properly educated people.* For instance—of three different things (say Baudelaire, fine bindings, and Wordsworth) you and a dozen others may like one or two and dislike (or be indifferent toward) the other or others. Belknap and a dozen others may like one or two—perhaps the one or ones you dislike—and hate the one you like best. And Jim Morton and a dozen others may prefer above everything else one which both you and Belknap hate. Now in a set-up like this it can't be that whole groups of judges are dead wrong whilst others are dead right. There's too much variation. Obviously, there must be *something* of real value in *all* the kinds of things under consideration. But is this an admission that all aesthetic values are subjective, and that anything at all may be either good or worthless according to the emotions of the observer? *Not a bit of it!* To continue our test, let us take a *fourth* kind of thing .... something different from any of the other three, and intensely pleasing to millions of people ... say a "poem" by Edgar A. Guest. Set the same judges on it—you and Belknap and Morton, and others like each of you—and see what the verdict will be. Disagreement again? *Nothing of the sort!* Here we have something *entirely different.* You and Sonny and Jim and all the rest *vote together as one man against the material considered.* Despite your differences regarding certain things, here's something about which you are all unanimous. Somehow or other—whether through your intellect or emotions—you all, as high-grade persons properly trained, recognise that a certain class of things lacks some element about whose presence or absence you differ when other classes of things are under consideration. You may think that Baudelaire and Merrymount bindings have the element (i. e., give you pleasure) and that Wordsworth doesn't—but you're sure Guest doesn't. Belknap may think Baudelaire and Wordsworth have it but that bindings don't—but he's sure Guest doesn't. Morton may think bindings and Wordsworth have it but that Baudelaire doesn't—but he's sure Guest doesn't. Now what conclusion

must a disinterested onlooker necessarily draw from all this? Naturally, he must realise that Baudelaire, fine bindings, and Wordsworth all represent something on the one hand—despite individual differences—which on the other hand Eddie Guest *doesn't.* High-grade, educated men *can* like Baudelaire, fine bindings, and Wordsworth . . . . *whether or not all such men do* (and many *do* like all three)—but no such man can possibly like Eddie Guest. Here is the basis for a *genuine and absolute distinction.* We may say that Baudelaire, fine bindings, and Wordsworth *all represent genuine art,* whether or not any given *individual* may respond to any or all of them, whereas Guest does *not.* There is a quality common to certain things—even though they affect different people differently—which certain other things lack. *Art is a quality which is capable of giving certain high-grade and cultivated people a sense of universal truth or rhythm constituting pleasure in its purest sense*—WHETHER OR NOT ALL SPECIFIC MANIFESTATIONS OF IT PLEASE EVERYBODY OF HIGH-GRADE AND CULTIVATION. Of course—if everybody were *theoretically perfect* in mental and emotional balance and sensitiveness, we would *all* be responsive to *every* form of art just as soon as education opened up our channels of perception and recognition. But the human race simply isn't built that way. We are for the most part imperfect chance products of varied evolutionary conditions, so that any one of us must be content with only *part* of the aesthetic responsiveness which an ideally perfect human being would possess. Some of course are lucky enough to possess a much wider range than others . . . but nobody is 100% responsive to all the aesthetic stimuli which exist.

But how about the man who says he *recognises* a kind of art which does not actually please him or otherwise stir his emotions—myself, say, in relation to Dreiser? Is such a guy a hypocrite or a babbler of nonsense? I don't think so. When he says an art-phase doesn't please *him,* he *recognises that it may and does please others.* As I have intimated, the human *intellect* is much more *uniform* (in *kind,* though perhaps not in *degree*) than the human *emotions;* so that any person of ordinary acuteness can learn to distinguish the qualities which separate real art (i. e., material which can give real aesthetic pleasure to *some* people) from non-art (i. e., material which cannot give real aesthetic pleasure to *anybody*). Of course, this process of distinguish-

ing may be purely intellectual—the distinguished may not be able to respond emotionally to a great deal of the material which his cool perception and reason classify as truly artistic (i. e., capable of evoking a true emotional response from *somebody*). *But that doesn't make the unfelt material any the less artistic.* In such a case the critic is simply conceding that he has an emotional blind spot—as we all have in one direction or another. *His* emotions can't get a kick out of the material—but his *brain* is able to recognise in the stuff something which can and does give *other people* a kick. What is other than sound about such a classification? The guy knows what he's doing. Put a piece of trash before him and he'll reject it as inartistic. It may not affect his *emotions* any differently from the really artistic thing that left him cold, but his intellect recognises the difference—he knows that this thing couldn't possibly evoke a real emotional response from any cultivated person. Take the case in point. Dreiser leaves me *rather* cold .... although my recognition of his power *does* give me a certain sense of universal drift which comes close to the borders of appreciative pleasure. But I know that really sensitive and cultivated men like Mencken and Vrest Orton and thousands of others *are profoundly and pleasurably moved by him.* And I have enough perception and power of comparison to discover in him certain definite and recognisable elements of universal truth and harmony *which correspond to certain elements in other things which do move my own pleasurable emotions,* but which are entirely absent from still other classes of things—those classes which do not please or move *any* high-grade people. I know—as a rational observer and analyst—that Dreiser has something which (in another form) Poe and Keats and Wagner and Harry Clarke and Hobbema also have, but which Eddie Guest and Nictzin Dyalhis and Seabury Quinn haven't. What if he doesn't move me as Poe does? Poe doesn't move Orton as Dreiser does. Who expects every individual to be responsive to every aesthetic stimulus? I recognise Dreiser as art but don't feel him acutely. Orton recognises Poe as art but doesn't feel him acutely. . .

. . . . . .

Yrs. for the Elder Sign—
Ech-Pi-El

753. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
Feby. 10, 1935

Dear Jehvish-Êi:—

. . . . . Speaking of writing—I appreciate the compliment of your suggestion that I bombard the *Atlantic* with an autobiography compiled from epistolary extracts (a damn clever way of assembling one, I'll say!), but really fear that my sense of proportion is a bit too strong to let me launch such a project. There are too damned many autobiographies as it is; & when it comes to bungling old geezers who've never done anything in particular, the line simply has to be drawn! Almost anybody could cook up a lot of childish reminiscence & nostalgic maundering with a certain amount of "charm"—but the real importance or appropriateness of such a thing depends largely upon the calibre of the person concerned. If he never did anything of moment, an atmosphere of ridiculousness hangs about any attempt to dramatise his sources, recollections, & environment. *Montes laborant; nascitur ridiculus mus!* One might as well write the pompously documented biography of a sandwich man or elevator boy in 8 volumes—I. Ancestry & Childhood; II. Education & Early Contacts; III. Period of Dime Novel & Western Cinema Influence; IV. Period of Tabloid, Pool Room, & Sex Cinema Influence; V. Friendships & Debates in the McSoak's Barroom Circle; VI. Industrial Evolution; VII. Opinions & Utterances of Maturity; Leadership in the Madison Square Bench-Warming Senate; VIII. Bibliography & Index. Ho, hum . . . . us great men! Which reminds me that I read Comte d'Erlette's second detective novel last autumn (*The Man On All Fours*), & guessed the solution on p. 32. I judge from your reference that you have also read his first—which is more than I've done. His third will be out some time this month. Later he hopes to arrange for the publication of his first serious book—*Place of Hawks*. He certainly is arriving on all fours in the magazines!

Regarding political matters—I still don't see any course of action *likely to be adopted* which offers any improvement over the constant

experimenting of the New Deal. The old principle of *laissez-faire* capitalism is absolutely dead. It has nothing but mass starvation to offer, & would—if restored—form merely the prelude to a revolution. One of the perils of the present administration is that it will too seriously heed the pressure of the frantic plutocratic element & swing too far to the right—thereby playing into the hands of irresponsible & incompetent radicals. What is needed, quite obviously, is something considerably to the left of the New Deal—but how in hell is such a thing ever to be achieved except by slow degrees? When a "leftist" proposal is openly made, the people get frightened & defeat it—as in California last autumn. Clearly, the only practical course is to go slowly—a little at a time—& get the people used to the habit of change. Certain fixed concepts—such as the inviolability of profit & private property—must be modified & liquefied very gradually. When the first general shift toward the left is fully made, the next one will be less difficult. If the present administration cannot engineer the second step, it will naturally be replaced by one that has a better chance of doing so. The one great thing is to accomplish the needed change gradually & peacefully—avoiding the kind of violent upheaval which creates irreparable harm through the destruction of cultural values. If the Democratic party veers rightward or crystallises where it is—thus replacing the possibly defunct Republican party as a reactionary force—then the next hope is some new liberal party centreing in the La Follette element in Wisconsin. If even that fails, it will be time to see what Norman Thomas, Upton Sinclair, & even the grotesque Huey Pierce Long have to offer. But in any case one may hope that the trend will stick to genuine American movements really suited to the temper of the people, & not veer off into the insane Marxism of self-deluded European slave-populations. The imported Russian-Jewish radicalism of New York City is just as bad as the old Republican plutocracy against which it is arrayed. Both are nationally suicidal.

Regarding my use of the expression "three alternatives" in the political letter—I may only say that the interests of forcible & direct expression did not seem to justify a retention of the archaic limitations formerly governing the word *alternative*. While it is customary with some persons to observe the old restriction (I might myself in a thing designed for permanent preservation), I did not deem it advisable to do so when a sacrifice of force would be involved. You are of course aware

that the wider application of *alternative* has been common in the best writing since 1880, & that all editions of *Webster's International* have justified it as a parallel definition since the 1890 revision. Gladstone repeatedly employed the word in its originally *incorrect* sense. The advisability of such usage depends largely on the individual case. In time, all vestiges of the original limitation will undoubtedly break down because of the strong natural pull of common sense & every-day usage in such a direction. Such a change is far more logical, & far less to be lamented, than the possible parallel change which substitutes *like* for *as*. Incidentally—I notice that in the very paragraph wherein you speak of *alternative,* you employ the word *embrasure* (which means a shallow recess containing a door or window, or else a slant-sided opening in a fortification) in its archaic & obsolete sense of *embrace* or *act of embracing* .... a usage definitely inadmissible since Elizabethan times. How come? .....

Regarding cinemas—my attendance during the past twelvemonth has been confined to such performances as my hosts on various visits have dragged me to. I saw *Cleopatra*—which had excellent Roman scenes, but which was spoiled by having the Alexandrian Greek court represented as *native Egyptian* in architecture & costume. As well show the British Viceroy of India in a Hindoo turban! I saw *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* & liked it—it certainly did bring up the early, Victorian age with tremendous verisimilitude. ... And I guess my sight of *Little Women* (good 19th century atmosphere in spots) post-dates my last epistle to you. The one really first-rate thing I've seen since last February is *Don Quixote*—genuine art from start to finish, without a false note. Of the others you mention, I have seen none. Most of the films I've been taken to have been such unmitigated junk that I can't recall either their titles or performers. Last April both Morton & I dozed off to sleep at a show to which the Longs treated us! By the way—you'd have been interested in a lecture I heard last December (by Prof. S. Foster Damon of Brown—biographer of Thomas Holley Chivers) on the cinema as a separate & authentic art. This address was followed by a showing of *All Quiet*—which I was glad to see again after four years, & which impressed me even more favourably than in 1930.

..... About the pronunciation *frā'kas*—I've just found it is in Webster. To what lengths is Yankee provincialism carried! But I fancy I'll continue to say *frā-kā'*, as I always have done.

. . . . . I dropped you a card from Nantucket—but hades alive! no card could even begin to describe the archaic charm of this surviving fragment of a bygone century! Only 90 miles from this doorstep—& yet I'd never seen it before! Probably the reason for my delay was the formerly expensive steamboat service—plus the fact that I never realised its full charm till Morton described it to me last year. Now that I've seen it, I'll say that Morton didn't exaggerate a bit. What a place! I must get there again if it kills me! Nantucket is the ultimate island outpost of New England, & forms a sort of meeting-place or boundary betwixt the familiar world we know & the mysterious outer realm of unfathomed watery distance. It is 30 miles from the nearest mainland (Cape Cod), & 54 from New Bedford—the ancient port used by Providence voyagers. It makes about a 6-hour trip—1 hour overland to New Bedford & 5 on the water—from here. I had a sunny day, & the ride to New Bedford was delightful. The wharves of the old whaling port possessed their accustomed charm, & I almost hated to leave. The ocean trip was pleasant & varied, including stops at Woods Hole (on Cape Cod) & Martha's Vineyard, as well as a brief period wholly out of sight of land. Finally, after the modern world was wholly cast off, the low line of the ancient island rose ahead. Old Nantucket . . . . famous in legend & history, yet never before seen by my eyes! At last, when the ship rounded the point into the harbour, there loomed up a skyline of venerable wharves & roofs, topped by white spires & hoary belfries, which belongs altogether to the brighter, vanished world of a century or more ago.

I forget just how much information I managed to crowd on my card. Nantucket is about 15×7 miles in extent (see my map), with its principal town (of the same name now, but called *Sherburne* prior to 1795) on the north shore. In some respects this town is the best-preserved fragment of the elder America in existence today—having cobblestoned streets lined with colonial houses; horse-blocks, hitching-posts, & great silver doorplates; picturesque lanes & waterfront; a windmill built in 1746 & still in order; archaic churches with galleries & box pews; whaling & historical museums—everything, in short, that the antiquarian could ask. The town rises from the water's edge, & the tangle of centuried streets climbs several distinct hills. Its numberless gardens & fine old trees are luxuriant, while its aged wooden houses & great Georgian mansions bear suggestions of Salem. Many architectural fea-

tures are essentially local—particularly the prevalence of the salt-box type of house (this:  —elsewhere obsolete after the 17th century) & the railed platform or "walk" for marine observation found on most of the roofs. This island metropolis dates back only to about 1720—the first settlement having lain somewhat westward, on a smaller harbour which closed up around 1700. One of the principal features today is the Maria Mitchell Observatory in Vestal St. (formerly Gaol Lane), which adjoins the birthplace of the celebrated female astronomer (professor at Vassar) whose name it bears. The observatory is modern —a memorial to Prof. Mitchell. I had a good chance to observe Saturn through its excellent 5″ telescope.

Nantucket was first described by Gosnold in 1602, & first settled by Massachusetts (Essex Co.) families around 1660. It had a fair-sized Indian population, with whom the whites dealt honourably—though it swiftly declined. The last Indian there died a century ago. In 1664 the island was incorporated into the Province of New-York, but in 1692 was transferred to Massachusetts, to which it has ever since belonged. Its great prosperity came from whaling, which began about 1670. Whales were first killed off shore in small boats, but when they grew locally scarce the Nantucketers began to equip large whaling vessels & scour the high seas. By 1730 they covered the whole Atlantic, & after 1791 they rounded Cape Horn & made the Pacific their own. Though greatly retarded by the revolution & War of 1812, Nantucket whaling reached its apex in 1842, when the island teemed with wealth & supported a population of about 10,000. Then whales grew scarcer, & the demand for whale-oil fell off through the discovery & introduction of petroleum. Decline set in, & the last Nantucket whaler came back to port in 1870. After the end of whaling Nantucket fell into great poverty, from which the summer-resort industry finally pulled it. It is now mainly a summer colony—with the fine old houses appreciatively maintained by visitors. The permanent population—some 3800—largely descend from the original settlers, & when not in the summer real-estate business conduct a slim & precarious fishing industry. Typical names are Macy, Coffin, Starbuck, Folger, Ray, Wyer, Gardner, & Hussey. Benjamin Franklin's mother was a Nantucket Folger. At one time Quakerism was dominant in Nantucket, but since 1900 has been extinct. The islanders have a sturdy & distinctive character of their own, & use

several idioms peculiar to their remote domain. The surface of the island consists mostly of low, rolling moors—almost without stones, & (outside the town) treeless except for some struggling pines planted in 1847. Fresh ponds abound—the vast amount of pure ground water being a puzzle to physiographers. The contour of the coast is frequently altered by the sea, which washes away land in one place, & deposits sand in another. Climatically, Nantucket is like all islands very equable —with cool summers (I nearly froze several times!) & warm winters. This is the only place in New England where the hedges were not killed last winter. It is nearer the Gulf Stream than any other part of the northeastern states. Aside from Nantucket town the principal settlement is Siasconset (locally pronounced "Sconset") on the southeastern coast—an indescribably quaint quondam fishing village settled in 1690 & now wholly a summer resort. Siasconset's rustic garden-bordered lanes, with the fisher's cottages all restored & occupied, form a sight not easily forgotten. I had 8 days in Nantucket, & saw about all there was to see. I first took an exhaustive "rubberneck wagon" trip over the island, & then settled down in the cheapest habitable place I could find an ancient mansion on a crooked hillside lane made over into an hotel. This joint—called "The Overlook" with good reason—soaked me 9 bucks a week for an excellent room with running water & a superb eastward view of the harbour & Brant Point Light. In the days that followed I did—literally—every inch of the town's tangled lanes on foot, & explored all the historic buildings & museums—including the 1746 windmill. Every separate vista was a poem—& I could spend a whole summer just looking around without acquiring ennui. The full charm of the place is something too elusive for words . . . it includes a curious *apartness*—a sense of suspended time & closeness to other ages & other worlds—which no mainland region could possibly duplicate. The curving, cobbled ways of the town make one see around him the actual, unchanged substance of a whaling port of the past; while the mystical impression conveyed by the dreamlike moors & vague marine horizons is something altogether "out of space, out of time". I did Siasconset thoroughly, & absorbed most of the typical island perspectives. One thing was a positive rejuvenation—my first *bicycle ride* in 20 years! In Nantucket wheels are everywhere for rent, & an adult can pedal around without attracting the least notice. Naturally I was quick

to take advantage of this—although I had no idea how much of the cyclist's art I remembered. In youth I was a veritable bike-centaur—but two decades is a long time! Well—after all, I hadn't forgotten a thing! I just hopped on my hired steed, & rode off as if I had just dismounted the night before. Nothing was strange or difficult .... except the realisation that it was 1934 instead of 1900 or 1903 or 1907 or some other time back in the Golden Age! I've never before or since encountered anything which gave me an equally powerful impression of sloughing off the years & returning into the mist-enshrouded past. I almost felt constrained to hurry home in time for the opening of school .... surely the Providence of 1903 with its little open-platformed trolleys & clattering delivery-wagons & smartly groomed horses & victorias & silently whizzing cycles must lie at the other end of my journey! Looking down, I felt just the least bit surprised to find myself in long trousers .... it must, then, be after April, 1904. ..... Bless my old grey head & creaking bones, but what magic resides in the resumption of some aeon-forgotten activity of youth! Actually, I felt no fatigue or soreness afterward. I wish to hades I could get a bike again & circulate around Rhode Island as I used to, but on the mainland an old geezer like me would look like a fool doing such. Well—anyhow —I had my bit of revived youth on the island, & covered all the roads in great style. I'll bet I came close to 25 mi. per hour on some stretches when the wind was with me.

I returned home—rather reluctantly—Sept. 3, & lorded it in solitary state for a while, during my aunt's absence in Maine. In mid-October —when the autumn foliage was at the height of its splendour—I visited Cole again in the Boston zone, & was treated to some memorable trips in his car. On one occasion he took me through Lexington & Concord & Groton to a region in north central Massachusetts which I had never before visited—West Townsend, where the vistas of wooded hills, distant valleys, & white-steepled villages are ineffably lovely. It is curious how different the *two* major types of New England scene are .... the seaport & marine countryside, with salt winds, slanting willows, & ancient huddles of gambrel roofs; & the inland hill regions with low-pitched cottages, giant elms, triangular commons, & slender white steeples embowered in dense greenery. It was the inland scene that I beheld on this October trip, & I appreciated it to the full. We dined at a 1774 tavern, & penetrated a state reservation of magnificent woods

& ravines & waterfalls .... all this in the glory of flaming autumn. In the end Cole brought me home, picked up my aunt, & led the Chevrolet expedition into Rhode Island's picturesque South County—the region which Price & I explored in 1933. In the splendour of autumn the landscape (once again, the seacoast New England) was exquisite beyond words—the centuried part of Wickford, unchanged since 1800, & the brooding, stone-walled meadows by the Pettaquamscutt, where still reposes the ancient snuff-mill where Gilbert Stuart was born in 1755. Cole had never before seen the mill, & I was glad to be able to take him over it. Many of the vistas in this region are said to suggest Virginia landscapes—a curious coincidence, since the local life before the revolution was closer to that of Virginia than any other in the north. Alone in New England this Narragansett Country had large estates with many black slaves .... my ancestor Robert Hazard leaving 133 negroes in his will. The patriarchal folkways closely paralleled those of the South—though the plantation-houses followed New England gambrel-roofed lines on a large scale. Most of the planters had town houses across the bay in Newport—of which the greater number are still standing, though only two of the plantation-houses remain. Livestock & dairying were the great economic standby—Narragansett pacers & Narragansett cheeses being known the world over in the early 18th century. The revolution put an end to all this prosperity—though a few of the old families regained affluence by taking up manufacturing. I guess I told you of the trip through the old Robinson house (best surviving specimen) which Price & I made in 1933. And so it goes. In November Cook & I met again in Boston & confabulated with Cole, Lynch, & others of the old group. We also went to Medford & explored the ancient Royall mansion (1737), which Cook had never entered before. December was filled with lectures (Providence conducted an "art week") & Yuletide festivities. I had a Christmas tree for the first time since boyhood—carrying out the rejuvenation which the Nantucket cycling began. On Dec. 31 I went to NY to visit Belknap for a week .... Home Jany 8, & since then crushed to earth with work. Feeling rotten, too—digestion all shot to hell. This winter isn't as cacodaemoniacally vicious as its predecessor, but it's pretty bad. I don't get out of the house much—& Jan. 23-4 there was a record-breaking snowstorm which paralysed local traffick. ...

. . . . . .

Well—here's wishing you better luck for '35 than you had in '34! And may Yuggoth-called powers send an early spring!

Yrs. for the Black Sign—
E'ch-Pi-El

754. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Feby. 12, 1935

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . Incidentally—at this writing I am looking out the window into a sunset as mystically glamourous as any which could have inspired the poem . . . . . orange, rose, & *green* all curiously mingled in wavy lines behind a pair of ancient church towers, with a distant, needle-like steeple (on a hill 2 or 3 miles away) in the far distance. And some of the lights of the lower town are winking on . . . . as my desk light will have to do very shortly if this script is to remain even partly legible!

Later—lights on

I waited to watch the rest of the sunset—utterly magnificent! The rose & green gave place to crimson & orange—one vast sea welling up from the violet horizon. And the evening star blazed over the city's tallest tower. . . . . .

Wretched weather hereabouts—the snowstorm of Jany. 23-4 paralysed local traffic for days, & has not yet melted off. Cold days in continuous succession—so that I've been outdoors only on rare occasions. I did, though, manage to attend two of the poetry readings by authors at the college—Susanna Valentine Mitchell (now of Prov.) & Archibald MacLeish (author of *Conquistador*). Both were excellent—& MacLeish comes about as near to a major poet as this hemisphere can now boast. Hope Hornig is straightening out your *FF* subscription—I dropped him a line about it. Which reminds me—did I send you the amateur paper containing my *Homes & Shrines of Poe?* It not, let me know, & I will do so. Little Barlow, by the way, has just sent me a fine edition of Poe's tales with fantastic illustrations by Harry Clarke.

E. Hoffmann Price has bought a cottage atop a wooded hill near Redwood City, California—in sight of the southern part of San Francisco Bay. He has also acquired a marvellous white cat—a mighty hunter who claws gophers out of their holes & brings them for his master to see before devouring them. Price has appropriately named him Nimrod. He simply strayed in one day & shewed an inclination to remain ... previous history unknown!

****

Glad you can get glimpses of the moon. This study has some fine moon-vistas—last week I caught the infinitely thin crescent in the west just after new moon. Last Sunday evening I was all ready to watch the occultation of the Pleiades, but clouds malignly intervened. .....

....

Glad Little Bobby drops in now & then. A truly brilliant kid!

All good wishes—

Yr obt Servt
HPL

755. TO F. LEE BALDWIN

#66
—Feby. 16, 1935

Dear Eph-Li:—

... Hope you can get a good biography of Robert E. Howard. Wish I had time to delve into his voluminous letters & get some of the facts buried there, but at the moment can give only a few points from memory. REH was born in Texas in 1906, of old Southwestern & Southern stock. The Howard line came from England to Georgia in 1735. The Ervin line has produced men of high standing & ability—Confederate officers, planters, Texas pioneers. A large part of REH's blood is Irish, & he takes great pride in his knowledge of Celtic history & antiquities. He lives with his parents in a village from which pioneer violence has not yet fully departed. His father is a physician of high standing, & great courage & resourcefulness, who once fought a knife duel with one hand tied behind his back. REH is a typical primitive throwback

in emotions—idealising barbaric & pioneer life. He hated school—yet loved books so much that he used to force open a window of the school library in the summer, when it was closed, in order to take & return things he wanted to read. He is today a really profound authority—on Southwestern history & folklore—as well as on ancient history. He began to write stories very young, but takes very little pride in them—saying he'd rather be a good prize-fighter than a good novelist! Being brought up in a rough town, he came to accept rough ways as a matter of course. He has been through dozens of fights, with & without weapons, & has served as an amateur boxer. I think he was once connected in some way with a travelling carnival. I judge he was rather a roving character in his teens—away from home a good deal. He says he feels most at home among rough workmen, & has passionately strong sympathies for the under-dog despite a personally aristocratic ancestry. He is very bitter & cynical in temperament—but kindly & sympathetic at the same time. Extremely brave & conscientious. At one time during his teens he worked at a drug store soda fountain. He has seen a good deal of the rough life of oil boom towns, & hotly resents the way large eastern corporations exploit Texas. When he says his life is 'tame & uneventful', he is thinking only of Western standards. Actually, he sees a vast amount of violence. He sympathises greatly with outlaws, & is really a fanatic on the subject of alleged police persecutions—unjust arrests, 3d degree, &c. His fetishes are strength, civility, justice, & freedom. Everything civilised, soft, effeminate, or orderly he hates with astonishing venom. In ancient history he detests Rome as strongly as I revere it. He travels occasionally in Texas & the S. W.—has seen the Carlsbad Caverns & sometimes spends the winter in San Antonio. Has never been east of New Orleans. First stories published in *W. T.* in 1925 or 6. A poet of savagely great power. So fond of his Celtic heritage that he has Gaelicised his middle name Ervin into Eiarbihan—as the fanatics in Ireland nowadays Gaelicise theirs. Tastes in literature somewhat uneven—despises all modern subtlety & likes books about simple characters & violent events. Would rather be a Celtic barbarian of 100 or 200 B. C. than a civilised modern. I'd show you some of his letters if he hadn't asked me not to let anybody see them. . . . .

Sincerely yrs.
Ech-Pi-El.

756. TO WILLIAM FREDERICK ANGER

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
Feby. 16, 1935

Dear An-Ghah, Hierophant of Lemuria:—

. . . . . I wish that I could be in on the expedition to Placer County, where the thousand-mile shaft to evil Tsathoggua's nighted abode hits the surface of the planet. Needless to say, the High-Priest Klarkash-Ton will be glad to see you all. It will be a good thing for him—breaking the monotony of a very prosaic and uneventful existence. When you get there you'll see an even larger collection of pictorial horrors than I saw last month—for CAS has kept the best of his products himself. Ngrrhh! but I'd like to get a glimpse of some of those that Wandrei (who was there in November) told about! You'll find Auburn an interesting place, full of the history & early traditions of your state. It was one of the first gold camps, being known as Woods' Dry Diggings until renamed by some Goldsmith-lover in 1849. Some of the pioneer buildings are still standing in the older sections. During the 13 years of our epistolary acquaintance, Klarkash-Ton has sent me numberless postcards illustrating the region.

. . . . . Regarding the Moore stories—one has to separate the undeniably hackneyed & mechanical romance from the often remarkable background against which it is arrayed. *The Black God's Kiss* had a vastly clever setting—the pre-human tunnel beneath the castle, the upsetting of gravitational & dimensional balance, the strange, ultra-dimensional world of unknown laws & shapes & phenomena, &c, &c. If that could be taken out of the sentimental plot & made the scene of events of really cosmically bizarre motivation, it would be tremendously powerful. The distinctive thing about Miss Moore is her ability to devise conditions & sights & phenomena of *utter strangeness & originality,* & to describe them in a language conveying something of their outré, phantasmagoric, & dread-filled quality. That in itself is an accomplishment possessed by very few of the contributors to the cheap

pulp magazines. For the most part, allegedly "weird" writers phrase their stories in such a brisk, cheerful, matter-of-fact, colloquial, dialogue-ridden sort of style that all genuine sense of shadow & menace is lost. So far, Miss M. has escaped this pitfall; though continued writing for miserable rags like the current pulps will probably spoil her as it has spoiled Quinn, Hamilton, & all the rest. The editors will encourage her worst tendencies—the sticky romance & cheap "action"—& discourage everything of real merit (the macabre language, the original descriptive touches, the indefinite atmosphere, & the brooding tension, &c.) which her present work possesses. Nothing will ever teach the asses who peddle cheap magazines that a weird story *should not & cannot* be an "action" or "character" story. The only justification for a weird tale is that it be an authentic & convincing *picture of a certain human mood;* & this means that *vague impressions & atmosphere* must predominate. Events must not be crowded, & human characters must not assume too great importance. The real protagonists of fantasy fiction are *not people but phenomena.* The logical climax is not a revelation of what somebody *does,* but a *glimpse of the existence of some condition contrary to nature as commonly accepted.* . . . .

Yrs for the Black Apocalypse
E'ch-Pi-El

757. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Feby. 27
1935

Rumour has just arrived that the *FF* has failed!
Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Glad you found the *FF* enjoyable. Under separate cover I am sending the Sept. & Nov. issues—which ought to complete your file. If any issues are still lacking, let me know—for I think I can supply any of the recent ones except July. I have an almost comical surplus of June issues. I am also sending the paper with my Poe house article— plus an art museum bulletin which I think will interest you. This month there

was a splendid lecture & special exhibition pertaining to my favourite Hokusai, & the entire quarterly bulletin was devoted to the subject of Japanese prints. The article was so fine, & the illustrations so graphic, that I could not resist getting several extra copies to send to especially appreciative persons. Note *one* mistake—on p. 19, with illus. on p. 22 —where a *Hokusai* fan print of hibiscus flowers is erroneously attributed to *Hiroshige.* I wouldn't have spotted this if I had not seen the original prints & their authentic labels in the museum. Another lecture at the School of Design was on contemporary art in Soviet Russia—with abundant lantern-slides. It seems that the Russians are doing better than they are commonly thought to be doing—& producing some fine work in spite of their theories that art should be subordinated to some social purpose. Oddly enough, they are far freer from freakish & decadent tendencies than are the modern (or "modernistic") artists of the western world.

. . . . . I don't pretend to keep my study immaculate for company. Papers & books have to be scattered around, & those who come to see me have to take the place as they find it. . . . . .

A few days ago I had a letter from Loring & Mussey of N. Y., asking to see some of my stuff with a view to possible book publication. Since this is the *5th* time I have received such a request, with no tangible results to date, I'm not as naively excited about the matter as I might otherwise be. However—just to leave no stone unturned, I sent them a fairly representative array of mss.

There are four coal-black little brothers of the late Samuel Perkins at the boarding-house across the garden—13 days old. I fervently hope at least one will be retained!

Glad Barlow gets around now & then, & hope he'll keep a wise watch on his health. . . .

Best Wishes—

Yr most obt Servt
HPLovecraft

758. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

For Klarkash-Ton, 7th Incarnation of Eibon the Unfathomable
Motto to be prefix'd to *The Seal'd Casket,* by R. F. Searight, Esq.
Weird Tales, March, 1935.

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

—Fragment from the Eltdown Shards.

759. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
March 5, 1935.

Dear Helen:—

. . . . . Sorry that dealings with members of the so-called human race prove perplexing at times—but it appears to be a fact that perplexity & disappointment are inevitable whenever one depends much on the reactions, opinions, & actions of the species, or allows himself to be concerned about the various shades of emotion, attitude, & procedure in individuals. I always feel sorry for those strongly emotional, gregarious, & sensitive persons who are continually worried

about the opinions & sentiments of others toward themselves. It seems to me that they fail to form a perfect picture of the blind, indifferent cosmos, & the fortuitous, deterministically-motivated automata who form a sort of momentary insect part on the surface of one of the least important of its temporary grains of dust. What people are, & what they think & feel & do, are pure accidents of cosmic mutation. We can't expect them to be other than they are—each separate individual moulded by a trillion inevitable conditions of heritage & surroundings. All one can do is to observe these cosmos-driven automata, study their general & individual instincts in the objective manner of natural history, & entertain no expectation that any can be much other than it is. When this or that automaton represents some quality or furnishes some influence which interests or pleases one, then the sensible thing is to expect of it only such things as are connected with that quality or influence. We might wish that various qualities of interest & agreeableness could be concentrated in the same person, but this occurs only by accident at rare intervals. In practise, no member of one's circle of acquaintances is likely to represent more than one or two of the human qualities which one relishes & admires. When one does, it is simply a fortunate accident. However—there is nothing truly tragic in the existing condition *if one expects nothing more*. From the material at hand, taken as it is, one may often make up a very interesting circle. Now & then a particularly congenial individual turns up—but there's no way of finding such an one except through constant observation of the miscellaneous passing stream. At other times an individual with some interesting qualities will prove so ultimately unadjustable that elimination, total or partial, is necessary—but whatever annoyance or regret attaches to such a condition may be softened by reflection on its naturalness & inevitability. And as one grows older—if a philosophic perspective be constantly maintained—the importance of human beings steadily decreases in one's sight, so that absorption in some adequate aesthetic, intellectual, constructive or administrative activity (an activity which emphasises the individual ego directly, instead of secondarily, in relation to other egos) becomes a paramount & satisfactory emotional life .... supplemented, of course, in many cases, by such rational attachments to human interests as favourable accident may happen to allot to one. It is certainly not necessary to be a misanthrope. One may

enjoy friends without taking them too seriously or expecting too much of them—& may even happen to encounter a few who seem to deserve serious consideration. The great point is not to expect too much. Ideal human adjustments are not a natural "right" to which everyone is "entitled". They are, on the contrary, mere lucky accidents of none too commonness. When they can occur, one may well congratulate himself on having stumbled on to a good break. But when they don't occur there is no sense in feeling cheated, melancholy, or dissatisfied. Such an indifferent deal is about what the average person gets. The most sensible course in life is not to expect much, but to make the most of the scattered & fragmentary material at hand. A lot of people are interesting & valuable in specific ways—so the thing to do is to enjoy each for his own specialty & expect no more. By adding all one's acquaintances together one may usually—with the use of good sense, skill & imagination—patch up a hand-picked human environment of very tolerable interest, stimulation, & satisfyingness . . . . . an environment distinctly worth living in when supplemented by non-human objects of beauty, significance, & favourable symbolism. But the tranquility & value of such an environment depend on one's ability to be content with the material as it is—to let each individual play his own part, & expect no more of him. It doesn't do to become too concerned about any of the individual human atoms—or groups of atoms—or to worry excessively about one's own adjustment to any or some or all. The people on Mars will never know that any human race exists—the people on Neptune can never know that the earth exists—the people on the planets of Alpha Centauri can never know that the solar planets exist—the people of trans-galactic systems can never know that the sun exists—the people of the remotest nebulae can never know that our immediate stellar universe exists. A few trillion years hence there will be no consciousness in existence that can know of the former existence of such a thing as a human race. The universe will be just as it would have been had no earth existed. With which typical flourish Grandpa concludes an equally characteristic ream of sententious senile maundering.

. . . . . .

A more recent lecture which my young friend Belknap would have raptly absorbed was also at the museum & illustrated with lantern-slides

—contemporary Russian Soviet art. I was really quite astonished by the amount & quality of some of the work, for I had not thought so much of the aesthetic impulse & the old Byzantine tradition had survived. Despite the silly Marxian effort to deny the existence of any art without social motivation, there is much skill & vitality among some of the Soviet painters. They amount to more than their theories would permit if literally enforced—& as the Soviet culture mellows & lets down its extreme revolutionary propaganda I presume they will get still better. Amusingly enough, their art does not tend to be even nearly as radical as the insane "abstract" junk of the decadent so-called artists of the western world's "modernistic" schools. But on the other hand, there is a vast amount of commonplace crudity of mere poster grade—the direct fruit of the Marxian ideal. Whatever upturn may come, the cataclysm of 1917 was a tragic set-back which can scarcely be neutralised in a century's time. The only advantage gained by artists in the upheaval is a sense of the *future* in civilisation. That's what the bolsheviks have which we haven't. They are at the beginning of an era—however poor & lopsided an one,—whereas we are at the obvious end of an era . . . or at least of a distinct phase of an era. We don't know what's coming, hence cannot appraise the real significance of anything new in western life. Their art is barbaric & nascent; our modern art is decadent, senescent, & hesitant. But that's not saying that Soviet art is anything for other nations to copy. Each to its own—the Slav is saying something that we couldn't say even if we adopted his political system. My own opinion is that an obviously sterile age like the present ought not to try to create anything new. Conditions are not favourable for the expression of the momentary environment—the environment has nothing crystallised enough or certain enough to be expressible. A far more sensible course at present is to emphasise such elements in the age-long mainstream as are equally valid in all ages—to devote energies to the expression of the universal rather than the transient. A kind of neo-classicism, it seems to me, is the least absurd ideal to follow amidst an age of turmoil & uncertainty. Such deliberate & intelligent archaism has been practiced before with successful results—as when the Egyptians of the 18th Dynasty (age of Tut-Ankh-Amen) thoughtfully worked in the classic forms of the departed 11th Dynasty . . . . or when the markedly decadent 26th Dynasty (6th Cent. B. C.—time of Persian conquest)

attempted a general restoration of ancient Memphian art. It is obvious, especially in the latter case, that the classic revival furnished infinitely more beauty than any attempt to *express the contemporary age* could have done. But again Grandpa maunders into ponderous abstractions!

. . . . . .

Yr obt hble Servt
E'ch-Pi-El

760. TO EMIL PETAJA

66 College St.
March 6, 1935

Dear Petaja:—

. . . . . Regarding the matter of religion—while a story is of course no place to air philosophic views, I must say that I myself do not believe in any form of the supernatural. While religion was a perfectly natural thing for mankind in early ages, when nothing definite was known about the constitution of matter & the causes of natural phenomena; there is really no basis for its existence in the light of what we know about the universe, & about our own mental & emotional processes, today. We now realise that the varied happenings of the universe, & the phenomena of life & consciousness, are all parts of a general pattern of force-&-matter mutations whose perpetual flux of alternate building-up & breaking-down does not even remotely suggest such a thing as conscious direction or purpose. While there is no positive *disproof* of a cosmic consciousness, there is simply *no reason to assume* that any such thing exists. It is just as if I were to say that a man named Smith lives in a brick house in a city called Nuth on the 3d satellite of Jupiter. There is no way of disproving what I say—but who would believe anything so gratuitous & improbable? And when we come to analyse supernaturalism, we find that it forms an assumption no less gratuitous & improbable. What really disposes of supernatural belief is our modern understanding of *the reason it has existed*. Psychology & anthropology have now shown us how & why the concepts of "spirit", "deity", "immortality", "right & wrong" (as distinguished

from the sound values based on aesthetic & utilitarian ethics), "worship", "sin", &c., &c., came into existence among primitive races trying to explain the unknown tangle of the external world & their own emotions, & have made it overwhelmingly clear that the growth of these concepts is an inevitable concomitant of primitive ignorance—in no way implying any truth behind them. The same sciences also make it manifest why these concepts have come to exert so great a sway over the emotions of the majority, & why they have survived so persistently in the face of the increased knowledge which has virtually disproved them. Thus it is no longer possible to argue that the intense *wish* or profound emotional *belief* of the majority in all ages forms any indication of the truth of the "deity" or "immortality" concepts. We know today, through psychology, that *any* belief or emotional bias, no matter how untrue or absurd, can be implanted in the brain & nervous system of a human being with tremendous force & firmness if the victim be inoculated with it in infancy. A person thus subjected to indoctrination with some special idea at an age under seven will always have a deeper instinctive predisposition toward that idea—but this has nothing to do with the truth of the idea. There is no natural leaning toward religion. Originally, it merely attempts to explain the unknown through poetic symbolism & crude personification; today it survives among the less analytical majority merely because they lack scientific information, & because their emotional apparatus has been permanently biassed or crippled by religious propaganda hammered into them in childhood, before their mind & emotions had developed beyond the infantile state of helpless & uncritical receptivity. It is really a crime against a child to attempt to influence his intellectual belief in any way. Anything like bias or indoctrination should be confined to such broad concepts as have been universally found expedient & harmonious through racial experience—concepts like honesty, order, non-encroachment, &c., which relate to practical conduct & not to matters of *opinion*. So far as points of theory & belief are concerned, the only decent & honourable thing to do with a child is to teach him *strict open-mindedness & intellectual integrity*—urging him to accept nothing through mere hearsay or blind tradition, but *to judge everything honestly himself on the basis of existing evidence*. If religion is true, he will then sooner or later accept it. If it is not true, he will then be free from a degrading mental slavery which cannot honestly be called *belief*. The fact is, a *real* friend of religion

would not *wish* anyone to accept it if he did not do so through an honest & open-minded appraisal of the evidence offered by the phenomena around & within him. All attempts to mould belief on emotional, non-rational grounds are to be condemned without qualification as unworthy of any organism as highly evolved as man. This applies to non-religious & anti-religious propaganda as much as to religious propaganda. The Russian soviets are just as reprehensible in warping popular emotions in favour of religion. What really ought to be taught people is *how to think*. Nine-tenths of the people in the world *never really think* on any topic of large scope. They *imagine* they have "opinions"—but these "opinions" are so completely the product of irrational emotion, blind heritage, & sheer mental indolence, as to be unworthy of the name. And this applies to most atheists as well as to most religious people. We would be a lot better off if our preceptors would stop trying to teach us *special attitudes,* & buckle down to the vital business of teaching us *accurate thought & strict intellectual honesty*.

. . . . . Man has a well-defined set of instincts & emotions; & the planning of a way of life which shall satisfy these with the least possible conflict & disharmony & encroachment, & with the greatest possible opportunities for the growth & expression of the species' most high-evolved attributes, is a full-time job of which no philosopher or leader or ethical teacher need feel ashamed. This task of ethical leadership, based on sound principles of aesthetics & sociology, is the one now awaiting the sort of man who in earlier ages formed a religious leader. I do not advocate the forcible extirpation of religion, but I think it is wise to transfer energies to something which has a foundation in reality. The conditions of life are growing more & more different from what they were in the ages when the various religions took form; hence one can no longer expect any religion-based ethics to be at all times as useful as an ethics based on reality. What is more, religion is rapidly losing its emotional & ethical hold over all classes—even those who consciously believe it. The wide gap between what it teaches & what we now know to be real is too vast a thing to conceal & gloss over. People realise it subconsciously even when they are blind to it with their conscious minds. Religion *as a practical force in life* is dead—& if we expect to rally the emotions of the people to anything today as those emotions were rallied to religion in the past, we must provide something in which they can *really believe* . . . with their subconscious as well as conscious

minds. The Russians have got something of the sort in their new way of life based on social adjustment. If we want anything as powerful, we must also devise some ideal of human adjustment *which has a real chance of working* & of offering the people an actually bearable set of living conditions. Religion always promises, but has no power to perform. It is simply a sort of emotional intoxication—as helpless as whiskey to make real the grandiose visions it holds forth. The race is too disillusioned & realistic at this stage of the game to follow any such phantom. If we want to rally everybody to a single purpose, we must formulate a goal which has a demonstrable chance of giving the whole of mankind *better conditions in the only life it is certain of having*. I don't think the soviet ideology embraces the best possible goal, & would hate to see it established in the western world. But at least it is a *real goal*—something to which men can be intelligently loyal. At the moment, the western world possesses no such thing—even though the Nazi movement thinks it has found one. We live in an era of unmistakable decadence—the last phase of a way of life founded on conditions & beliefs forever vanished so far as this cycle of civilisation is concerned. Shall we ever find a substitute—a practicable social order which may at once solve the economic & political problems of the present, & preserve (as the soviet system fails to do) what is still sound & infinitely valuable in the cultural heritage of the past? I don't know—but if we do, we shall have something around which our children can rally as our fathers rallied around the ideals of the past. The chances are about even whether such a thing can come to pass, or whether there will be a long period of decay under some ruthless fascist system . . . or a plunge into a bolshevism for which the western world is certainly not fitted.

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. . . . . As a rule, I don't think that a comic or flippant style—or one with much satire—mixes well with the *weird*. Dunsany has lost power through giving over too extensively to humour, & Cabell's weird touches are pallid for the same reason. . . . . M. R. James joins the brisk, the light, & the commonplace to the weird about as well as anyone could do it—but if another tried the same method, the chances would be ten to one against him. The most valuable element in him—as a model—is his way of weaving a horror into the every-day fabric of life & his-

tory—having it grow naturally out of the myriad conditions of an ordinary environment. . . . . In the 1890's the fashionable decadents liked to pretend that they belonged to all sorts of diabolic Black Mass cults, & possessed all sorts of frightful occult information. The only specimen of this group still active is the rather over-advertised Aleister Crowley . . . . who, by the way, is undoubtedly the original of the villainous character in H. R. Wakefield's *"He Cometh & He Passeth By"*. The monstrous elder world—atavistic glimpses of which sometimes flash into the memories of modern persons—conjured up by Chambers is founded on one or two chance allusions in the stories of Ambrose Bierce . . . *Hastur, Lake of Hali,* &c. Chambers borrowed Bierce's artificial mythology just as Clark Ashton Smith & I allude to each other's artificial mythologies in our respective tales.

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. . . . . About *The Mountains of Madness*—it is *not* a new story, but was written—& rejected by Wright—in 1931. I forgot that I hadn't sent it to you, but have now found the list I made of things sent & not sent. Before long I'll try to dig it up & shoot it along. It is the longest thing of mine which I have not repudiated . . . coming to 115 typed pages. My new story—finished Feby. 24—is called *The Shadow out of Time,* but I am so uncertain about its merit that I may destroy it. My work dissatisfies me extremely, & of late I have destroyed much more than I have saved.

Yrs most cordially
HPL

761. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
March 13, 1935

Dear Jehvish-Êi:—

. . . . . As to your familiarity with a wide variety of human types & situations—I never supposed it was as extensive as that of the knockabout tramp writers who are nowadays

bursting into an ephemeral print. I merely contrasted it with the more limited experience of those whom I personally know. And I don't quite grasp the significance of your distinction regarding generations—since it was with others of your own age that I was comparing you! I have a fair idea of what the boys of the various families I know are doing, & am also in touch with a full score of young fellows through literary correspondence—but have never come across any of the semi-hobo types you mention. Virtually all the boys I know are very restricted, in their contacts. They tend—because of the financial stringency of the times—to be very parochial & untravelled; but none has attempted any "bumming" as yet. They stay at home, go through high-school (generally *public* high-schools now) & college, & then manage to work into some business or other (occasionally their father's), or drift into free-lance writing & Greenwich Village stuff (like the Wandrei boys). And I am speaking of *your own* generation—kids under 25. Except yourself, I can't think of any boy (Robert E. Howard has indeed knocked about a bit—but his 28 years may put him outside your generation. Arthur Leeds (50) has also seen the world from various angles, Morton (64) as well.) who has really talked—on any basis of confidential personal acquaintanceship—with members of the actual working class or underworld fringe. They *affect* the proletarian pose now & then, but would hardly know what to do if confronted by some of the types you have described—Ross, &c. &c. Their contacts are very narrow, & they seem to hold rather unreal ideas of the colourful figures of which they learn through books & the stage & cinema. Even when they become sporty or Greenwich-Villagish they meet the vague underworld only in certain specialised ways. Wandrei thinks he's a regular devil—& so he is, but his associates in the wench-&-gin world are merely other well-born sensation-seekers like himself. He knows nothing of the elemental substance & struggle of life except on paper, & can have no idea of the emotions & tides of action taking form among the seething hordes of waterfront, factory, wheatfield, railway "rods", &c. The average boy has merely read of these seething hordes—& generally in a very superficial way. Well—as you say, your own knowledge of varied types is perhaps not as extensive as that possessed by typical "wild boys of the road", but it certainly exceeds that of any other youth I can think of within my radius of acquaintance. Hence my remark of last month. And

it is not all a matter of mere contact, either. The point is that you *notice* the varied types you meet—the ordinary as well as the extraordinary. Others might see people without studying them so closely or singling out their essential & typical qualities . . . . hence the myriad writers who reflect a wholly & unreal world, dissociated from the scenes actually around them. Of persons I know, only Derleth seems to share this trick of observing & exploring character—& of course his range of study is infinitely narrower than yours.

Regarding the element of formal education—it is certainly true that a greater number of untrained or one-sidedly trained persons are writing now, than were writing in the past. Colleges are ceasing to treat the classics as compulsory subjects, & linguistic standards are undoubtedly at a low ebb. Fashion, too, encourages a kind of superficiality involving a disregard of the coördinated facts of human experience & a careless violation of traditions & harmonies whose sources are far deeper than the violators can realise. This general condition combines with the attitude of *enquiry versus artistry* which I previously mentioned (& which may be a direct result of the condition), to render a good deal of current writing wholly ineffective as literature—however valuable it may be as sociological source-material. Fortunately it is not *universal*—especially in Great Britain—so that the torch of literary art may be considered as flickering dangerously rather than as totally extinguished. It ought to be the supreme effort of every well-wisher of civilisation to keep this torch alight—& to avoid any such violent overturn of cultural standards as has occurred in Russia. The Russians have fanatically torn down all the upper stories of their aesthetic temple, & are having to build laboriously over again what they could easily have saved. . . . . .

Regarding political matters—at the moment, it does look as if the rightward pressure were taking dangerous effect on the government; but I fancy it is too early to be dogmatic. The whole problem is to find some course which is not only conceivably feasible, but possible of actual establishment through the existing logged political machinery. This is harder than it seems, for pressure is brought to bear in multifarious ways. It will have to be a gradual process—with plenty of time for the reactionaries to ponder on the rising rumble of mass demands & modify their obstructions accordingly. Huey Long, Upton Sinclair, & Father Coughlin are salutary irritants—unless the Republicans find a

way to use them in splitting the liberal vote. The growing response to such appeals is slowly shewing the mossbacks the utter impossibility of restoring a ruthless *laissez-faire* regime—& therefore preparing them for retreat. Government policies, too, will have to veer again toward courageous experiment in order to meet the demand thus manifested. But it will necessarily be a slow seesawing. Long & kindred extremists could never dominate an election—they could only divide the votes & perhaps let outrageous reactionaries slip in. The safest policy is to stick by the most liberal element *which can actually get its measures into effect.* It will be easier to take this as a first step—a point of departure for further moves—than to attempt to introduce radical changes all at once, when such an attempt is palpably doomed to certain failure. Even if such an attempt could succeed, there is no one plan in existence on which to found a stable regime. Sinclair is for socialism, Long for a curtailed capitalism whose workability is very doubtful, Coughlin for something else again, Townsend for still another panacea . . . . & so on. Fancy the fight which all these factions would have among themselves, with the Marxian Jews leering in the offing & waiting to pounce at the propitious moment! And anybody who can't see the utter impossibility of unity among these elements is blind indeed. Long & Townsend are for something utterly antagonistic to all that Sinclair & Norman Thomas (who themselves differ!) represent. Actually, Sinclair & Thomas are probably right—for it is not likely that private capitalism could stand the strain which "wealth-sharing" would put upon it. Collectivism of some sort is bound to come—it is the only way an entire mechanised nation can be permanently fed & clothed & housed—but the way to get it is to keep pressing on a responsible government capable of a unified (though varied & experimental) policy & effective action. So for the present I can be set down as still a New-Dealer.

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Yrs. for the Black Litany of Nug & Yeb—
E'ch-Pi-El

762. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

March 14, 1935

Hail, O Malik:—

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. . . . . The profit motive is of no significance whatever in any work even remotely connected with the genuine arts. . . The idea of measuring the magnitude of a piece of work by its commercial reception or financial return is plainly a fallacy born of the transient conditions of our tottering bourgeois "civilisation"—especially that openly tradesman-like phase of it which has flourished in the U. S. since the Civil War. Incidentally—Derleth's first serious novel, *Place of Hawks,* will be published April 24. This will form his fourth full-length book to appear in print. All are published by Loring & Mussey. And speaking of L & M—I'm expecting my own junk back any day now. After four previous fiascos in the book line, I am convinced that my products lack some essential quality of real merit—for these book propositions do not rest on the pulp formula basis. If one author can't get anything published by a quality (non-commercial) magazine or book-publisher, the fault would certainly seem to rest with him. By the way—I finished *The Shadow out of Time* last week, but doubt whether it is good enough to type. Somehow or other, it does not seem to embody quite what I want to embody—and I may tear it up and start all over again. It came to 65 pages in all—but I don't see how it could be made any shorter without a loss of the essential effect. It is valueless to set down weird effects without adequate emotional preparation. As soon as I get a chance, I am going to experiment on other story ideas which repose in my notebook.

. . Speaking of pedestrian trips, though—I did manage to work in a magnificent one March 6—when the mercury was up to 65° in the afternoon. I started out northward from the house, and eventually made a round trip of 12 miles—through five different cities and towns (Prov.—Pawtucket—Central Falls—Lincoln—N. Prov.), and including a plunge into my favourite Quinsnicket or Lincoln Woods countryside.

Something of spring's intangible atmosphere was abroad—and at dusk an exquisitely slender crescent moon hung in the western sky not far from the blazing beacon of Venus. . . .

. . . . . .

Blessings of all the Djinns and Afrits!
Abdul Alhazred

763. TO LLOYD ARTHUR ESHBACH

66 College Street
Providence, R. I.
March 19, 1935

Dear Mr. Eshbach:—

. . . Your suggestion that I contribute something is indeed flattering, and I fervently wish I had something suited to the *Galleon's* requirements. If weird material of substantial length were acceptable, I would promptly inundate you— but alas! in all my existence I have never written a story which was *not* weird! . . .

Yrs. most cordially,
H. P. Lovecraft

764. TO MAURICE W. MOE

The Ancient Citadel
—3d Day of Spring
March 24, 1935

Hail, O Sage!

Well—the guest of honour blew in at one p. m. Saturday, March 2, and the first thing I did was to guide him to an tangle of semi-rural alleys just a bit north on the hill, where Skippy could be tethered indefinitely to rest and gooze. We then returned briefly to the house, chatted a bit with my aunt, and set out on an antiquarian tour of the

ancient hill—after a pause at some bookstalls downtown, where Mocratulus wished to purchase a volume of soulful lyricks for some young gentlewoman of his acquaintance. . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . Afterward we descended to "Jake's"—the famous stevedore restaurant at the foot of the hill which Wilfred B. Talman (then a Brown student) discover'd in 1926 and introduced to the gang. Here have gorg'd such dignitaries as W. Paul Cook, James Ferdinand Morton, Donald Wandrei . . . and now Robert Ellis Moe. This is the joint where good food is serv'd in such fabulous quantities. We chose sausage-meat and johnny-cakes, with stupendous bowls of short-cake (R. E. M. banana; H. P. L. peach) and whipped cream for dessert. Then up the hill again, stopping in at the antient art club building (1795), tinkering a bit with Skippy, washing up at 66, packing Skippy (alas!) for the visitor's all-too-early departure, and looking over the collection (including the 1808 curtain of the old Providence Theatre, with a view of the town on it, and the apple-tree root which enter'd Roger Williams' coffin and is said to have follow'd the lines of the skeleton) at the century-old R. I. Historical Society.

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Yr. obt. hble. Servt.,
Lo.

765. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
March 25, 1935

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . I was sorry, too, to read of good old Justice Holmes's death—for I had hoped he would round out a century & more after being freed from judicial cares. It makes me feel my own years to realise that he was the *son* of the original O. W. H. . . . . whom I might have recalled had my memory been more acute in 1893.

The funeral must have been impressive—& deservedly so, since Justice Holmes was really a great figure in his own right, no matter how much his father's fame may have eclipsed him in popular consciousness. In a changing era he was one of the very first to perceive the reality & far-reaching ramifications of the change—at a time when lesser men were blindly clinging to externals which his keen mind recognised as obsolescent. It is gratifying to reflect that he lived to see his own liberal philosophy become dominant in the nation—so that today his side of a court decision would be more likely to be a majority than a dissenting verdict. What a pageant of history he lived through—his first period of the 1840's, with the tension of the civil war issues increasing—then the war itself, with himself in an active role—then the flamboyant, decadent "flesh age" of the '70's, with parvenu grotesqueness & extravagance rampant, & with private capitalism laying the foundations of the present crash—then the précieuse, mincing '80's, the "daring" '90's & the Spanish War, & the smug, hopeful Theodore Roosevelt era of reform & expansion—then the World War & its hectic aftermath, with changing standards & folkways—& finally the smashup & the first experimental steps toward recovery & a saner order. All in one lifetime! Yet many have lived longer without seeing a millionth as much change. It is the *period* more than the individual span—for even young people today have outlived the world they were born in. Little Bobby Barlow, for all his scant 16 years, can remember a world & a phase of civilisation—the feverish, thoughtless, reckless age of the 1920's—which is today as dead as Tyre & Babylon!

Glad the various things I sent were of interest. Is your *FF* file now complete up to January? As I said in an exterior postscript, the little magazine has found it impossible to continue, so that the February issue is the last. I'm enclosing a copy of that farewell number herewith. Evidently my *Sup. Hor. in Lit.* will never be completed! Some of the features of the *FF* will be taken over by a similar publication called *Fantasy Magazine*—in which a biographical sketch & portrait of me will appear in April.

I thought that Japanese print bulletin especially delightful—you may recall that Hokusai's *Cranes on Snow-Laden Pine* was one of the things I especially liked in the exhibition last December. I was glad to get so good a reproduction of it. Another captivating print is the one of the

cat watching the butterflies—which reminds me that the local feline family is now narrowed down to the mother & *one* coal-black *kitten* . . . a delectable duplicate of the lamented Sam Perkins. He's going to be a spirited little imp—he *hisses* manfully if a finger is poked too familiarly at him! I am calling him John Perkins—though perhaps his real owners will apply some other name to him. He'll make a good member for the Kappa Alpha Tau—which reminds me that the elders of that society have begun to sun themselves on the clubhouse roof in encouragingly vernal fashion. I had a long conversation with the tiger vice-president the other day!

Many thanks for the interesting cuttings—the sunset item is especially interesting. I have seen some fine sunsets of late—with Venus & the thin crescent moon adding charm during the early March evenings. My outing season of 1935 is already under way—unusually early for me. March 2-3 I had a very interesting visitor—the 22-year-old son of an old friend of mine in Milwaukee. The young man—Robert Ellis Moe—graduated from the U. of Wis. with high honours in electrical engineering in 1933, & stepped at once into a good position with the Gen. Elec. Co. Lately he was transferred to Bridgeport, Conn.—which puts him within a cruising radius of Providence (130 m) & New York (60 m). I had not seen him before since he was 11—& he certainly has grown! He came in his car, & I showed him all the colonial sights of Providence & of the quaint little seaports down both sides of Narragansett Bay—Warren & Bristol on the east shore, East Greenwich & Wickford on the west shore. The weather was very favourable, & I certainly welcomed the sight of the countryside after so long an hibernation. My guest seemed very appreciative, & expects to come again. My first *pedestrian* outing occurred March 6, when the temperature went up to 65°. On this occasion I took a 12-mile walk in the countryside north of Providence, & felt much the better for it. A later excursion—March 9, when a relative took my aunt & me to ride—extended through the terrain east of Providence, just across the line in Massachusetts. We had some excellent vistas of woods & fields & village spires, & could feel the atmosphere of coming spring on every hand.

The other night I saw a very interesting illustrated lecture on the recently uncovered 9th & 10th century mosaics in the great church of St. Sophia in Constantinople—by Thomas Whittemore, who had charge

of the uncovering. Now that the building has been wisely transformed to a museum, the modern trappings are being cleared away—leaving it as it was in its prime. This edifice has always fascinated me—a product of Rome's final decay (A. D. 532-8), yet embodying the majesty of Roman design in one titanic swan-song. It has, of course, the subtle oriental touches which had begun to develop as Byzantine architecture & these mosaics, installed 300 to 400 years later, are utterly Byzantine in their technique. The building is one of the best preserved of all the large structures which have come down from the edge of classical antiquity. When it was erected, Latin was still the language of Western Europe & North Africa, & the Roman people had not yet begun to realise that the occidental half of the Empire had irrevocably fallen. Justinianus brought the Eastern Empire to its apex of power—even reconquering Italy for the time being. People in that age must have felt somewhat like people today—with impending change in the air—yet nothing really radical happened. It was over a century before the Moslem wave swept the Mediterranean littoral, & 400 years before the lowest point of the Dark Ages was reached.

..... Glad *Marvel Tales* safely arrived. The format is much improved, though the contents are mediocre. My *Sarnath* is an old piece—1919—& is badly misprinted. By the way—there is a new semi-professional magazine called *The Galleon,* published by L. A. Eshbach, 1337 Good St., Reading, Pa., which has a very high standard & would welcome poetical contributions. No remuneration, however. The editor used to be with *Marvel Tales.* .....

Glad Barlow is finding his art course helpful & enjoyable. His bookbinding lessons must be pretty advanced, since he has long been highly skilled in that art. Existing specimens of his work have a quite professional look. I've seldom encountered a brighter or more promising boy, & I certainly hope he'll be careful of his eyesight & general health.

.....

Those cuttings anent juvenile "literature" are going into my permanent files of Americana. Which reminds me that I have just extended the system of cabinets whose beginning I described in January. My new acquisition consists of *six* small cabinets of a kind just on the market—papier-maché with wood frame, in imitation brown grained wood finish. Each 22 x 13 x 9½″ in size, & having four drawers, each 12 x

8¼ x 4¾". I got them at a special sale for only a dollar each, & they have proved a marvellous help in disposing of odd piles of pamphlets & envelopes of cuttings. They are so small that they can be tucked neatly in various corners without disturbing the general furnishing scheme in the least. I think they were intended to be *shoe-boxes*—but this humble purpose does not make them any the less valuable in my eyes.

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Yr most oblig'd & obt Servt
HPLovecraft

766. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Megalithic Ruins beneath the Desert—
Hour of the Chill Wind from the Black Trap-door.
Mar. 26, 1935

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Regarding the scheduled *Out of the Æons*—I should say *I did* have a hand in it . . . . . I *wrote* the damn thing! . . . But it's really foolish to attempt jobs so extensive, when with the same amount of work one could write an acknowledged story of one's own. This is the last collaboration of the sort I shall ever attempt—indeed, I've turned a deaf ear to all further suggestions from Sultan Malik, Mrs. Heald, kid Bloch, and others. Which reminds me that I've finished *The Shadow out of Time*—65 pages of pencil script. I am woefully dissatisfied with it, and may destroy this version as I did the first last autumn. In my present state of doubt I am reluctant to type the thing—so Comte d'Erlette has generously agreed to attempt a deciphering of the original text, and to render a tentative verdict. If he says it's worth saving, I shall get a typed copy somehow and send it on the rounds—starting with Averoigne.

. . . . . .

Yrs. in the fellowship of Thasaidon—
E'ch-Pi-El

167. TO WILLIAM FREDERICK ANGER

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
March 27, 1935

Dear Ang-Ghah:—

. . . . . Regarding *Julhi*—I wouldn't tend to give it an extreme classification in either direction. It certainly displays very well the author's peculiar power to evoke images & conceptions of utter strangeness, & to suggest monstrous gateways from the tri-dimensional world to other spheres of entity, yet somehow doesn't have quite the concentrated power of *Shambleau & Black Thirst.* There is too much literal & concentrated explanation, & the central idea is largely a repetition of the *Shambleau* theme. I would tend to rate it above *Black God's Shadow,* but below *Black God's Kiss.* It is hard to measure a story absolutely—there are so many points to consider. The real test is simply that of ability to awake & sustain a certain mood in the discriminatory reader. *Julhi* falls short of certain other Moore yarns because there is something just the least *expected* about the various twists & touches—& of course a sort of conventional romanticism hovers over the whole thing. However—the story of course rises miles above the lifeless, mechanical tripe forming the bulk of *W. T.*'s contents. As for the illustration—it is of course nothing notable, though it would have to go a long way to take the cellar championship from some of the other "art" work in the magazine. The best thing Wright could do is to cut out all illustration—unless he can provide material equal to Rankin's better products. The new illustrator—whose name I didn't know till you mentioned it—is a good realistic draughtsman in the usual tradition, but lacks the subtle quality of fantastic imagination which one could wish in work of this kind. He beats Hammond, though. Of all the illustrators who have worked for *W. T.* I think Rankin is the best, with Brosnatch as a fair second. Olinick is far & away the worst—with Doak not far behind him. Occasional good work has appeared from the less frequent artists Joseph Doolin & J. Allen St. John. I wish Wright would accept work from Howard Wandrei, who draws magnificently in the Sime-Harry Clarke tradition, but so far he has rejected all offerings from that

quarter—thereby proving that he is more favourably disposed toward the usual than toward the truly excellent. By the way—Klarkash-Ton has the purest essence of the weird in his drawings, though his difficulty with human figures & with the pattern element hampers him somewhat in the realm of illustrating. Have you ever seen his crayon & water-colour studies in blasphemous entities & hellish trans-galactic vegetation?

Regarding *The Feast in the Abbey*—I really don't know how much of its fan vote was deliberately whipped up. Of course it was absurd to compare anything in the issue with *The Dark Eidolon*—& yet not only the Bloch item but two more—a wretched Quinn thing and the rather uneven *Charon*—were cited as first-place rivals. After all, the votes of the readers means almost nothing—including as it does vast hordes of the ignorant, the tasteless, & the superficial.

As for the intrinsic merit of the *Feast*—I think you're a bit too severe on it. Of course Bloch is a 17-year-old beginner still frankly in the imitative, traditional, & experimental stage—but I don't think he's doing badly for his years. I saw the first draught of the *Feast* about a year ago, & can assure you that the improvement in the present version is striking. Give the boy time—& not in San Quentin, either! His worst fault is exactly like my own—a tendency toward overcolouring—laying the adjectives on too thick in scenes of horror & mystery. Undoubtedly he'll outgrow a good deal of that—I was vastly worse at his age. The very traditional beginning of the *Feast* can hardly be condemned without qualification. Of course these storm openings are undeniably usual—but they are sometimes so perfectly suited to their purpose that one hesitates to rule them out with a blanket edict. In various parts of this tale there is a certain sinister authenticity of mood—a touch of half-convincing dread—which marks it off from hopeless routine items. Despite the mechanical climax one feels that the author knows both the principles of dramatic suspense & situation, & the basic essence of the cosmic horror mood. There is promise present. He doesn't use his materials to full advantage yet, but he has them in a way that a lot of other minor contributors haven't. The story ought to be judged merely for what it is—a beginner's product. It was really unfortunate that it won prominent mention & thus seemed to come into competition with mature work. . . . .

Yrs for the Black Seal
Ech-Pi-El

768. TO AUGUST DERLETH

6th Day of Spring
(March 27, 1935)

Dear A. W.:—

. . So *Tabitha* has become purely a feline name in Sac Prairie? Hereabouts it is still applied to female primates of the species *Homo sapiens* mostly, however, of the generation now gradually dying off. Curious how it flits from animal to animal—for it was originally an Aramaic (the corrupt or local Hebrew used in Syria in New Testament times) word signifying a *female gazelle. Dorcas* (from a Greek word meaning *to flash or gleam*—referring to the large, gleaming eyes of the gazelle; from another form of the same word comes the Latin noun *draco,* meaning a *dragon* or *serpent* or—later and by transference—*devil.* Hence, through Slavic or Roumanian sources, the word dracu, and the proper name DRACULA. *Drak* or *dric* is an old Aryan root going back to Sanscrit—meaning to *see or flash.*) is the Greek word for a gazelle or antelope, thus forming a translation. In the Book of Acts (ix. 36) both forms are given—thus: "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named *Tabitha,* which by interpretation is called *Dorcas;* this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Both Tabitha and Dorcas were favourite female names in early New England. The transfer of Tabitha to the she-cat (common here for the last century or more) represents a very interesting philological process involving accidental phonetic resemblance and false etymology. The tabby-cat's designation, which originally held no especial implications of gender, comes from an altogether different source—the Arabic word *attabi,* signifying the rich watered silk manufactured in the Attabi quarter of Bagdad. This silk was introduced into Europe through Spain (where the Moors reigned) and France, and was known in Spanish as *tabi* and in French as *tabis.* From the brindled or wave-marked surface of this silk, the name *tabby* became—in England—transferred to cats of similar marking—hence the name *tabby-cat*—which might mean either male or female. It was not until later that the accidental likeness of tabby and Tabitha caused the latter name to be applied playfully to

brindled cats. As soon, of course, as the transfer became popular, the name *Tabitha-cat* (and, retroactively, *tabby-cat*) shrank to cover only the ladies of the species. Curious twist of fate—a name starting with a she-quadruped (Tabitha—Aramaic for she-gazelle) ends up as designating another she-quadruped after passing through a human stage. Still more—here we have two utterly different *Semitic* words—the Aramaic word for gazelle and the Arabic name of an urban district—*Tabitha—Attabi*—fusing together and becoming interchanged in an Aryan speech utterly unknown to either branch of Semites in question!

As a fanatical devotee of the felidae, I have always been interested in cat nomenclature. No doubt you know that *Tom-cat* is a comparatively recent (a century or two) designation for my favourite kind of gentleman. The original type name for a he-cat was *Gilbert,* not *Thomas* —hence (from the slang or nickname form of *Gilbert*) the common Elizabethan expression *Gib-cat.* With the passage of time—and after the rise of the parallel term *Tom-cat* for a typical lusty male—the name *Gib-cat* became at least partly transferred to the pampered eunuchs of cosy and well-bred firesides. Today *Gib-cat* is almost an obsolete term —indeed, I have never heard it orally, even among rustics born early in the 19th century.

The feminisation of such names as *Evelyn* is very curious, and the process is still going on. A good example is the surname *Shirley,* which to my mind calls up some such image as that of the Hon. William Shirley, Governor of His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay in the time of George the Second. When I was young, the idea of this word as a female Christian name was unheard-of in New England—or all America, so far as I know—although it had figured thus, very sparsely, in novels and plays. Then—circa 1910—it began to be noticed in a few young women—who *may* have been so named in the 1890's, but who possibly adopted the name through affectation. Much might be said of *affected and assumed* names—of which there are both typically patrician and typically plebeian forms. *Ivor* is a fashionable male name borne by some who were—and some who weren't—so christened. I know a sappy young pseudo-aesthete who (though of 100% English stock) is trying to Scandinavianise the name *John* into *Jon.* Among the females, there is the silly and (so far as I know, wholly artificial and assumed) use of "Kay" for *Catherine,* and the more spontaneous (since

1910 or 1915) misspelling of *May* as "Mae". This last is wholly plebeian—I never heard of a gentlewoman or well-born female child with this spelling. Amusingly, aging women of the lower middle class, born before the advent of the fashion, make it retroactive—so that fat, grey-headed "Maes" crowd the cheap cinemas each afternoon. The cinema itself, by the way, is a fruitful source of freak names among the lower orders—hence the crop of 5 and 10 year old *Garys* &c now in primary and grammar schools. In the middle 19th century slang diminutives had a disgusting vogue, and ascended higher in the social scale than ever before or since— thus children of good families were named Fred, Annie, Will, Fanny, Susie, Hattie, Frank, Carrie, Jennie, &c. The less cultivated classes went to incredible lengths at the same period, with Gladiola, Sadie, Mamie, &c. Parallel affectations have developed in Great Britain—and now the South Irish are making fools of themselves by archaically Gaelicising their names—thus Patrick Kelly becomes Padraic O'Ceallaigh, John Sweeney becomes Sean MacSwibhne, &c. Our distinguished fellow weirdist Two-Gun Bob has succumbed to this fashion to the extent of hashing up his own middle name (Ervin—distinguished in Southern history for 200 years) and signing himself "Robert Eiarbihan Howard". Another freak wave was the "romantic" period of the fabulous 'forties—the age of pale, languishing *Lenores,* and *Rosabelles,* and *Ermyntrudes.*

Names taken from or corrupted from novels, however, were common from the early 18th century onward—hence the *Amelias, Matildas, Alzadas,* &c. on ancestral charts. Occasionally, specific corruptions become narrowly local. Thus in Rhode Island the name *Roba* became *Rhoby*—and occurs twice in my own ancestry. In all this business of extravagance and affectation, women seem to suffer worse than men—notwithstanding the Victorian *Egberts, Harlwyns, Percivals,* and *Athelstanes* who nowadays write their names as E. Milton Jones, H. Mason Brown, &c. &c. Another interesting tendency, indicative of the growth of sophistication and the decline of hero-worship, is the steady descent of the social ladder made by "great men" names. Up to two or three generations ago the best families were full of George Washingtons, Thomas Jeffersons, Benjamin Franklins, Zachary Taylors, James Madisons, Winfield Scotts, John Marshalls, Roscoe Conklings, Henry Clays, Daniel Websters, Stephen Douglas's, &c. Around the 80's this habit

began to wane, so that the Grover Clevelands, the Garfields, Benjamin Harrisons and Ulysses Grants were generally pretty middle-class. Later, the William McKinleys and Deweys and Theodore Roosevelts were noticeably confined to the distinctly humble circles. . . . . .

Blessings—
Grandpa HP

769. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

March 28, 1935

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

Your expressed difficulty in making a story *as long as* 2000 words—something which young Barlow also experiences—excites my deepest envy & impels reflections on the diversity of mankind. I simply can't write a *short* story these days. Words & images well up & demand to be set down; & if I try to boil the text down to smaller compass, the effect is that of a mere *synopsis,* not an actual story. With me, it takes a building-up process to establish the atmosphere of illusion necessary if the story is to seem realistic & convincing. In short, my methods are wholly of about a century ago. I think & feel, fictionally, in the manner of the 1830's—& if I try to get a story across in any other way, the result is total failure. I tried to make my newest tale brief—but in spite of me it spun itself out to 65 pages . . . . a novelette. I don't like to use conversation, either. It seems to detract, except under certain limited conditions, from the atmospheric tension of a weird tale. For atmosphere-weaving, there is nothing quite equal to plain narrative prose. However—a few weird *dramas* such as Dunsany's *Gods of the Mountain* & *Night at an Inn* have demonstrated how a natural expert can weave horror, dread, & mounting tension with skilfully managed dialogue. I look upon such productions with admiring envy—for I would flounder helplessly in such a medium. . . . . .

I remain Yrs most sincerely
HPLovecraft

770. TO JAMES F. MORTON

IV Ante Nones Aprilis
(April 4, 1935)

Premier Pursuer of Proaval Particulars:—

Nope—Grandpa ain't getting sporty! On the other hand, this yaller journalism** is really the essence of conservatism ... involving the using-up of some bargain stationery purchased in the year 1910—just a quarter-century ago—and brought to light during the course of some file-sorting involving the unpacking of long-neglected boxes! When, as a youth of twenty, I laid in these ochraceous pads, did I ever think a grey-headed old has-been of almost forty-five would be scrawling on 'em in the virtually fabulous future year of *1935?* 1935 ..... even today it has an unreal, far-ahead sound! Can *I* be living in a year whose numeral seems as fantastically remote as 2000 or 2500 or 5000? Where *have* all the intervening twelvemonths gone to? Even 1910 is fantastic enough to one whose sense of existence is somehow curiously oriented to *1903*. And can it be that the world of 1910 will in turn give place to something as different as 1910 is from 1450? Is there to be a war ... a breakdown of capitalism and democratick illusion ... an emergence from millennial attitudes and folkways ..... a rise of nightmare "modernism" in architecture ... and a discovery by me of something called "amateur journalism"? Bless my soul, but such predictions sound fantastick! King Edward has just died, but I dare say the Prince of Wales (or I should call him George V now!) will be an even better-liked focus for our racial-cultural loyalty. In this local region, President Taft is something of a disappointment—but I hope we'll have T. R. back in 1912. Hope Premier Asquith can head off the disgusting radical schemes of that wretched little Welshman Lloyd-George .... there's actually some talk about subtracting power from the House of Lords!

Ah, me! Ah, me! And yet that grotesque alleged calendar above my desk *does* say *1935* .... but here's the same yellow pad and the same old man and the same (or perhaps worse) undecipherable hieroglyphs!

** Written on orange yellow paper.

. . . . . .

Read Augie Derleth's new detec novel—*Three Who Dy'd*—and guess'd the outcome in full on page 145 (out of 252). A cleverer book than its predecessor. Also lapp'd up Gustav Meyrink's *The Golem,* lent me by little Bobby Barlow. The most magnificent weird thing I've come across in aeons! The cinema of identical title in 1921 was a mere substitute using the name—with nothing of the novel in it. Yuggoth, what a study in subtle fear, brooding hints of magick, and driftings to and fro across the borderline betwixt dream and waking! There are no overt monsters or miracles—just symbols and suggestions. As a study in lurking, insidious *regional* horror it has scarcely a peer—doing for the antient, crumbling Prague ghetto what I unsuccessfully strove to do for rotting Newburyport in *The Shadow over Innsmouth. . .*

. . . . .

Yrs. for memories of 1910—
Theobaldus Perkins

771. TO HYMAN BRADOFSKY

66 College Street
April 5, 1935

Dear Bradofsky:—

. . . . . A more important enclosure is the assortment of brief lyrics by Samuel Loveman. When I urged him to send you something he declared he had nothing new, but told me to select something from among the large stock of his mss. in my files. Of such mss. some are absolutely unpublished, while others represent material printed 25 or so years ago in amateur papers now wholly vanished and forgotten. Dozens of poems have been lost with the journals in which they appeared, since Loveman—with characteristic negligence—failed to keep copies of his own. Some he retained in memory—and 13 years ago I made him recite as many as possible of these, taking them down on paper for my own preservation. Thus—even allowing for a few which

may lurk in the recesses of the Fossil Library—I have a good many Loveman poems existing nowhere else in written or printed form today. . . .

I remain yrs. most cordially,
H. P. Lovecraft

772. TO EMIL PETAJA

66 College St.
April 5, 1935

My dear Petaja:—

I can't see the point of finding it difficult to reconcile the highest levels of beauty & art with a "mere animal origin". The fact is, the tendency to despise & belittle a natural organic source is a purely fallacious convention based on blind tradition & primitive delusion. *Why shouldn't* the processes of biology be the means of building up the most complex & delicate perceptions & creations of harmony & rhythm? Analyse the situation & you will see that the prejudice against the relationship between simple & highly evolved manifestations is completely groundless. An infinitely delicate watch & a common crowbar are both made of iron —but do we have to doubt that the watch *is* made of iron merely because it is vastly finer than a simple crowbar? That kind of doubting is supremely illogical, since it ignores the stupendous differences inherent in *degree* irrespective of *kind*. The idea that one must presuppose some fantastic "spiritual" world to account for everything that seems at all removed from obvious simplicity is an essentially childish one—natural enough when the race was young, but more & more obsolete today. . . . . .

As for crude & visible "supernatural" manifestations—no, I've never had any experience even remotely suggesting a "spiritual world", or ever heard of one which did not, on analysis, resolve itself into natural factors or sheer intentional deception. Most reports come from egocentric neurotics whose evidence is not to be trusted. Man's capacity for self-delusion is infinite, & anthropologists understand how typical super-

natural legends are built up. When a person believes in the possibility of certain kinds of impossible phenomena, he often imagines he has witnessed actual manifestations—& will go to any length to convince others. Some of the stuff in Flammarion & Chevreuil is pathetic! As for the actual beliefs of celebrated weird writers—I fancy they are divided. Blackwood & Machen seem to have lingering supernatural ideas, but Dunsany, Poe, Bierce, James, Shiel, & Ewers do not. Of the cheap magazine weirdists, the only orthodox religionist I know of is the peculiar H. Warner Munn. Derleth believes in natural telepathy but not in the supernatural. Donald Wandrei believes in undiscovered natural laws, but not in immortality, deity, or anything religious. Clark Ashton Smith, Barlow, Cook, Long, Koenig, Francis Flagg, Howard Wandrei, & I have no beliefs outside recognised natural science. R. E. Howard & some others are undecided agnostics—suspending all belief till further proof is available. Most of the science-fiction writers—Hamilton, Williamson, Keller, &c.—believe as little as I do. .....

Yrs most cordially & sincerely
HPL

773. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Arx Theobald:—
II Ante Nones Aprilis
(April 6, 1935)

O Sage:—

.. Whilst rearranging files, I tapp'd a box containing stuff undisturb'd since the Middle 598 Period—and found therein the most astonishing array of tail ends of writing materials—composition books with a few blank pages, incomplete pads, and the like. One composition book of 1905 bears the title of a story about which I had completely forgotten —*Gone—But Whither?* I'll bet it was a hell-raiser! The title expresses the fate of the tale itself. Another book contain'd the opening chapters of *A Brief Course in Astronomy—Descriptive, Practical, and Observational; for Beginners and General Readers* (1906). That I *do* recall

—it got as far as the typed and hand-illustrated stage (circa one hundred fifty pages), though no copy survives. And this old yaller paper—of which I had a dozen or more pads at a nickel each in good old '10—is simply lousy with memories. Gawd, the heroick couplets that have bounded down these ochraceous sheets! *Twenty-five years ago*—a quarter of a century—and who would have thought the old man would still be making hen-tracks on the same aureate surface in the well-nigh fabulous future year of *1935?* Hell—I don't believe there is such a year as *1935* after all! It is merely a sort of theoretical Ragnarok like A. D. 5000 or 10,000 or 1,000,000! Or if there *could* be such a remote age, I couldn't be living then! God! Isn't 1910 bad enough for one whose heyday was around '03? What a world! .....

.....

Yr. most oblig'd obt. Servt.,
Lo.

774. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Citadel of Leng—Rising of
the Purple Moon.
(April 20, 1935)

O Invincible Lord Ghu:—

.....

..... Most of the poems in question are in my own hideous scrawl—taken down from Loveman's lips between 1922 and 1926. He had dozens of early pieces—some of them magnificent—of which no copies whatever remained. Some had been published in the amateur press between 1902 and 1912 or so, but most of the papers containing them were wholly lost to sight. Others had never been published at all. Loveman, with a singular and almost reckless modesty, totally disregarded them amidst the enthusiasm of composing new things. Well—the only saving element was his remarkable rote memory. Some of the things—even after 20 years—still remained in his head, in versions more or less correct. When—after my first shock of learning that so

much was lost—I realised this, I began to insist that the poet record his recollected elder poems; but in this campaign I had very indifferent success. He would *promise* to set down this or that poem, but would never get around to *doing* it. Hence at every personal meeting I would take matters into my own hands and make him recite old lines to me—jotting them down hastily as I received them orally. . . . . .

. . . . These lectures** so impressed me, that on the night following the second one I had a picturesque dream involving Dr. Franklin and myself, and centreing in a curious distortion of time (such as our weird and scientifictional colleagues are so fond of depicting) whereby an area of 1785 merged imperceptibly into an area of 1935. Franklin and I were riding horseback from Philadelphia to New York through the world of 1785—he being just return'd from France. The road was narrow and muddy, and border'd by rail fences considerably intertwin'd with vines and briars. I had on a full green coat of old style (say of 1760) with silver buttons; a flower'd reddish waistcoat, snuff-colour'd small-cloaths, and black leather riding-boots. Glimpses I later caught of myself in windows reveals that I had a rather small, tightly-curl'd half-powder'd bag-wig and a black three-corner'd hat. Dr. Franklin was drest in buff, in an affectation of the Quaker fashion, and wore his own hair (now become very grey) stringing about his shoulders. He had a broad-brimm'd hat of the Quaker fashion. My horse was of a chestnut colour, and his a black and white piebald. My companion's voice was pleasant, unaffected by age, and without any offensive provincial accent. Our conversation related to a horrible truth of which I had somehow become master—namely, that something hideous and inexplicable had happen'd to *time,* and that there lay somewhere ahead of us a monstrous nightmare of machinery and decadence call'd *1935.* Franklin would not believe me—but some rumour had reach'd the village of New-Brunswick, for as we rode through the cobbled streets of that place we found frighten'd crowds and heard bells tolling in all the steeples. Around Metuchen, some time later, we encounter'd a curious fog—and in Rahway we could see the spectral shapes of 1935 (new buildings, motors, modernly drest persons) impinging on the cobblestones, gambrel roofs, Georgian facades, and knee-breech'd inhabitants of 1785. Even then,

**By Professor V. W. Crane on Benjamin Franklin.

however, Dr. Franklin insisted that we were merely subject to some bizarre collective delusions. Halfway down the Elizabethtown road the fog vanish'd, and we were in the full world of 1935—with our horses rearing at the bewildering streams of motors. At last Franklin realised that something was gravely wrong—for he saw passers-by staring amazedly at our costume. Once he put his mind to the problem, he seem'd to have no difficulty in grasping what had happen'd; and so ample was his scientific training, that he cou'd appreciate the modern uses of the electrical fire which he had so spectacularly snatch'd from the heavens in 1752. In (modern) Elizabeth, foregoing a call on Leedle Sharlie at 137 W. Grand St., I stopt to purchase some cloathing of 1935, donning it in the shop. Dr. Franklin, however, refused to alter his semi-Quaker attire, and continued to receive curious stares. In Newark we left our horses at a livery stable and took the Hudson Tubes to New-York, emerging at 33rd St. (Not so far from where you took the Washington coach last January.) Here no one noticed Franklin's costume, and we walk'd about freely—I pointing out to the philosopher various marvels and horrors (like the Empire State Bldg., the foreign populace, the strange conveyances, and so on) of 1935, whilst he attempted to adjust them to his previous knowledge. At times we talk'd of politicks, and I candidly blam'd him for permitting his advocacy of just colonial reforms to extend to the treasonable length of sanctioning that revolt against our rightful Sovereign and Parliament which selfish, greedy, and misguided provincials had instituted in 1775 and terminated with tragick and suicidal success two (or rather, *152*—for this spectre of a world of 1935 was appallingly realistick) years ago. I had, it appear'd, been a kind of secretary to Genl. Sir Guy Carleton of his Majesty's regulars—first in Quebec and later (until its evacuation by our troops) in New-York. During this rambling ciceronage and discussion, and without the attainment of any dramatic denouement or the approximation of any logical story-plot, I began slowly to drift into wakefulness. Thus the vision ended—aimless and pointless, but a striking testimonial to the substance of Prof. Crane's historical discourse!

. . .

Thine by the Septuple Claw of Uf—
HPL

775. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
April 22, 1935.

That magazine—*The Galleon*—to which I recommended your sending verse has just taken 2 of my *Fungi from Yuggoth* & an old prose fantasy called *The Quest of Iranon.*

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . Regarding the late lamented *FF*—if you will send me a list of all the issues you have, I think I can complete your file. The first was *Sept. 1933,* & no month was skipped. . . . The discontinuance of the magazine was a great disappointment to all devotees of weird fiction—for humble though it was, it filled a unique special want. My *Sup. Horror in Lit.* was published complete in 1927 in W. Paul Cook's *Recluse.* Did I not send you a copy of that? If not, I will lend one later. The present serial reprinting contains several changes of text—bringing the facts down to date. Many important weird books have been published—or discovered by me—since the original printing 8 years ago.

Little John Perkins continues to prosper, & bids fair to develop into a redoubtable warrior. He is a diminutive streak of furry black lightning, & will certainly be a very frequent & welcome guest at #66 during the months (& I hope years!) to come.

Yes—transitional periods are always hard to go through . . . because new conditions have to be met by repeated experimentation, trial, & error, & because so many people retain from the past a hampering body of prejudices, standards, & psychological attitudes which are meaningless & even dangerous in the light of present necessities. However, so far as the Anglo-Saxon world is concerned, I think there is no likelihood of any such explosion as Russia's—or even any such eccentric regime as Germany's. The struggle is developing about as one might have predicted. It is being demonstrated that stronger remedies are needed —but the ice has already been broken for their non-violent adoption in



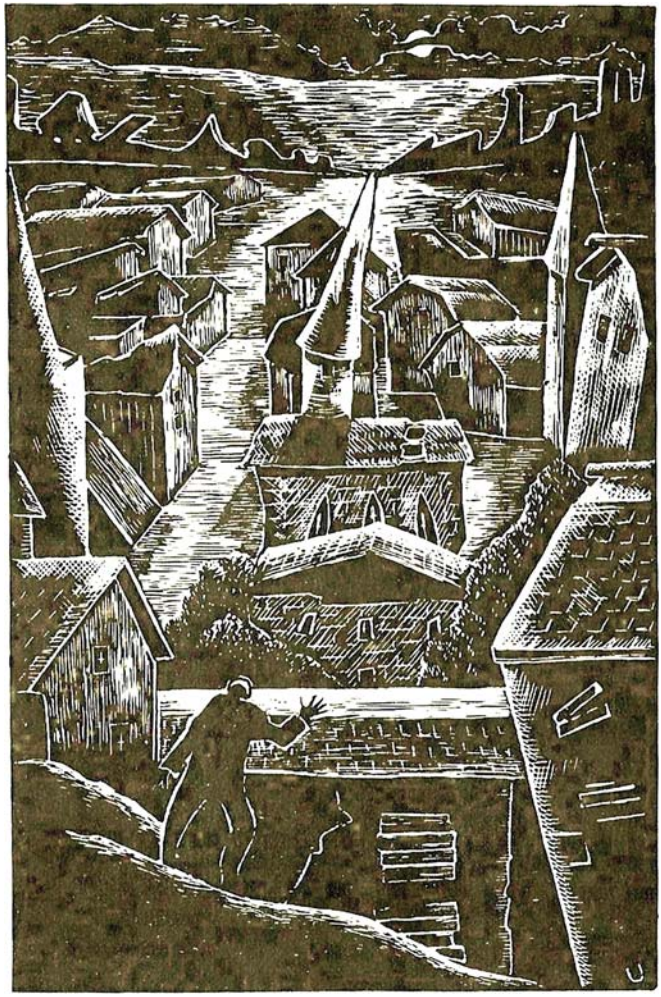
1, ELY'S COURT, PROVIDENCE,
April 26, 1936

Dear Miss Bonner:—

The fraternity indeed rejoices at the return of the Garden House's long-absent chatelaine, & will welcome the time when the recent ordeal shall have retreated to the domain of the fabulous & half-forgotten. Meanwhile it reiterates its appreciation of the part played by your cheering messages in sustaining the spirits of the ex-patient.

Turning to recent topics in logical order — pray extend my sincerest gratitude to Pres. Perkins for his appointment of me as Official Limner of the local K.A.T. chapter. I shall proceed with the initial task — the portraits of all the members — just as soon as I can induce the latter (including the restless Executive himself) to grant me suitable sittings. The list of suggested poses has been very carefully filed, & is most profoundly appreciated. Some are capable of very diverse treatment — thus cat-a-comb may signify either something like the Canal St. station of the B.M.T. subway in New-York, or some process like that which my Florida friend Barlow applies to his Persian companions Cyrus & Darius when their acquisitive interest in entomology seems excessive. Regarding our letter-head #3 — this same Barlow, rather than the local limner, must be held responsible for its pictorial designs; the latter being impressions of linoleum cuts fashioned by his skilful young hands. As you infer, the right-hand panel consists of hieroglyphs interpretable only by members of the fraternity. The lettering involves the resurrection from my autobiographical museum of two rubber-stamp alphabets which formed my pride & joy some 40 years ago. Many of my earlier works — such as "Wilkes's Explorations" (1902), "Ross's Explorations" (1902), "Antarctic Atlas" (1903), & "Astronomy" (1903), have title-pages printed from these old reliable devices, & I never could bear to discard them. To the best of my knowledge, the recent letter-head forms the first impression made from these alphabets since the year 1904.

Stationery for the Kappa Alpha Tau fraternity



Frank Utpatel's frontispiece for the 1936 Visionary Press edition of *The Shadow over Innsmouth*

successive stages. If the blind & fatuous Hoover Republicans had hung on, there would have been no precedent for rational change. No public relief, no intelligent coördination of industries, no rescue from financial panic & violent revolution. Now, however, the machinery is limbered up, & the government knows it must bend in the direction of public need. The constant application of irritants like Huey Long & Father Coughlin is really a good sign—a sign of adherence to legal methods instead of violence. While it is unlikely that the plans of either of these agitators would work, the pressure they exert performs a valuable function in forcing the government to consider some radical *but workable* step. That step, of course, is the public operation (& probably ownership in the end) of the larger industries & utilities. Only by public control—with its policy of non-profit operation for service only—of industry, can the massed resources of the nation be sufficiently released to permit of the rational redistribution which the overwhelming mass of the people insistently—& rightly—demand. All this, of course, is much further than the present administration is now willing to go—but this administration will be likely to respond to pressure better than its insanely bigoted predecessor ever could have done. The elections of 1936 will be very tense & important—& if the Democrats are wise, they will move sharply toward the left in order to retain what otherwise may be a third-party vote. There will, of course, be unpleasantness. Old-time "let 'em starve" conservatives will howl, & large-scale private business will create as much trouble as it can. But these influences no longer have the power they once had. A steady trend toward rational socialistic planning may be expected, & only some unforeseen obstacle would be likely to release any violent or culturally subversive forces. The most that may be expected in the direction of a revolution is some vigorous coup d'etat like Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922, or the Spanish overturn of 1931. And even this sort of thing is less probable than a "revolution" of ballots only, such as that which seated the Nazis in 1933. Nor need it be even as much as that if the present administration will break further with capitalism & continue in the bold pioneering course of its first half. The fact is, that no important element in America or England *wants* any major upsetting of the general ways of life. All that any responsible person wants is a restoration of the virtual certainty that a livelihood can be obtained in exchange for services. The desired adjustment is *purely economic*—not cultural. Such changes in culture-

values as would eventually result from the needed shift would be very slow & subtle—& in an *unqualifiedly desirable* direction . . . i. e., a direction of lessened emphasis on property & wealth & acquisitive ability, & greater emphasis on personal excellence. The major evils of the newer age will probably be those common to all new ages—clumsiness, inexperience, & inefficiency. These must be expected until a new industrial-economic-governmental technique can be worked out & established as part of the national folkways. Naturally this means a tedious & gruelling period ahead—but one ought to be thankful that no worse need be expected. When one reflects on the horrors of violent revolutions, one can appreciate the good luck of a nation likely to get off with mere *discomfort.* The present age, it seems to me, is most distinctly *not* one of "peril" or "menace" or "cataclysm", as some loose-mouthed sensationalists insist. It is, rather, one of *discomfort, bother, hardship, fumbling, bewilderment, disappointment, stagnation,* & *slow transition.* It is much more like the gradual readjustment of the western world after Rome's fall than like the destruction of Babylonia before the Persian hosts, or the extinction of classic culture in North Africa by the Moslems in the 7th century.

. . . . . .

With best wishes—
Yr most oblig'd & obt Servt
HPLovecraft

776. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
April 24, 1935.

Dear Helen:—

. . . . . Heard a number of interesting lectures recently—including (vide enc.) a particularly good series on the late Dr. Franklin, whose setting took me pleasantly back to that 18th century of which I form, psychologically, so inextricable a part. I was glad to

see the lecturer (a really notable authority on Am. history) emphasise a point I have always realised from Dr. F's own writings—namely, that despite his insistence on thrift & individual caution, the philosopher did *not* sponsor any such programme of *laissez-faire* capitalism as some of the modern defenders of that system are seeking to justify with his authority. He expressly proclaimed the need of governmental supervision of commerce & industry under certain conditions, & in general uttered sentiments which would indicate his position as a New Dealer were he alive today. Prof. Crane further demonstrated that Franklin's casual utterances, addressed to the simple masses as in *Poor Richard's Almanack,* greatly bely his actual convictions when they imply his worship of purely material success. . . .

. . . . . This psychology of quasi-exhibitionistic vanity & anti-traditional subjectivism seems to me peculiarly adapted to the bringing out of certain annoying & unpleasant traits always latent in the non-analytical human mind & emotions—traits connected with an exaggeration of the ego, an emphasis on the element of *monopoly* in nearly all activities, & a curious & disastrous tendency to personalise & sentimentalise all sorts of human contacts & exchanges of ideas; so that the subject makes of every type of acquaintanceship or friendship something which cannot logically be made of any save the most exceptional family or prospectively family relationships . . . . . a kind of mirror for his own image of himself, to be valued only so far as it reflects him in impressive & gratifying proportions. This type of attitude is constantly exemplified in the moody, egotistical person who is never content to exchange ideas & impressions for their own sake, but who invariably pauses to invent & dissect some mystical, imaginary link betwixt himself & every person with whom he effects such exchanges. Hence the mawkish, sophomoric essays on "true friendship" so often perpetrated by persons of high-school age—or at least, high-school psychology. Hence, too, the boresome, puerile, & often impertinent custom of minutely studying the personal emotions of all one's acquaintances toward oneself; & the attendant cycle of callow exaltations & depressions based on the fancied fluctuations of reciprocal regard observed or assumed in this or that individual. It is a very pathetic spectacle—this transference or extension, as it were, of the conditions of serious romance to domains where such conditions are basically & manifestly

inapplicable. For the general tendency, of course, modern egocentricity is not wholly responsible—indeed, the simperingly sentimental Victorian age was a great offender in this direction. But one cannot deny that radical modernity has vastly aggravated the fallacy, & substantially increased the virulence of many of its effects. Having repudiated the rational aesthetic pattern laid down by human experience, whereby the field of intense & monopolistic regard is reduced within well-defined & recognisable limits, the emotional modern appears to seek a position in which he can enjoy the undivided homage of as many other persons as possible; rather unreasonably complaining if any of these fails to exalt him with that singleness which he himself does not accord to anyone! Not, of course, that every modern consciously subscribes to this extreme. It is merely the tendency toward which the over-emotionalised *behaviour* is impelled by the influences dominant around him. Some display it more than others—according to their degree of some capability to popular fashion & mass-suggestion. As for a panacea for such a state—alas! Could we so easily mould the blind, irrational philosophic currents which sweep certain generations along with them, the whole problem of social, political, & economic adjustment were a simple one! Actually, there is very little to do save to preserve one's own clearness of perspective & impersonality of attitude—endeavouring to spread a rational philosophy whenever an opportunity occurs, & always discouraging the growth of out-of-place attitudes, customs, & points of view. In the course of time it is very possible that psychologically sounder modes of aesthetic-ethical education, & a riper cultural experience which recognises the inevitable futility & unpleasant results of egocentric sentimentalism, will naturally & spontaneously correct some of the extravagances of the present chaotic period.

The trouble with these emotional egotists is that they expect too confoundedly much of existence. They represent a typical modern neurosis whose first great exponent (as someone pointed out last summer in the *Atlantic*) was the French author of a century ago—Stendhal. They want to cut a great swath in the world—to do what they please, receive the undivided homage of everyone they encounter, & enjoy on every hand those delicate & specialised emotions of regard which (if they but knew it) are actually of exceeding rarity, & are dependent for their existence on the very sort of life-patterns & limitations which modern radicals

refuse to recognise! Sooner or later they will learn that they can't have their cake & eat it .... that they can't expect to retain varied & interesting contacts with other minds if they insist on mixing with those mental contacts the incongruous fumes of romantic sentimentality, & the silly & exasperating practice of measuring reciprocal esteem & classifying friendships on a minutely graduated quantitative scale. The two kinds of thing are simply irreconcilable. In some cases, of course, *sheer egotism* predominates—stark grasping after empty precedence & monopoly, without any admixture of boarding-school sentimentality. Thus a person acquainted with a certain person of prominence will sometimes take pitiful & puerile pains to prevent any of his other friends from meeting that person. He feels that knowing a celebrity confers a kind of reflected distinction, & is unwilling to share that distinction with any more people than he is obliged to share it with. But of course this type of pettiness is more or less allied to the other. It has the same egotism at its base, & it acts on the same fallacious conception of friendship as some mystical attribute of enormous personal importance. Thus when a young friend of mine boasted of corresponding with H. G. Wells, he could not comprehend why I refused to regard that circumstance as of vast importance. Of course it was pleasant to be in touch with a great man—but the only thing that would have been of *importance* would have been my friend's ability to *think & write as powerfully* as Wells. And so it goes.

I have said that there is no direct remedy for the trouble—& that is true so far as the offenders themselves are concerned. Those, however, who are bothered by the exacting caprices of those offenders may certainly escape much annoyance by adopting a position of increased impersonality & widened perspective, & realising how trivial after all are the issues involved. Of course there is no sure preventive against the loss of certain highly stubborn acquaintances of imperious & unreasoning temper; yet the rate of loss may be very substantially cut down by the adoption of a fixed position of rationality whereby all exacting & presumptuous expectations are met with lightness, ridicule, & non-notice, & all communications confined to such matters as are relevant to the alert interests on which the acquaintanceship is based. When, for example, some writer is confronted by a request from some egocentric & monopolistic acquaintance that he give him *all* his original MSS. for

a collection, the sensible thing for the writer to do is to laugh at the vain sap, tell him pleasantly to go to the devil, & continue discussion as amiably as before. In 9 cases out of 10 it will work—& the acquaintance will not be alienated. Indeed, in perhaps 1 case out of these 9 the vain panhandler may be made to see the absurdity of his ways & led to adopt a more sensible attitude. And so on . . . & so on . . . Of course, all this does not mean that friends of truly sympathetic attitude & genuinely profound devotion ought lightly to be dismissed. To them is due a serious consideration in proportion with the intensity of undividedness of their own esteem. The real point is to preserve that principle of proportion by refusing to let varied ego-feeders claim such a degree of consideration as *only* the profoundly & particularly devoted merit.

As for the attitude of those few genuinely devoted ones themselves—it is one of the merits of a *genuinely* profound esteem, that it involves no such monopolistic attitude as that of the ego-caterer. With actually thorough friends, those problems of tact & discrimination *do not exist.* Monopoly & jealousy become truly justified only in matters of domestic relationship wholly removed from any of these cases. The fact is, that matters of personal adjustment & friendship really demand just that *laissez-faire* policy which is becoming unworkable in the economic field. The secret of harmony is to refuse to take the institution of friendship too formally & seriously. Let the various types of acquaintance flounder about as they will, until each finds its own natural niche or drifts out of the picture. And don't attach too much importance or regret to their ego-impelled flounderings. The process of natural selection makes for the best ultimate results. Nor is this course a really cynical or misanthropic one—for just as it disfavours the arrogant & the insincere, so does it favour the profound & the sincere by singling them out & assigning them a merited position of consideration.

. . . . . .

Yr obt servt
HPL

777. TO WILLIAM FREDERICK ANGER

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
April 24, 1935

Dear An-Gah:—

Regarding *W. T.* illustrations—I hope I didn't do Binder's work an injustice. He is really an excellent artist. I merely tried to point out that for weird work certain special imaginative qualities & a certain adroitly nebulous technique are desirable—& that of the *W. T.* regulars, Rankin has those attributes most strongly developed. The *O'Mecca* picture is surely excellent—though I wish you could have seen the one which Howard Wandrei himself drew for the story. Wright turned it down—for some capricious reason past fathoming. I suppose you know that Howard W. is a weird artist of the very first quality—wholly above the pulp illustrator's level. Fiction is a relatively minor interest with him—though he is now doing a vast lot of cheap work for Street & Smith & others. . . .

I saw that Wollheim article dealing with Hugo the Rat—through the kindness of a bright young member of the Science Fiction League, Kenneth Sterling, who has recently moved to Providence. It was nothing new to me—for more than one friend of mine has been robbed by that thieving son-of-a-beachcomber. He printed a story by Frank B. Long in the Spring 1930 *Wonder Stories Quarterly,* & neither paid the author nor gave any attention to letters about the matter. I advised Long to take drastic steps, but he thought the sum wasn't large enough to bother about. Others I know—including CAS—have recovered cash from the Rat only through legal action. There's no real answer that Gernsback can make to the Wollheim exposé—all he can do is to keep quiet. But his shifty tactics will overreach themselves & wreck him in the end. Meanwhile he relies on suckers, pays two or three contributors whom he can't afford to lose, & counts on the mss. of writers who don't care whether they're paid or not. I wouldn't mind a non-paying magazine if the editor would honestly call it such . . . It is his masquerading as a

remunerative publisher which makes Hugo such a damn'd thief! Fortunately he is an exception. Street & Smith, the *Terror Tales* & *Dime Mystery* firm, & Wright are all honourable in their dealings. Wright is sometimes slow, but he always pays in full in the end. By the way—speaking of the S. F. League & its members—have you seen their mimeographed parody on the science fiction magazines—*Flabbergasting Stories?* It is really extremely clever & witty—Sterling showed me a copy. If I recall correctly, Wollheim is the editor.

With all good wishes—
Yrs for the Avatar of Tsathoggua
—E'ch-Pi-El

778. TO EMIL PETAJA

66 College St.
April 24, 1935

Dear Petaja:—

Now as to the distribution of organic life in the cosmos—there are many factors to be considered. First—what is it? Is it an unique principle transmitted through space in the form of spores, as Arrhenius believed, or is it a form of electrical energy separately produced whenever a plastic mass containing carbon, hydrogen, & nitrogen cools into solidity? Can it exist under conditions widely different from those of the earth? What seem to be its requirements? Well—the dominant belief is that life is separately produced when a plastic mass cools on a large scale under certain conditions of mechanical equilibrium. Probably it could not exist except on a cool, solid body, & under certain specific conditions like the presence of oxygen & water. Primitive organic energy, as first generated from inorganic matter & energy, must necessarily operate in unicellular matter-units. One of the basic properties of these units is to build up into more & more complex forms when stimulated by changes in their environment—but what especial forms will be produced, depends wholly on what these changes may happen to be. Relatively slight environmental changes are found to give rise to tremendous differentiations of organic form even on *this* planet—hence it is inconceivable that any of the higher organic species we know can

be duplicated or even closely resembled on any *other* planet. The chances of the existence of some other planet *just* like the earth, revolving under *just* the same conditions around some sun *just* like ours, are so slight as to be virtually negligible. It is not, then, to be expected that anything even remotely resembling *human* life or *human* thoughts & feelings can exist anywhere in the cosmos save on the earth. It is the constant mistake of cheap science-fiction writers to depict the denizens of other worlds (whatever their *physical* shape) as having mental & emotional processes (modes of reasoning & communicating; values, desires, motivations, objectives) either like ours or at least comprehensible to us. The absurdity of this is self-evident—since of *all* human attributes, the psychological ones are the *most* unstable, local, & accidental. Even within the human species the accidents of differing environment give rise to wholly alien modes of thought & feeling & valuation. What, then, can be expected of the organic life of differing worlds? Of the *degree* of complexity of evolution on different worlds we can set no arbitrary limits. Many planets have doubtless failed to produce life-forms as complex as the earth's highest products (= Caucasian-Mongolian man), while many others have doubtless surpassed these forms to a substantial degree. The extent of possible development would seem to be determined both by chance & by the life-span of the given planet. No planet lasts for ever. Its sun expires sooner or later, & eventually the very material substance of its system—& galaxy—& universe—disintegrates into its constituent electrons & leaves only an "empty" field of force (out of which another universe is later born). We have no means of predicting what the future of organic life on the earth will be—whether the human race can find a way to resume the evolution which slowed up about 100,000 years ago, whether it will remain dominant at its present level, or whether it will be superseded in its dominance by another form of life—probably of the insect order, which shows signs of being better adapted than the mammalia to the varying conditions of this planet.

Now as to the distribution of life in the cosmos—it is plain that just one thing determines how widely protoplasm can occur: i. e., the number of *cool, solid planets* throughout space. We can no longer dispute the independent existence of protoplasm on different worlds, since *vegetation* on Mars has been well authenticated by direct visual &

photographic evidence. The question then boils down to this: how many cool, solid worlds are likely to exist at any one time in the cosmos? Up to a decade or a decade & a half ago it was commonly thought that such worlds are virtually unlimited—i. e., that a large number of stars possess planetary systems like the sun's. Recently, however, the mathematical calculations of Jeans & Eddington have very gravely challenged that concept, & have tended to indicate that a planet-system represents a kind of celestial accident of relatively rare occurrence. The number of planets existing at any one time, then, is perhaps very limited. Furthermore—of those planets, only a few are likely to possess the special conditions needed to sustain life & raise it to any substantial degree of evolution. There must be heat—a temperature between certain maxima & minima; there must be oxygen in certain proportions; there must be carbon in assimilable forms; there must be water or water-vapour; there must be an atmosphere of adequate density & without gases antagonistic to life; & so on. This brings down still further the possible number of life-bearing planets at any one time. I think Eddington has ventured the guess that (granting the finite Einsteinian space-time continuum) the cosmos may possess about *six* worlds with highly-developed life at any one time. In our solar system, no planet but the earth is likely to possess complexly-evolved organisms at the present moment. But of course, counting the "dimension" of *time,* the number of inhabited worlds in the cosmos becomes infinite. It may be added that the Jeans-Eddington doctrine of the scarcity of planetary systems is not *universally* accepted—though it is certainly the *prevailing* present belief. One of its chief opponents is Prof. Dinsmore Alter of the U. of Kansas, who has a very ingenious alternative theory of planetary formation. In any case we may hold it extremely unlikely that highly-developed life is anything peculiar to the earth. . . . . .

Most cordially yrs
HPL

779. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
April 27, 1935

Dear Miss Moore:—

. . . . . .

For sustained magic and subtle colour it is hard to touch Klarkash-Ton, High-Priest of Night's Tsathoggua. Poet—artist—fantaisiste—nobody else has yet produced such an exhaustless and exuberant stream of rich, maturely polished fantasy of every sort. I am sure you will find the contents of *The Double Shadow* highly impressive. My favourite items are *The Maze of the Enchanter, The Double Shadow,* and *A Night in Malnéant.* Has Barlow ever lent you any volumes of C. A. S.'s poems—especially *Ebony and Crystal,* with the stupendous *Hashish-Eater?* If not, ask him—or me—to do so. C. A. S. the poet would be a revelation to those who know only C. A. S. the fictioneer. Glad you have seen some of his drawings—which are like nothing else on earth . . . . except the efforts of his admiring imitators. They certainly are diabolically well-adapted to haunting the couch of fever!

. . . . . .

Another weird artist—and perhaps the most technically advanced of all—is Howard Wandrei, brother of Donald and author of many good stories of his own. His work is in a totally different vein from Klarkash-Ton's and Barlow's—in the tradition of Sime and Harry Clarke.

Yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
E'ch-Pi-El.

780. TO ROBERT BLOCH

Providence, R. I.
April 30, 1935

To Whom it May Concern:

This is to certify that Robert Bloch, Esq., of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A.—reincarnation of Mijnheer Ludvig Prinn, author of DE VERMIS MYSTERIIS—is fully authorised to portray, murder, annihilate, disintegrate, transfigure, metamorphose or otherwise manhandle the undersigned in the tale entitled THE SHAMBLER FROM THE STARS.

(Signed) H. P. Lovecraft

Attest: Abdul Alhazred
Gaspard du Nord
(Translator, *Le Livre d'Eibon*)

Friedrich von Junzt
(Author: *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*)
Tcho-Tcho Lama of Leng

781. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

May, 1935

Dear Miss Moore:—

. . There's nobody quite like good old Klarkash-Ton! *The Star-Treader* includes C. A. S.'s early poems—written at and before the age of seventeen. It is just as remarkable as *Ebony and Crystal,* even though it does not contain any such *tour de force* as *The Hashish Eater.*

. . . . . .

Yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
E'ch-Pi-El.

782. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

May, 1935

Dear Miss Moore:—

It takes some time to realize that there are actually *two* worlds of literary endeavor—as far apart as the poles in essence and motive, despite occasional outward resemblances and certain fortuitous overlappings. One is the realm of sincere aesthetic expression—the saying of what the author actually has to say in the best possible way, regardless of audience or commercial results. To this world belong all the figures in standard literature—and such practitioners of fantasy as Blackwood, Machen, etc. This is the only world which I can take seriously, and don't see why any genuine artist should bother with any other if he has any honest means of obtaining the essentials of food, clothing, shelter, warmth, and a civilised environment apart from the sacrifice of his talents. The other world is the realm of "popular" writing—not the saying of what one has to say oneself, but the saying of what a callow, under-educated public wants to hear, and therefore of what commercial editors will pay for. This latter world—or underworld —is of course simply a matter of gauging low-grade popular psychology and mechanically following the pitifully few and childishly unreal and over-simplified formulae which suit that psychology in such matters as plot, incidents, atmosphere, assured values, and characters. It is easy to distinguish a typical popular product from a typical work of literature—for there are always the damning stock properties—bold, handsome hero, fair maid, adventure, conflict, good-and-evil values, etc. etc. etc. to mark it out. The real work of literature, on the other hand, is likely to have few or none of these. In the weird field, a *genuine* story is more likely than not to consist simply of a pageant of baffling shadows seen—without conflict—by some kind, obscure, middle-aged householder. The "hero" of such a story is never a *person* but always a *phenomenon* or *condition*—the "punch" or climax is not what *happens to anybody,* but *the realization that some condition contrary to actual law as we understand it has (fictionally) had a brief moment of existence.* For the object of weird fiction is purely and simply emotional release—a highly specialized form of emotional release for the very small group of people whose active and restless imaginations revolt

against the relentless tyranny of time, space, and natural law. It must, if it is to be authentic art, form primarily *the crystallization or symbolization of a definite human mood—not* the attempted delineation of *events,* since the "events" involved are of course largely fictitious and impossible. These events should figure *secondarily—atmosphere* being first. All real art must somehow be connected with *truth,* and in the case of weird art the emphasis must fall upon the one factor representing truth—certainly not the events (!!!) but *the mood of intense and fruitless human aspiration typified by the pretended overturning of cosmic laws and the pretended transcending of possible human experience.*

But I digress. The gist of the matter is that a following of popular vandals—the sort of thing represented by the pulp-magazines who cluster fawningly around them, not only *does not help* a genuine literary aspirant, but actually *harms* him to a small degree by leading him in the wrong direction. The laws of one world cannot operate successfully in another world—and anyone seeking commercial success of the Merritt/Edgar Wallace/Bedford-Jones/R. W. Chambers/*Saturday Evening Post* type, must bid farewell to the hope of succeeding in the sincere field of Poe, Hawthorne, Coleridge, Blackwood and Machen. . . .

This, though, is not to say that sincere work is one hundred percent unremunerative and unacceptable to popular editors—or even necessarily unpopular with the herd. As you see, Poe and Blackwood and Dunsany *have* managed to get into professional print, while even the miserable pulps print some of Clark Ashton Smith's and the late Henry S. Whitehead's sincere work. . . The fields overlap, and it is quite possible for a genuine artist to become a popular idol as well—if *by chance* his work, (or part of his work) coincides with something the stupid rabble are gaping for. The important thing is simply for the author to retain his artistic integrity—to think only of sincere expression and ignore the herd and the hope of profit. Then, if profit and popularity come to him *incidentally.* all very well. *That* will not hurt his genius. He will not make as much money, or be such a darling of the proletariat and petite-bourgeoisie as if he had chosen the popular road of Mammon; but he will have saved his own personality and enriched literature with an artist who would otherwise have been sacrificed.

Yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
E'ch-Pi-El.

783. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Caverns of K'n-yan
(May 11, 1935)

O Ten-Thousandth Incarnation of Garoth!

. . . . . .

. . I had a very vivid dream fragment only last night—perhaps in part derived from that extremely clever plot idea outlined toward the end of your letter. You speak of a cranium containing, in place of a brain, a curious metal device—implying that the latter is either an alien or conscious entity itself, or else a sort of receiving set by which remote *outside* entities can control the body in which it is planted. Well—in my dream I was, while walking in a familiar rural region, suddenly attacked by a swarm of swift-darting insects from the sky. They were tiny and streamlined, and seemed able to pierce my cranium and enter my brain as if their substance were not strictly material. No sooner had they entered my head than my *identity and position* seemed to become very doubtful. I *remembered* alien and incredible scenes—crags and pinnacles lit by violet suns, fantastic piles of cyclopean masonry, varicoloured fungous vegetation, half-shapeless forms lumbering across illimitable plains, bizarre tiers or waterfalls, topless stone cylinders scaled by rope ladders like ships' ratlines, labyrinthine corridors and geometrically frescoed rooms, curious gardens with unrecognisable plants, robed, amorphous beings speaking in non-vocal pipings—and innumerable incidents of vague nature and indefinite outcome. Just where I was, I could not be certain—but there was a powerful sense of *infinite distance,* and of complete alienage to the earth and to the human race. Nothing actually happened at any time—and I *realised* I was dreaming considerably before I actually awakened. Upon rising I made a note of the dream in my Black Book (whose present edition you so assiduously started)—and some day I may employ either that or your unadulterated version in a story. Thanks for the idea—whether or not it caused the dream!

As for whether a weird story must—or even should—have a denoue-

ment—I am, in my retired and reflective old age, inclined to think negatively. It is a tempting trick, but essentially artificial and mechanical. Indeed—all formal *plot* in the sense praised and demanded by conventional commercial editors is basically inartistic. A weird story, to be a serious aesthetic effort, must form primarily a *picture of a mood*—and such a picture certainly does not call for any clever jack-in-the-box fillip. There *are* weird stories which more or less conform to this description .... especially in Blackwood's *Incredible Adventures*. But the temptation to introduce theatrical artificiality is so strong—and the insistence of cheap editors so great—that not many pure studies in the sense of unreality manage to get before the public. Too damn bad—but tragically true!

.....

Yrs. by the Litany of Thoth—
HPL

784. TO MR. BANTZ

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
May 16, 1935

Dear Mr. Bantz:—

Regarding American political parties—I think they are all obsolete today, in view of the new conditions brought about by the almost simultaneous development of two basic changes in human life—the application to industry of the mechanical technique of swift and easy duplication with a minimum of human labour, and the collapse of several philosophic illusions traditionally favouring certain false values and unconsciously barbaric methods. The Republican philosophy (which is, incidentally—with its Whig and Federalist antecedents—that of my own family) strikes one as being least adaptable to the needs of the future because of its bland trust in certain laissez-faire economic principles no longer operative and never more than approximate. The Democrats, through their willingness to experiment, are a shade less im-

possible—but the only sort of government with any effective future will have to savour largely of socialism and fascism. Most of the younger thinkers are going over to Marxian communism—but to me this represents a tragic waste of traditional values . . . a medicine which kills more than it cures. In these latter years I have an increasing regard for the social opinions of the La Follette group in your own state.

. . . . . .

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft.

785. TO WILLIAM FREDERICK ANGER

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
May 19, 1935

Dear An-Ghan:—

. . . . Yes, others have thought it odd that one born in the midst of a famous sea-food region should have such a detestation of marine products—but actuality has nothing to do with neat consistency. Rhode Island clams & clambakes are celebrated the world over—& when our friend the Peacock Sultan was here in old Juggernaut in 1933 I introduced him to a typical clam dinner in a quaint fishing village near Providence down the west shore of the bay. Narragansett Bay is likewise famed for oysters. . . .

Yrs most cordially
E'ch-Pi-El

786. TO WOODBURN HARRIS

May 19, 1935

Dear Harris:—

. . . . . .

. . . . The real job is to educate the herd to accept some system other than unsupervised capitalism. They won't accept it now—look at what happened to Sinclair! They've got to see one half-way measure after another fail, until they get it through their thick heads that *only government ownership of large industries, on a non-profit basis,* will give them any fixed assurance of steady work and decent living conditions. Even now I think they realise that *laissez-faire* capitalism is dead. They seem largely uninfluenced by even the loudest of Republican wailings and ululations. They know that nothing but governmental control of industry will ever restore to every man the likelihood of getting a job . . . which is quite a grasping-feat for the herd mind. One more step, and they'll realise that private profit probably can't or won't stand the strain of governmental control—which means of course that private profit must go, since governmental allocation of labouring opportunities is an obvious future necessity. By the time this is realised, the people will be really ready to elect a leftist administration with open and intelligent socialistic aims. But that's a long way from the barbarism and ignorance and false science and grotesquely inverted values of the orthodox Marxian communists. Intelligent socialism involves no such crazy gesture as exalting factory hands at the expense of high-grade planners. As before, simple work will command modest pay while high-grade service will command substantial pay. The world need not be turned upside down. What will disappear will be the vast private accumulations which do no one any good, the waste of resources in unearned profits, and the barbarous and criminal practice of leaving employment uncertain and dependent on the accidental profits of transactions whose object is not public service.

This, of course, isn't a *prophecy.* It is only a *possibility.* Nobody knows what will really happen, since all sorts of imperceptible and unforeseen factors may in the end prove the pivotal and decisive ones. When I speak of *sober evolution* I don't necessarily mean a thoroughly

tranquil and parliamentary process. All sorts of coups d'etat, local riots, fascist marches, etc. etc. may be involved. Even a moderate revolution like those in Spain and South America would not be outside the category. But anything within sane limits can be called "sober evolution" as distinguished from the savage and destructive extravagance and stultifying fallacies of bolshevism. However—don't get me wrong. I merely say that I think evolution has a good chance . . . not that it is in any way certain. If necessary changes are too slow in coming, and if Republican madness and criminality hold up relief to any marked extent, there's no telling what may happen in the way of an hysterical explosion. I'd hate to see bolshevism come—but there are limits to the extent of my surprisedness in the event of such a disaster. After all—the Dark Ages did come, even though civilisation did its best to keep alive amidst the chaos of alien impacts and destructive philosophies.

. . . . . .

Future events undecided . . . though there's a distinct possibility that I shall visit Barlow again in De Land after he returns thither from Washington in June. Going to Florida for the summer seems as bad as Cook's going to Vermont or New Hampshire for the winter—but there's really no time of year that I don't prefer a subtropical environment with its genial and dependable warmth, its live-oaks, and its (to me) peculiarly invigorating atmosphere. Naturally, if the project turns out well, I hope to pause in Charleston, St. Augustine, and other favourite spots of mine.

Well—*On māne padre on!*

—Ech-Pi-El

TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Elder Pharos—Hour of the
Monstrous Beam
(May 24, 1935)

Chief Apprentice of Maal Dweb:—

Having no particular interest in the subject of sex save as one of a hundred social and aesthetic problems (and a vastly less important one right now, than those connected with economics) of civilisation, I

would be the last to choose an Havelock-Ellisian line of argument as an evening's diversion—whilst as to religion, I am content to let anyone believe what he likes so long as he does not try to meddle with my own beliefs. I never recall starting a religious—or erotic—discussion, and I am by no means disposed to encourage the growth of such (except, of course, when some scientific and disinterested thinker shews a keen wish to examine in a serious way various cultural and philosophical difficulties involving one or both of these factors) even when others launch or attempt to launch them. Assuming that experience has taught you an equally non-aggressive attitude, the possible sources of a free fight are considerably whittled down! As one whose chief interests are antiquarianism, architecture, history, the 18th century, scenery, fantasy, and various phases of art and literature, I certainly feel no urge to launch lecture courses on anthropological and philosophical subjects. The world is so full of varied interests, that conversation doesn't suffer badly through the elimination of a few.

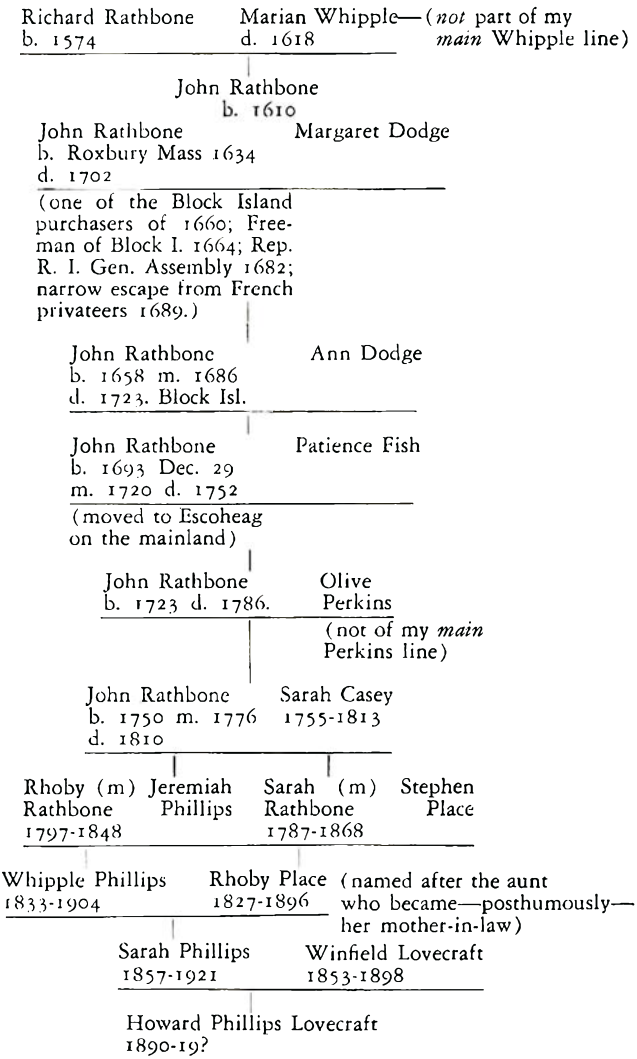
I don't see why you dislike your name, or any of the ordinary abbreviations, colloquialisations, or diminutives of it. There's no name in all the Western European nomenclatural tradition with more dignity and euphony, or with a better lineage and better set of historic exemplifications .... Robert Bruce, King Robert of Sicily, Robert le Diable, Robert, Earl of Huntingdon (Robin Hood), Robert Burton, Robert Herrick, Robert Adam, Robert Burns, Robert W. Chambers (think of *The Yellow Sign!*), Robert E. Howard, Robert Southey, Robert Browning, Robert Treat, Robert E. Lee, Robert M. La Follette, Robert Hichens, Robert Flud, Robert Walpole, Robert Peel, Robert Morris, Robert G. Ingersoll, Robert Briffault, Robert M. Coates, Robert Fulton, Robert Cecil, Robert Southwell, Robert Owen, Robert Greene, Charles Robert Darwin, Robert Buchanan, Robert Bridges, Robert of Normandy, Robert B. Thomas, Robert Mantell, Robert Frost, Robert of Gloucester, Robert of Anjou, Robert, Marquis of Salisbury, Robert Schumann, Robert Louis Stevenson, Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, Robert Mills, Robert, Earl of Leicester, Capt. Robert Gray, Robert Loveman (SL's late poet-cousin of Georgia), Robert Fitzsimmons, Robert Sully, Robert Feld, Robert Livingston, Robert Nathan, Robert Morse Lovett, Robert Bloch (to give you a young contemporary), Robert Moe (just for good measure), Robert Maynard Hutchins, Robert McBride (not to forget a fellow-publisher—and the publisher of your beloved Jim Cabell at

that!), Robert H. Davis (who accepted *The Moon Pool*), Robert Underwood Johnson, Robert Boyle, Robert Emmett, Robert Barr, Robert Bloomfield, Robert Tannahill, Robert C. Benchley (you're fond of flippant humour), Count Robert de Montesquieu (if you like decadent rascals), Robert Lowth, Robert Grant, Robert Foulis (you admire great printers), Robert Fabyan, Robert Fergusson, Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, Robert, Lord Castlereagh, Robert, Lord Clive, Sir Robert Cotton (book collector), Robert Baillie, Sir Robert Ball, Robert Barclay, Robert Bellarmino, Adm. Robert Blake, Robert Planquette (*Chimes of Normandy*), Robert Koch, Robert Raikes, Robert Houdin, Robert Fellowes, Robert Pollock, Robert, Lord Liverpool, Robert Brown, Robert Bunsen, Robert Toombs, Robert Y. Hayne, &c. &c. &c.—Hell's Bells, but what kind of a gawdamighty are you that these guys ain't good enough company for ya? Incidentally—in idly reflecting on my correspondence list the other day, I discovered that the praenomenon most numerously represented is none other than *Robert*—Barlow, Bloch, Howard, Moe, Nelson. Even counting out the very casual Nelson, the name still leads. The incident of your mother's having to look your name up in the paper is certainly a rare bit for your future biographer! Perhaps you *are* a misprint for Rathbone or Richard or Robbins or something-or-other Barlow! Well—cheer up! There aren't many names out of which nicknames and diminutives can't be made—Jim, Nick, Charlie, Jack, Joe, Will, Noll, Pete, Ned, Ed, Dick, Walt, Dave, Ben, Tony, Sam, Alec, Sandy, Jerry, Frank, Art, Alf, Chet, Hal, Archie, Ken, Rod, Tom, Hughie, &c. . . . and when a chap has a sort of abbreviation-proof name like your brother's—or like George, Clark, Earl, Dean, &c—he generally goes through life as "Bud" or "Fatty" or "Spike" or "Doc" or some similar invention of the sportive undergraduate spirit. "Howard" isn't much for nicking, but I've been "Lovey" (and haven't especially relished it) in my day .... largely before my entrance to high school. In high school I was not generally nicknamed, though a few fellows began calling me "Professor" after they found out I wrote astronomical articles. Fortunately, most people aren't very particular about what they're called, so long as there's no insult or derogation in the title. Nowadays I'm not only indifferent to modes of address, but really can't recall without effort just what this or that person habitually calls me! What are your preferences? "Mr. Barlow"? Good old Jim Morton would have hard work understanding your phobic distaste for

abbreviations and diminutives . . . he may be a white-haired curator, but he's still complacently "Jim" to the bulk of his friends! As for the origin of my "Howard"—I fancy it formed a sort of vague outgrowth of parallel thought-streams. To begin with, the name had become very popular in the late 19th century—just as certain other surnames had gained a wide prevalence as praenomina in the period just preceding. (Herbert, Byron, Elmer, Chauncey, Orville, Wilbur, &c. &c.) It probably owed its vogue to the aristocratic aura attending the Fitz-Alan Howards—the family of the Duke of Norfolk. You remember Pope's couplet, no doubt—

> "What can ennoble Sots, or Slaves, or Cowards?
> Alas! not all of the Blood of all the Howards."

It was around 1860 that the use of this surname as a first name began to grow frequent. By 1890 it was a fashion—and that fashion persisted far into the 1900's, as witness the younger Wandrei. Today I rather think it is on the wane. I was never fond of the name, since I preferred *real* praenomina like John, James, William, Henry, &c. In America, however, surnames have always been popular—from colonial times down. *Cotton* Mather, *Bushrod* Washington, &c. My grandfather (b. 1833) was *Whipple* Phillips . . . after his paternal grandmother's family. Well—another reason for the "Howard" was that a boy in a neighbourhood family, well liked by my family, was named that. Still another reason was that the name had a geographical and ancestral-in-law connexion with my maternal line . . . . my grandfather's aunt being the wife of Judge Daniel Howard of Howard Hill (on which are that burned-down Phillips homestead cellar and family burying-ground which I recently spoke of) in Foster, R. I. Clarke Howard Johnson of that line (toward the end of his life Chief Justice of the R. I. Supreme Court) was my grandfather's best friend and executor of his will. I have no Howard blood, but there are remote cousins of mine (whom I don't know) who bear the surname and inherit the cells of that clan. This vague association with Howardism no doubt played its part in determining what monicker to saddle on the helpless arrival of 1890. Incidentally—one of the Foster *Howards* who came to Providence around 1830 changed his name to *Hayward* for no reason that I can ascertain. He later became a Mayor of Providence. Speaking of quasi-genealogical matters—I've been meaning to shoot you a sketch of my *Rathbone* line so that you can see just where you hitch on. Here goes.



Pardon the confused, space-saving form. As you see, I have a *double* dose of Rathbone (and Casey) blood because *two* of the daughters of John R. (1750-1810) are great-grandmothers of mine. Sarah's daughter married Rhoby's son—from which union my mother was born. To see where *you* come in, watch the early Block Island

Johns. The 1634 one has several sons besides my ancestor (Thos. 1657, John 1658, William 1661, Joseph 1670, Samuel 1672). The 1658-1723 John had 8 children (Mercy 1688, Jonathan 1691, John 1693, Joshua 1696, Benjamin 1701, Ann 1703, Nathaniel 1708, Thomas 1709). I can't seem to find a record of the children of the 1693-1752 John—but the 1723-1786 one had (by 2 wives) the following: John 1750, Rowland, Jonathan, Hannah, Betsey, Charity, Thomas, and Olive. In the official genealogy (by John C. Cooley) at the Hist. Soc. I could probably find more. Anyhow, your line hooks on here somewhere. By the way—are you any sort of kin to the Connecticut poet and diplomat Joel Barlow (1755-1812), whose 18th centuryish *Columbiad* (1808) and mock-heroic *Hasty-Pudding* (1793) have always been favorite verses of mine? If so, the enclosed cutting (which please return) will probably be of interest to you. Joel, like you, was a Washingtonian for a time—and the name of his country-seat "Kalorama" has left its impress on D. C. nomenclature. He surely was quite a boy—fighting with the rebel army during college (Dartmouth, 1788) vacations, studying law, editing a paper, writing verse, dabbling in trade, living in London and Paris, acting as consul in the Barbary States, becoming American minister to France in 1811, and dying of pulmonary inflammation in Poland while on his way to confer with Napoleon. A great tribe, the Barlovii! Some of Joel's couplets are quite graphic in their description of American climate—

> "Where Spring's coy steps in cold Canadia stray,
> And joyless seasons hold unequal sway"
> (he might have said *Novanglia!*)
> . . . "But warmer suns, that south zones emblaze,
> A cool thin umbrage o'er their woodland raise;
> Florida's shores their blooms around him spread,
> And Georgian hills erect their shady head;
> Whose flow'ring shrubs regale the passing air
> With all th' untasted fragrance of the year."

Yes, Sir—your cousin Joel could write! His *Hasty-Pudding* is a classic which time can never efface. And now they've found Joel's grave!

. . . . . .

Yrs. by the Eyeless Slug of Pnath—
HPL

788. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

May 29, 1935

Dear Malik:—

. . . . .

But tell Nimrod to be on his guard against evil spells . . . . for lo! The second of his fleece-white brethren has now vanished into ethereal space! I sadly told you about the evaporation of the sturdy and alabaster Doodlebug at the Villa Barlovia last winter. Now the curse has crossed the continent and attacked the Kappa Alpha Tau's stronghold in Asotin, Wash! For alas, young Rimel's marble-hued Crom has floated out of his tri-dimensional world into some forbidden realm of the 4th Axis! What hidden enemy is at work against our clan? Perchance it is this continent-spawning Malevolence which Nimrod battles by night! Well—I trust the teeth and talons of this last and mightiest of the Sons of Snow may prove victorious! Death to all oppressors and enemies of the K. A. T.!

. . . . A plausible idea is a plausible idea—and it doesn't make a damn's worth of difference whether or not it has ever formed part of an actual mythological fabric. The fact is, I rather prefer *purely original* weird concepts as opposed to those derived from genuine folklore. Authentic folk-beliefs are likely to be insipid, ill-proportioned, freakish, and in general far less aesthetically effective than concepts formed by an author with a specific artistic purpose in mind. Quinn makes me tired with his dragged-in encyclopaedia-scrapings.

Ever yr. most obt. hble. Servt.—
Abdul Alhazred

789. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Quinsnicket Woods—6 m. N.
of Providence; May 29, 1935

Hail to the Lord Ghu!

. . . Raindrops . . . but the sky shews a light rim near the horizon which impels me to take a chance and stay . . . for a moment. No—too much sprinkling. Have moved down into the piny valley toward the east. Am on a great rock beneath thick evergreen shade. Now let it rain (up to a certain limit) and be damn'd. This section of the wood is really primeval. Indians and 17th century colonists have seen these giant firs. There are houses as old as 1670 and 1687 within a mile of here. Rain increases—but what the hell? Insect life is manifest—but that's a good preparation for Cassia. . . .

Started pouring—with thunder and lightning—and my pine shelter proved inadequate. Have now sought a summer-house near the road—where I'd have gone before if I'd been wise. As it is, I'm quite a bit irrigated—though I have on a seedy grey suit (1925) which needed pressing anyhow, so lamentations are limited. Also, my straw hat is a primal relique warped from prior inundations. Seems to be getting lighter now, so that I may get back to town without further damage. . .

See you the 9th or later—Yrs. for the Crimson Ray—

HPL

790. TO EMIL PETAJA

66 College St.
May 31, 1935

Dear Petaja:—

Regarding popular myths & supernatural reports in general—there is certainly no reason to believe in any parallel order of existence apart from that whose tentatively recognised units we call electrons, protons, neutrons, &c.—while the notion of *consciousness or personality* apart

from the infinitely complex material structure of which such qualities are a delicate specialised product is simply grotesque & infantile. There is really no evidence whatever to the contrary—since religious tradition is obviously a blind emotional heritage from ages of ignorance & fantastic speculation, while the marvels claimed by spiritualists & kindred dupes & fakirs constitute folklore syntheses of a type pretty well accounted for by anthropologists & psychologists—men who study & analyse (a) the multiform & surprising capacities of the human mind for hallucination & (intentional or unintentional) self-delusion; (b) the apparently fixed mania of certain mental types for spreading supernatural belief & inventing (often consciously & elaborately) supposed evidences of it; & (c) the universal phenomenon of myth-making & myth-diffusion through the multiple repetition (with distortions, accretions, & re-colourings at each stage) of some fragment of observation or narration either real or false. In accounting for persistent popular myths—& occult "evidences" as investigated & set forth by men like Flammarion & Chevreuil—one can reckon several varieties of types according to different principles of classification. Division into understood or solved examples & baffling or unsolved examples means little, since we know from past experience that even the most baffling mysteries always turn out—when finally solved—to involve only the material, non-dualistic physical principles with which we are familiar. However—judging from the vast number of solved examples we can attempt a fairly significant classification which undoubtedly applies to both solved & unsolved examples. Thus of all the incredible marvels reported in folklore, oral anecdotes, religious writings, press reports, scientific studies, &c., &c., virtually every one would probably turn out to belong in one (or *more,* since there are curious compounds & mixtures in legendry) of the following categories: (a) actual event produced by unknown natural principle or principles (rare); (b) erroneous or magnified account of some actual event; (c) hallucination or other psychological source, either total or based on some objective nucleus; (d) intentional deception; (e) psychopathic deception; (f) folklore synthesis whereby an "event" *which never happened* becomes accepted as reality & embroidered by repetition, or whereby some trifling circumstance, allegory, or personification of natural forces or phenomena sets off a train of typical folklore accretions, (variant of (b) except that in this case the accretions are likely to be of a standardised type based on

popular mythology. There are certain *standard stories* invented before the dawn of history or later, which endless generations whisper about, repeat in new settings, & fasten to contemporary events. When one comes upon such a stock story—man changed to animal, diseases miraculously cured, poltergeist effects, food indefinitely multiplied, rapping on table, man snatched up to paradise, apparition of distant dying relative, virgin birth, vampire, dead man moving, ghost, premonitory warning of death, &c., &c.—one can be sure that the report containing it is merely a repetition of old lore); & (g) repetition of some work of fiction as supposed fact (cf. Machen's *The Bowmen* . . . angels of Mons.)

In 1924-26 I did a good deal of revisory work for the late magician & exposer of spiritual fakes—Houdini—& he had tremendously interesting & important things to say about the origin of certain typical myths from *absolute fiction.* Take the well-known tales of Hindoo fakirs—the man who throws a rope up straight into the sky & has a boy climb up & out of sight on it, or the one who puts a boy in a wicker basket, has spectators run swords through it, & then has the boy clamber out unhurt. Up to recent times these things were attributed to the *collective hypnotism* of the crowd by the magician. There were frequent stories of people who smuggled cameras to such demonstrations, obtaining pictures of the magician in which none of the apparent phenomena shewed—even though the visual effect on the living audience was perfect. Well—Houdini went into this matter pretty exhaustively, & *found that no first-hand report of such a performance could ever be secured.* Dozens of people "had it straight from an eye-witness"—*but no real eye-witness could ever, during a long course of years, be located.* The inference is obvious. These extreme feats of the fakirs *have never been performed.* They constitute a well-defined type of folk myth—something everybody believes has occurred, but which has in truth never occurred. Even to this day one can find serious statements of the old "mass hypnotism" theory—but the investigations of Houdini tell their own story. Incidentally—the growth of the *camera* myth, as above outlined, is an even more vivid specimen of synthetic folklore without base—doubly vivid because of its conspicuous *recency.*

Assorted marvels like those in the eccentric books of Charles Fort are not hard to account for. Fort scraped up all sorts of press anecdotes of a certain type—which in turn were typical misstatements, misinterpre

tations, exaggerations, & distortions of actually observed things, or else hallucinations or fabrications. Track down any one of them to its reported place of occurrence, & the marvel evaporates. Unusual atmospheric effects, natural phenomena like the "fairy crosses" of western Virginia, optical & chemical properties of dust storms & kindred things these are the real sources of much of the Fort data. Another fruitful source is conscious press sensationalism—the kind of hokum peddled by the flamboyant *American Weekly* (of which A. Merritt is asso. ed.!) of the Hearst rags. It ought to be significant that no genuine man of science has ever taken Fort seriously.

About those Heald stories—bless my soul, but there's no theft involved! Mrs. Heald is one of my revision clients, & I've been paid for every one of them. They are really my own stories—"ghost-written", as the phrase goes. I put in all that artificial mythology myself—since Smith & Howard & I like to have our synthetic demons popularised by wide use. Such use tends to give them a convincing air of actual mythological standing. I've also put Yog-Sothoth & Tsathoggua in yarns ghost-written for Adolphe de Castro, & have encouraged other writers (Derleth, Long, Bloch, Wandrei, &c.) to use them. Smith constantly mentions my gods & I constantly mention his.

Yrs most cordially & sincerely
HPL

TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
June 2, 1935.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . Under separate cover I am sending the Nov. *FF*, which you mentioned lacking. If you will—after a final inventory—let me have a list of *all* the numbers in your files, I'll see how well I can complete the set. I'll lend the *Recluse* as soon as my copy is returned. Don't worry about the juvenile literature cuttings—there are so many excellent features of the sort that one series can well be

endured in incomplete form! The *Galleon* with my sonnet *Background* came some time ago. My prose sketch *The Quest of Iranon* (1921) will appear in the next issue. . . . . .

As for politics, economics, & sociology—I fancy that in Washington (as, for other reasons, in N. Y. City) one gets somewhat over emphasised pictures of existing tensities & future crises. One is in the midst of legislation & debate—the struggles of partisans, the turmoil of special interests, & the ramifications of rumour—& thus hears extreme estimates & oratorical prophecies which exaggerate the magnitude of coming changes. Actually, I don't think any violent European system like bolshevism or Nazism has even a chance to get started. No substantial group in England or America either wants what such systems offer, or believes the assumptions on which they are based. Changes will come —but in America they will come from native & agricultural sources rather than from the European radicals of our eastern cities. The northwest—Olsen in Minnesota & the La Follettes in Wisconsin—is worth studying as a possible source of American political & economic development. Here we see the problems of a mechanised nation discussed by people of essentially the same sort as those who established the national tradition centuries ago—cautious farmers, villagers, & small-town men of north-European Aryan ancestry & settled institutions. They know as well as the swarthy-faced Jewish & Italian agitators of the east that the old *laissez-faire* system can't last—but unlike those swarthy aliens, they have no sympathy with schemes which would destroy their familiar adjustment (an adjustment essentially akin to that of all old-Americans) to the general customs of the past. And of course it is clear that these native Nordic liberals vastly outnumber the hook-nosed & olive-skinned Marxists of the Eastern seaboard. Northwestern Farmer-Labour elements, Wisconsin Progressives, Corn-Belt followers of Milo Reno, California experimenters, Coughlinites, & even Huey Long partisans are all regular Americans with regular American wishes regarding the future. They may be ignorant & inept, & may do some fearful bungling before they force the reluctant plutocrats to yield to the necessary extent; but not for a moment would they sanction the aesthetic heritage destruction preached by the bolshevik fringe. With this element active & increasingly well-organised, one has very little of a cataclysmic nature to fear from the popular so-called "radicalism" of America. Things may become rather inconvenient for the wealthy commercialist—but that

isn't much to worry over as compared with the extremes found in Europe & Asia. If little things are symbols of larger attitudes, a significant story is conveyed by the sartorial habits of victorious radicals in Russia & England or America. In Russia the leaders cry out not only against the *economics* of aristocracy but against its very *costume*. Thus Stalin & other executives wear workmen's blouses on all occasions. In England, on the other hand, a Labourite elected to Parliament generally adopts the top hat & morning coat of his older colleagues from the gentry. We have an instinct for the *continuity of custom* which central & eastern Europeans lack. Even Huey Long—despite some weird extremes of sportiness—at least keeps shaved & wears clean collars!

The present so-called "spring" is surely one of the tardiest I can remember—& yet I had one good two-day outing a month ago, when genial weather felicitously coincided with a visiting & exploring session. The occasion was that of the second visit of young Robert Moe—whose early March visit I described in a previous letter. As before, he came in his 1928 Ford—& once more we managed to keep that vehicle busy.

The guest arrived on the morning of Saturday, April 27, & we at once started out to visit venerable Newport. We went by way of Fall River to avoid the heavy tolls of the Mt. Hope Bridge, & followed the east road down the island of Aquidneck to our destination. En route we stopped to photograph a highly idyllic scene—an ancient windmill atop a grassy knoll, with farm buildings, stone walls, & a flock of sheep nearby. I enclose a print. Before entering the city proper we visited "Whitehall" (1729), where the famous philosopher Berkeley lived during his brief but memorable new world sojourn. Also saw the Hanging Rocks where Berkeley used to sit reading, writing, or meditating—& the great rock cleft called "Purgatory", where the sea pounds thunderously in. Entering Newport on the side opposite to that encountered in a boat trip, we visited the great cliffs & descended the celebrated "40 steps" to the water. Then—at last—the ancient town—with 1698 Quaker meeting-house, 1726 Anglican church, 1739 Colony-house, 1749 library, 1760 Market house, 1763 Jews' Synagogue, & private dwellings as old as 1675. It was a glorious hot day—up to 82° in Providence, though not quite so good in Newport. On the return trip—made over the west road in the twilight—we saw the ancient Overing house, where in 1777 a small rowboat party of rebels made a prisoner of Genl. Prescott of His Majesty's regulars. Also saw another

of the ancient windmills for which the island is famous. It is the lack of vigorous water-power which made flat lands like Holland, Nantucket, Cape Cod, Long Island, & this island of Aquidneck or Rhode Island (from which the whole colony eventually took its name) take so completely to windmills.

Sunday the 28th we went to ancient New Bedford—Nantucket's successor as the world's great whaling centre, whose last lone exemplar of the industry put to sea only 11 or 12 years ago. The marine museum was closed—but after a tour of Johnnycake Hill (with the Seamen's Bethel & Mariners' Home mentioned in *Moby Dick*) & the centuried waterfront we set off southward to sample something still better. This was the Round Hills estate of Col. E. H. R. Green (son of the celebrated financier & miser Helty Green) in South Dartmouth, where the old whaling barque *Charles W. Morgan* (built 1841) is preserved at a realistic-looking wharf—but solidly embedded in concrete as a permanent exhibit. We went all over the vessel—which is tremendously fascinating—& snapped some pictures of it. That is, Moe snapped several, & I snapped one. I enclose a print of the latter. Also on the Green estate is an ancient windmill moved from Rhode-Island. We then explored a region—where southern Mass. adjoins southeastern R. I.—which I had never seen before in my life. Splendid unspoiled countryside with rambling stone walls & idyllic white-steepled villages of the old New England type. Of the latter the two best specimens—Adamsville & Little Compton Commons—are both in Rhode Island. Adamsville contains the world's only known monument to a *hen*—perpetuating the fame of the Rhode Island Red, a breed evolved in that village from East Indian & Chinese gallinaceous forbears. At Little Compton Commons can be found the home & grave of Elizabeth Alden Pabodie—daughter of the famed John Alden & Priscilla Mullins of Plymouth, & first white woman born in New England. This region was once the seat of the Sakonnet Indians—whose squaw-sachem Awashonks was persuaded by the noted old warrior Capt. Benjamin Church not to join King Philip's conspiracy in 1675. It was settled from Plymouth around 1673, & (like Barrington, Warren, & Bristol) came into the Massachusetts-Bay in 1691 & into Rhode-Island (when a boundary dispute was settled by H. M. George II) in 1747. Capt. Church lies buried not far from Little Compton Commons. Well—at last we turned north through Tiverton, where on our left we had some marvellous vistas of

low-lying fields & blue water. Here we passed the home of the navigator Capt. Robert Gray, who in 1792 discovered the Columbia River in the far-off Oregon country—naming it after his staunch Rhode-Island brig. Then back home via Fall River (an ugly mill city across the line in Massachusetts) & ancient Warren . . . at which latter place we paused at the famous Maxfield's (a rendezvous of Morton, Cook, & other visitors of mine) for a dinner consisting entirely of ice cream—a pint & a half each. (6 varieties—Moe: chocolate, coffee, caramel, banana, pistachio, ginger. HPL: chocolate, coffee, caramel, banana, lemon, strawberry.) Finally back to #66—after which I regretfully guided the guest out of town on his way to Bridgeport, & took a 4-mile rural & suburban walk before returning home. Quite a session, all in all! I am enclosing the principal snapshots which I took during the proceedings. You may keep them if they are of any permanent interest.

The next week-end—May 3-4-5—I visited Edward H. Cole in the Boston zone, but cold weather seriously interfered with our sight-seeing. We did, however, explore many byways of ancient & perennially fascinating Marblehead. That forms the entire list of major outings to date. This is no climate for outdoor life!

. . . . . Have just learned with sorrow that *another* row of ancient buildings in this vicinity is about to feel the vandal's hand. You probably recall my rage at the destruction of the S. Water St. warehouses (1816) in 1929. This time the scene of devastation is College St., itself—the doomed row being that huddle of quaint houses & archways reaching from Benefit St. downward to the foot of the hill—on the same (north) side as the court leading to #66, but beginning ¾ of a block lower down. Included in the cataclysm are the house of the first president of Brown (1771), a fine 1750 specimen, & one of those rare old archways leading under parts of a building to inner courtyards . . . . of which the only perfect survivors in America are those on Providence's ancient hill. (There is a bricked-up specimen in Richmond, & a boarded-up specimen in Philadelphia). On this site will ascend the new main building of the R. I. School of Design. Two palliating & consoling factors exist: (a) the preservation, restoration, & incorporation into the new building of the bottom (& only brick) house of the ancient row—the old Franklin House, with its quaint inn-yard archway. Thus the survival of *one* of the archways is assured. And (b) the choice of a splendid Providence-Georgian design for the new edifice.

The structure's lower units will harmonise with the surviving Franklin House, while the upper units will blend in pattern with the residential buildings up on the hill. One part will even have a "monitor roof' like #66—a form especially typical of Providence in the



1790-1810 period. The architect is F. Ellis Jackson, who also designed the new Providence-Georgian court house (1928-1933) across the street from the proposed structure. The change is regrettable, yet it is fortunate that the character of the new building will be the same. Obviously, Providence is remaining dominantly true to its traditional Georgian heritage, & avoiding the "modernistic" epidemic from which even Boston is not quite immune.

On May 25 I had an interesting visit from young Charles D. Hornig, erstwhile editor of the *Fantasy Fan*. He is a very prepossessing youth—pleasant & intelligent—& seemed to appreciate the archaic charm of venerable Providence. I shewed him most of the historic high spots—including the hidden churchyard on the ancient hill, which I have probably described in previous epistles.

With all good wishes—

Yrs most cordially & sincerely—
HPLovecraft

792. TO MR. BANTZ

Charleston, S. C.
June 8, 1935

Dear Mr. Bantz:—

Just now—as I sit in the sun on Charleston's Battery, I am being pestered by dozens of coal-black pickaninnies of the average age of eight, who want (a) to dance a jig for my benefit in exchange for a penny, and (b) to black my already-blacked boots. Dey des nochally ca'n't un'erstan' wha de genmum ruther write letters than improve his personal appearance or advance his choreographic education! Damn hard little wasps to shoo off—but one doesn't want to be cross with them. . . . . .

Every good wish: Yrs. most cordially,: H. P. Lovecraft

793. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Deserted Mosque of Yoth-Kedar
in the tropic jungle of Zhun
June 19, 1935

Dear Malik:—

. . . .

All is much the same at Villa Barlovia, save that the household is larger now through the presence at home of Bob's father (Lt. Col. E. D. Barlow, retired) and elder brother (Lt. Wayne Barlow of Ft. Sam Houston, Tex.). . . Monday we rowed for miles on Black Water Creek—a stream so tropical in appearance that it might well have been the Congo or the Amazon. It made me think of the river which flows from Silver Springs, Fla.—which I described to you last year. . . It is hard to convey the massed effect of a scene like this—though of course you've seen more of 'em than I have, and need no descriptive text. The black, silent glassy river with its cryptic bends—the monstrously tall cypresses with their festoons of moss—the twisted roots clawing at the water—the ghastly, leaning palms—the riot of underbrush, vines, and creepers—the black, dank earth—the grotesque sunken logs—the muted, sinister, scarcely identifiable sounds of forest and water—the evilly beckoning vistas and funereal arcades among the towering trees of the wood—the fungous, leprous flowers that have never felt full sunlight . . . . everything to suggest some exotic world of fantasy in which one would not be surprised to see the crumbling, aeon-decayed, moss-grown masonry of one of Two-Gun Bob's forgotten jungle ruins. On the whole, I got a bigger kick out of this trip than out of the one last year, since on that occasion the boat was a launch which moved too rapidly for the kind of appreciative absorption I like to exercise. This time we had a lowly and primitive rowboat, and I drank my fill of tropical colour without haste or harassing. . . .

Peace—
Abdul Alhazred

794. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

c/o R. H. Barlow
Box 88
De Land, Florida
June 28, 1935

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

. . . . . Mrs. Heald is a revision client of mine, & all her *W. T.* material is virtually written by me (like Adolphe de Castro's tales, Mrs. Reed's *Curse of Yig,* &c.). I am now, however, cutting out as much of this "ghost-writing" as possible—since it involves too much exhausting labour in proportion to the returns. It is amusing that Wright accepts many of my "ghost-written" tales while rejecting my signed work. . . . . .

Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

795. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

c/o R. H. Barlow
Box 88
De Land, Florida
July 2, 1935

Dear Miss Moore:—

. . . *The Picture in the House* expresses my feeling of horror at the curious air of mystery and alienage which pervades certain backwoods New England houses I have seen. Many people wonder why I don't exploit the traditional element of weirdness in the South—the brooding cypress swamps, the mouldering plantation-houses, the whispered negro lore, etc. etc. The fact is, however, that I can't feel the same deep, Gothic horror in any mild and genial region that I can in the rock-strewn, ice-bound, elm-shaded hillsides of my own New England.

To me, whatever is *cold* is sinister, and whatever is warm is wholesome and life-giving ..... an echo, no doubt, of my own tropic-loving constitution. *The Rats in the Walls* was suggested by a very commonplace incident—the cracking of wall-paper late at nights, and the chain of imaginings resulting from it. As for the *languages* represented in the atavistic passage—I don't recall including *Sanscrit,* though I did lift a sentence of *Celtic* (of which I know not a single word) from another story, *The Sin-Eater,* by "Fiona Macleod" (William Sharp). This sentence, incidentally, was what brought me into correspondence with Robert E. Howard. It was—since I swiped it from a Scottish story—a *Gaelic* specimen, whereas of course the Celtic language of southern Britain was *Cymric.* R. E. H.—as an expert Celtic antiquarian—noticed the discrepancy, and thought I had adopted a minority theory that a Gaelic wave had preceded the coming of the Cymri to Britannia. He wrote Wright on the subject and Wright forwarded the letter to me—whereupon I felt obliged to drop a line to the mighty Conan exposing my own ignorance and confessing to my rather inept borrowing.

.....

Another thing that always interested me was De Quincey's recurrent opium-dream in which the words Consul Romanus (more impressive to him than "King" or "Emperor") were constantly repeated, whilst there "came sweeping by, in gorgeous paludaments, Paullus or Marius, girt around by a company of centurions, with the crimson tunic hoisted on a spear, and followed by the alalagmos of the Roman legions." This interests me the more because, without the aid of the poppy, I have always had very curious Roman dreams—invariably laid in some western *Province* rather than in Italy itself (though *I* am always—unlike my waking self—a native Roman of the old hawk-nosed, broad-templed Italic stock ... Latian, Sabine, Samnite, Oscan ..), and with myself generally a minor civil or military official. The *detail* and apparent duration of some of these dreams is exceedingly singular—and their life-like vividness is impossible to exaggerate. Perhaps the most vivid of all occurred late in October 1927, when I dreamed I was a provincial quaestor in Hispania Citerior—at some time vaguely placeable as late in the republican age .... say B. C. sixty or seventy. The dream seemed to cover three days in continuous succession, and had a terrific nightmare ending. ..... I woke up—as thoroughly scared as I had ever been in my life or ever have been since. Not long after-

ward I wrote up the entire dream in some detail in the course of a letter to Long—and it impressed him so much that he asked permission to incorporate it into a story he was then writing. I let him do it—and the completed narrative (*The Horror from the Hills—Weird Tales* Jan. and Feb. 1931) contains my epistolary account in the original wording ... put into the mouth of a character. .....

Yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
E'ch-Pi-El.

796. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

c/o Barlow, Box 88,
De Land, Florida.
July 9, 1935.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... We continue to have a splendid time down here, & I am profiting enormously by the warm climate .... feeling prodigiously better than I ever do in the north. Bob's brother Wayne has returned to his duties as 2nd Lieutenant at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, & his genial presence is missed. There is, however, still plenty to do. Bob's cabin across the lake is virtually finished, & last week I cut a roadway from the landing to the cabinward path. This edifice is ideally located in a picturesque oak grove—not the live-oak of the south, but the old-fashioned, traditional oak of the north & of Old England. On this account I am tentatively calling the place *Druid Grove* (without any intention of infringing on Baltimore's *Druid Hill*)—& Bob seems inclined to accept the designation. The press, desk, & other Barlowian accessories are now moved over, & work on the first printing project is begun. This consists of a thin book of Frank Belknap Long's poems—those excluded from *A Man from Genoa* or written since—which we intend to issue secretly & present to the gifted author as an *absolute surprise.* We shall call the volume *The Goblin Tower*—after one of the poems included in it. Later on Bob aims to publish an amateur magazine of high quality—connected with the National Amateur Press Association. (An interesting nation-wide organisation

which I believe I have mentioned to you before.) Eventually Cyrus & Darius—together with their young master—will probably move across to the cabin—so that Bob will come to the house only for his meals. But all that is in the future. . . . . .

The duration of my visit still remains indefinite. I never saw a household as super-hospitable as the Barlows, & each suggestion for departure that I make is promptly vetoed. At present it looks as if I might stay across the line into August.

. . . . . Our friend Clark Ashton Smith (whose poems you have seen) has recently taken up a new hobby –that of *sculptural carving* in talc, rhyolite, *dinosaur bone* (a deposit of which exists near his home in Auburn, Calif.), & other appropriate materials. Specimens sent to Bob & me are really impressive. The technique of this *carving* is wholly different from that of the *modelling* in which Bob so brilliantly excels.

. . . . . .

Yr most obt hble Servt
HPLovecraft

797. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

c/o R. H. Barlow
Box 88, De Land, Fla.
July 11, 1935

Dear R E H:—

. . . . . .

Regarding the matter of police procedure—it seems that I still fail to make myself clear. At least, you cite certain implied comparisons which would attribute to me an attitude far from that which is really mine. I see that you used the term "sadism" only metaphorically—but your idea of what I endorse and approve is certainly much beside the facts. When you speak of 4 or 5 brawny men beating and stamping on a lone woman you speak of something which did not, so far as I know, figure in the discussion. What I *did* endorse was simply the necessary measures taken to quell or curb a vicious organised mob in the interest

of public safety and order. This does not involve anything truly brutal or aggressive—being essentially *defensive* in nature. Your picture of a savage attack on a defenceless lady does not represent anything in connexion with what I mean. All that I said was that when a mob plants women amongst its ranks, the resisters of that mob cannot alter their general plan of campaign—which may or may not include the use of clubs or firearms—merely because of exceptions to the masculine personnel of the enemy. Any impartial observer can see that this is an absolutely different thing from any real "brutality toward women". The whole matter is *impersonal*—a general plan is devised to keep certain ground clear of certain elements—and the plan is carried through with a practical team-work which does not and cannot stop for individual discriminations. The chances are that the mob is 90 or 95% masculine, anyhow. If it isn't the amazons who allow themselves to be planted among its ranks know what to expect before they start in. Nobody tries to take advantage of whatever weakness they may have. Nobody, indeed, thinks of any individuals. It's all a mathematical routine matter of necessity, and the actors in it play their parts pretty much as automata —as all disciplined fighters and police have to do in cases of collective action. As I said before, this sort of necessity has nothing to do with personal standards in individual cases, and does not mean that the policemen in question are any more "brutal" toward men or women or children—than anybody else. You'll have to admit that you only hurt any case which you may have, when you imply that I approve of the massacre of women and children (or of men, for that matter)—as you do in connexion with the procedure of Gen. Santa Ana. As I have said dozens of times before, I don't approve of *any* massacres .... of any persons of any age or of either sex. What I approve of is simply *the enforcement of order* .... with as little damage to anybody as is consistent with the attainment of the given object. To argue, from this attitude on my part, that I approve of the deliberate maltreatment of women and children (or of men), and that I have a contempt for any conqueror who abstains from such maltreatment, is simply to abandon reason and true argument altogether and to take flight into the realm of sheer fantasy. Another definitely false comparison is that implied in your assumption that I belittle acts of daring or sacrifice when the defence of women and children is concerned. Here again there is no relationship between the attitude assumed and any belief of mine. I

said that the elaborate forms and ideology of chivalry are artificial growths—which they undoubtedly are. But this did not imply (a) that all acts in defence of the weak are parts of artificial chivalry, or (b) that even the more moderate acts and attitudes of artificial chivalry are without a definite aesthetic and potential social value. On the other hand, I tried to make it clear that acts of courtesy and forbearance in accordance with the traditional code are to be encouraged whenever they do not conflict with the general welfare. That is, a sacrifice in defence of a woman or child is an undeniably beautiful and admirable thing when only the personal fortunes of the sacrificer are at stake. The time when the aesthetic rules break down is *when the sacrifice entails harm to the whole community.* It is noble to die as an individual in defence of one's grandmother . . . . but it not only is not noble but actually criminal to imperil the public safety by leaving a dangerous mob unchecked merely because a few brawny viragoes chance to be in it. To argue that this attitude implies an endorsement of Ben Butler, or some similar needless affronter of women, is simply to disregard the facts. Incidentally, a close examination of the habits of your favourite barbarians in treating the feminine population of conquered towns would not bear out your contention that only civilised men are ungallant. What any orderly policeman has ever done to a fighting communist wench is mild as compared with what the Goths, Gauls, Vikings, and other "noble savages" did to the helpless women of their beaten foes. Chivalry and barbarism don't agree!

. . . . . .

Glad you liked *Out of the Aeons*—which gives von Junzt's Black Book a bit more publicity. Your recent two-part story was splendidly vivid—in fact, all your recent work has dominated the issues of *W T* in which it has appeared. No question but that you and Clark Ashton Smith are the twin pillars of the institution. I've written nothing since *The Shadow out of Time,* and am still uncertain about that. Wright's non-receptive attitude does not encourage composition on my part. Glad you're finding new markets for adventure material—though it would be a tragedy indeed if no more of your fantastic tales were to appear!

. . . . . .

Well—as my Charleston bulletin apprised you—the southern trip *did* materialise despite all misgivings. Barlow got home June 3d, and I started on Wednesday the 5th. As I guess I told you, I cut out N. Y.

and Washington and made my first stop in ancient Fredericksburg—then straight down to my beloved Charleston. The moment I struck the steady heat of the Carolina low country I became stronger and more active—indeed, this southern trip has caused me to feel really *well* and comfortable for the first time in 1935. My sleep actually *rests* me as it never does in the north. Sooner or later I'll have to move down here permanently. Had 2 days in Charleston, then down to De Land via Savannah and Jacksonville. . . .

As for general doings—we read, write letters, classify books, set type on sundry printing projects, explore the country, do revisory work when necessary, and in general follow the programme of last year's visit. Bob has built a cabin across the lake (I helped him), to which—for the sake of seclusion—he transferred his press, desk, and various accessories as soon as it was ready for occupancy. . . On June 17 we visited a fascinating place—Black Water Creek, a tropical river whose lush scenery suggests the Congo, Amazon, and other exotic streams famed in history and legend. It winds through a steaming jungle of tall, moss-draped cypresses, whose grotesque, twisted roots writhe curiously at the water's edge. Palms lean precariously over the brink, and vines and creepers strew the black, dank earth of the bordering forest aisles. Sinister sunken logs loom up at various points, and in the forest pallid flowers and leprous fungi gleam whitely through a perpetual twilight. It is much like the river at Silver Springs of which I wrote you last year—though I enjoyed it even more because of the more leisurely observing conditions. At Silver Springs I was whizzed ahead in a launch; this time we (Bob, Wayne and I) went along slowly in a row-boat. Each bend of the tortuous stream brought to light some unexpected vista of tropical luxuriance, and we absorbed the spectacle to the full. Snakes and alligators were somewhat in evidence—though none came near our boat. I hope for more trips of this kind, since I am especially sensitive to the beauty of subtropical scenery. Doubtless all this sort of thing is more or less familiar to you through your acquaintance with the rivers, swamps, and bayous of East Texas and Louisiana—but to a northerner it is a fascinating revelation. . . .

. . . . I remain Yrs. most truly,
H P L

798. TO JAMES F. MORTON

c/o R. H. Barlow
Box 88
De Land, Fla.
July 21, 1935

Dauntless Disciple of Drastick Denudation:—

. . . .

As for the duration of the visit—so insistent is the super-hospitality of the Barlovii that I'm damn'd if I know whether I'm a guest or a prisoner! Every time I try to speak of a getaway, the household makes me feel that I'd be practicing croolty to children by leaving little Bobby to a grandfatherless monotony . . . . indeed, the latest plea is *that I stay down all winter.* This I really would hate to do, since I am lost without my books and files and familiar home things after a certain length of time. I shall have to find a tactful way of breaking loose before the north gets hellish with autumn— for it would wreck me to plunge out of this earthly paradise into the viciousness of a northern September or October.

Yrs. for clothes and less activism—
Theobaldus Perkins.

799. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

c/o Barlow
Box 88
De Land, Florida
August 3, 1935

Dear Malik:—

. . . . .

. . As I write these lines I am in very congenial K. A. T. company myself—for small tiger Alfred A. Knopf is ensconced in the curve of my left arm as I sit on a bench in the landscape garden . . . . occasionally chewing the edge of your letter, and occasionally reaching forth a

sportive paw to pat the moving Parker which indites this document. A black dog is hustling around near by, but Mr. Knopf is the object of my especial interest. I agree thoroughly with your crew as to the relative civilisedness of felidae and canidae. During the whole of a long lifetime I have been an unswerving and almost fanatical Khatist. . .

Yr. obt. Servt.—
Abdul Alhazred

800. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

c/o Barlow, Box 88,
De Land, Florida
August 7, 1935

Dear Ar-I-Ech:—

. . . . . .

. . . . I share your sentiments about the propriety of knowing the history and traditions of any region one lives in or travels through. If I knew nothing of the background of a region, I couldn't enjoy being there at all. Every time I take a trip I read up as extensively as possible on the places I'm going to see—so that when I get there, each site and object will have some meaning for me. I can't understand a traveller like the Illinoian you encountered—although I see such people daily. It is amusing how little most of the people around here know of Florida history—even after years and decades of continuous residence. If I ever made a southwestern trip, the first thing I'd do would be to get out my file of your letters and go over the magnificent historical epics here and there imbedded in them.

. . . .

. . It is a pity when a fine old town becomes self-conscious and exhibitionistic—laying on extra touches of pseudo-quaintness and attracting crowds of tourists, vacationists, and artistic pretenders. All too many of the East's ancient towns have suffered from this malady—Rockport, Marblehead, Provincetown, Nantucket, and St. Augustine being typical examples. But if such a town still preserves its old buildings and street

lines in unspoiled condition it cannot help being fascinating—no matter how badly cluttered up with "studios" and "gift shoppes" and other intrusive excrescences it may be. One can always capture something of the old charm by visiting it out of season—or threading the venerable lanes at odd hours when the tourists and pseudo-artists aren't about. Santa Fe, I imagine, must be much like this—a sort of western edition of St. Augustine. . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . Back in Providence my little black friend Johnny Perkins is getting to be a formidable fighting man—menacing the peace of the quiet Elders of the Kappa Alpha Tau. He can put old Pres. Randall to flight just by arching his back and hissing—but valiant Mr. Osterberg is less easily daunted. Johnny has a little white-and-black sister now—but she will probably be given away as soon as she is able to leave the maternal bosom. I'll certainly be glad to see Mr. Perkins on my return. My aunt says he comes to call quite frequently—curling up and purring in his favourite chair.

. . . . . .

Yrs. most cordially—
E'ch-Pi-El

TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

c/o Barlow, Box 88,
De Land, Florida
August 15, 1935.

Dear Helen:—

. . . . . The newer generation has grown away from me, whilst the older is so fossilised as to form very meagre material for argument or conversation. In everything—philosophy, politics, aesthetics, & interpretation of the sciences—I find myself more & more alone on an island, with an atmosphere almost of hostility gathering around me. With youth, all the possibilities of glamour & adventurous expectancy departed—leaving me stranded on a shelf with nothing to look forward to. Most distinctly, the picture is not an idyllic one & I'd scarcely wish my worst enemy the fate of being no better

off than I am. It might be said that I am just about two inches from the suicide level—among that vast majority for whom existence is the *barest shade* preferable to non-existence. But of course that bare shade makes a vast amount of difference. What keeps me alive is the ability to look back to the past & imagine I am still in 1902 or 1903. Of all my dreams, about 0.8 are of that period—with myself in short trousers & at the old home, with my mother, grandfather, black cat Nigger-Man, &c. still alive. Thus the world of the early 1900's still exists for me in about a third of the hours of my lonely life. As long as I can retain the books & pictures & furniture & accessories of those days, as I still do, I have something to live for. When I no longer can, I shall move to that lot in Swan Point Cemetery which is reserved for me. Meanwhile, of course, I certainly *do* get a lot of pleasure from books, travel (when I *can* travel), philosophy, the arts, history, antiquarianism, scenery, the sciences, & so on .... & from such poor attempts in the way of aesthetic creation (= fantastic fiction) as I can kid myself into thinking I can sometimes achieve. The reason I have been more *melancholy* than usual in the last few years is that I am coming to distrust more & more the value of the material I produce. Adverse criticism has of late vastly undermined my confidence in my literary powers. And so it goes. Decidedly, Grandpa is not one of those beaming old gentlemen who radiate cheer wherever they go! However—I *do* escape the pits of genuine & extreme melancholy through a rational analysis of my situation —whereby I realise that my lot is no worse than the average, that there is no reason to think that it could have been better, & that there is nothing in particular to be done about it. My absence of acute happiness is in the main a direct result of my own limitations. My natural temperament, & lack of special intellectual & aesthetic abilities & personal graces—not the "evil" or "injustice" of the world around me—is largely responsible for the impasse in which my declining years find me. Other elements were contributed by *sheer* chance—but nowhere does human or cosmic malignancy figure. To be *bitter* or *resentful* over something for which only nature & chance are responsible, would be the apex of folly & irrationality. Who can be *angry* when there is no guiding consciousness to be *angry* at? Everything is just as blind & uncontrollable cosmic chance determines it. Therefore I simply say "Oh, what the hell" .... & let things muddle along as they will .... meanwhile trying to make the most of what meagre endowments, environ-

mental advantages, & intellectual, aesthetic, & antiquarian interests I happen to have at my disposal. I couldn't help matters by brooding on the fact that some others are more happily situated. What's that to me? The happiness of *others* needn't make *me* any the more miserable! So I forego the unsocialistic luxury of mourning, & simply have as good a time as I can with the existing set-up. And at that, it isn't so bad. I'm no pining & picturesque victim of melancholy's romantic ravages. I merely shrug my shoulders, recognise the inevitable, let the world march past, & vegetate along as painlessly as possible. I suppose I'm a damned sight better off than millions. There are dozens of things I can actually enjoy.

But the point is, that I'm probably *a thousand times worse off than you are* . . . so that in preaching resignation & contentment I'm not in the false position of a fortunate prophet lecturing a real victim of misfortune. The gist of my "sermon" is that if analysis & philosophy can make *me* tolerably resigned, it *certainly* ought to produce even better results with one not nearly so gravely handicapped. You have youth, genuine artistic genius, attractiveness, competence, adaptability, versatility, & solid prospects in general. I have none of these. So if *I* am able to tell the world to go to hell & then continue along in endurable mediocrity, you surely—with so many more advantages—ought to be able to work out a tolerable corresponding adjustment. Of course all forms of resignation are more difficult in youth than in unhoping age but with a truly philosophic attitude a *beginning* can be made at almost any stage of life. When I was young I was of course more restless than I am now. I had more to hope for, & was constantly reaching out & getting disappointed. But even then I realised the element of blind drift in life, & the rarity of human happiness—so that I always placed as little stress as possible on transitory ambitions, & sought to lay the foundations of life in objective contemplation & the enjoyment of the visible external world. A deeply-seated determination to attain resignation & tolerable contentment with little is a vast aid in bringing about such attainment. Take things as they come—remember that happiness is a rare accident attained by few—expect little—learn to enjoy the small & usual things encountered along the way . . . those are the back rules for gaining whatever of contentment the average person can gain.

Before concluding, however, I must not fail to point out that no young person ever need exclude the vague *hope* (not to be confounded

with positive *expectation*) of a future beyond the average in felicity. In your case—with so much talent, grace, & competence—the foundations for such a hope would seem to be distinctly less insubstantial than in the majority of cases. A transfer of environment—or some new element in the environment of Averoigne—might easily alter matters to such an extent that you would encounter degrees of happiness at present virtually unimaginable. So—as a final homiletic word from garrulous & sententious old age—for Tsathoggua's sake cheer up! Things aren't as bad as they seem—& even if your highest ambitions are never fulfilled, you will undoubtedly find enough cheering things along the road to make existence worth enduring. Sometimes hopes (as of my shutting up, as I promised to, half-way down sheet VI,1!) prove delusive—but even allowing for these false alarms, the residue of life is not often so bad as to warrant despondency & melancholy. In my own case, it would take the loss of my books & household possessions to make me bump myself off. You, with so much more to live for, certainly ought to be a vastly longer way from the gas-jet or laudanum phial! That is, assuming you are still alive after these 14 solid pages of concentrated bull & high-tension hot air! Yuggoth . . . but how does the old man hold out after such a paralysing fusillade! If the last epistle was held 2 weeks before perusal, this one will probably take an equally long fortnight to wade through—assuming that my increasingly vile cacography makes such wading at all possible. . . . . .

Yr obt Servt
E'ch-Pi-El

802. TO JAMES F. MORTON

San Augustin
19 de Augusto

Fulgent Frequenter of Frozen Fastnesses:—

. . . .

By the way—on August 14th at eight p.m. I beheld a phenomenon which, though I had always known of it from books, I had never seen before in the course of a long lifetime. No one else present had ever seen it before either—although the company included persons up to the

age of sixty-six. I refer to a lunar rainbow—a clear, complete bow in the northwestern sky opposite the rising full moon. Bob claimed he could detect *colours* in it—especially red on the outer edge—though to me it appear'd of an uniform grayness—faint tho' distinct. Having beheld two total solar eclipses and now a lunar rainbow, I feel myself quite a connoisseur of odd phenomena! The moon is a great sight down here—rising beyond the grotesque pines which border the lake, and being reflected picturesquely in the latter's glassy surface.

. . . .

Yr. obt.—
Θεοβάλδος Πέρκινς

803. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Ancient San Augustin—
August 21, 1935

Hail, Mighty Malik:—

About your idea of collaboration with all proceeds to go into a California trip for Grandpa in case of sale—bless my soul, but I can't say how much I appreciate the generosity of the idea! You quite overwhelm an old man! Actually, though, you ought not to put so much constructive labour into anything with so doubtful a return. In the first place, the synthetic product probably wouldn't sell—since anything that *I* could do to a story would merely *unfit* it for the commercial pulp market. And in the second place, if by any miracle it *did* sell, it would be a pity to have a mere visit from an uninteresting old crank take the place of the quarter or half share (depending on the amount of material put in) which ought to be yours. I have grave doubts of whether any foundation-plot or synopsis of the pulp order would increase the chances of commercial acceptance of anything I might write. Such a foundation would form a proper starting-point *only for a story written in the same spirit and technique.* A building-up of *my* sort would only clash with such a start. The start would be handicapped by the story, and the story would be handicapped by the start. You can't make a good alloy of concrete and iron . . . . or hatch a hen from a duck's egg! Of course, exceptions occur now and then. If the idea were of a not too pulpish

sort, and if I happened to tackle it in a particularly objective mood, the result might assume a salable form. But your own development of your idea, or a story of mine from an idea of my own, would probably be much more effective. *Your* story would, in addition, be more commercially salable. Whatever I touch, I make *less* pulpishly acceptable. Well—think over all the drawbacks before being too definite. I might be tempted to try the thing some time—but not unless you realise all the handicaps involved. It goes without saying that I'd give a lot to see the Californian domain so vividly brought to life by your travelogues and accompanying maps!

Yrs. for the Litany of Eblis—
Abdul Alhazred

804. TO MISS HELEN V. SULLY

Lynn, Mass.
Septr. 23, 1935

Dear Helen:—

I am really tremendously sorry to learn of the death of Klarkash-Ton's mother—for no matter how long-expected it was, & how much it may lessen the complications of his position, it must necessarily be a blow of disorganising magnitude. Whenever such a link with early days is broken—such a focus of childhood memories & tender associations removed—a certain amount of irreparable *loss* occurs. Having sustained a similar bereavement in 1921—& one nearly like it in 1932 when my elder aunt died—I can sympathise very acutely with CAS . . . & have dropped him a line to that effect. The blow must be hard on the elder Smith, also—especially since his own health is so infirm. But of course in the long run—considering the misery of a feeble & shock-impaired existence—I presume that the event is a merciful one. No doubt the change will to some extent lessen the prevailing strain on Indian Hill—though the care of his father alone will probably keep CAS busy enough. The entire situation is a profoundly melancholy one, though no remedy save time & fate seems to suggest itself. One wonders what plans Klarkash-Ton will make when he is wholly alone—whether he will continue as a hermit of the hills, or whether he will seek urban

quarters & acquire a greater gregariousness & mobility. Perhaps the pattern of isolation is so firmly fixed in his psychology that—in view of his settled age—he will not care for any expansion of life & activities. But in any case he will probably have more leisure & quiet for his literary career. His productivity—even now amazingly great in view of obstacles—may be expected to reach tremendous proportions—in prose, poetry, painting, & sculpture alike. I can only hope that finances may not prove an acute problem with him, & that his health may hold out reasonably well. I am passing word of the bereavement on to E. Hoffmann Price in case he has not been directly notified—as I was not.

. . . . . .

Regarding matters philosophical—I hope that my preceding epistle did not sound too unrelievedly pessimistic. I am not a *pessimist,* but merely a realistic *indifferentist.* It is just as childishly romantic to postulate an actively hostile & malignant cosmos, as Thomas Hardy did, as to postulate a friendly, "just", & beneficent one. The truth is that the cosmos is blind & unconscious—not giving a hang about any of its denizens, nor even knowing that they exist. It doesn't try to pain them any more than it tries to help or please them—& if any of them can manage to have a good time somehow, in spite of the chaotic jumble of conditions & emotions around & within them, that's quite all right with the universal powers that be. I tried to make it clear in my harangue that the *blind chance* of a happy adjustment to nature—a chance sometimes able to be slightly augmented by good judgment—is never wholly lacking for one who is young, brilliant, & of pleasing personality. Anyone so blessed by fortune *may* through some rare chance attain moments of felicity at least roughly comparable to those depicted in romantic folklore—but such moments are not to be counted on or expected in any average existence. It is not, however, necessary to banish the theoretical hope of such things. When one is young, it is still possible to retain this hope as a sort of piquant stimulus. One *may* have good luck in life, just as one *may* fall heir to a fortune or back the right horse in a race. Not that any happiness is actually as keen as what romanticists depict & expect—but that there is, in a moderate way & in very rare quantity, such a thing. As long as the belief in this tenuous chance continues to be a help, it is to be encouraged. This optimism becomes harmful & undesirable only when carried to illogical & romantic extremes, & made the basis of delusive & extravagant expecta-

tions productive of error, maladjustment & nerve-wracking disillusionment. It would seem to be the part of good sense to harbour great hopes in a sort of light, indefinite way—extracting from them whatever bracing power their imaginative associations may possess, but keeping also in mind the ineluctable natural laws & probabilities which actually prevail. Naturally such a course is for many difficult; but almost anyone can probably—with suitable efforts & the exercise of coherent logic—approach it in a degree sufficient to remove at least some of the pains & shocks of unrestrained romanticism. In any case it is worth trying.

As to the part played by individual bias—aptitudes arising from specific personal experiences & difficulties—in the tenure & exposition of a philosophical, social, political, aesthetic, or scientific attitude, one must admit that it always tends to be considerable. The distorting effects of this tendency are escaped only in cases where the individual's chief personal emotion happens to be an enormous zeal for the intrinsic, abstract principles of order, truth, rhythm, & correlation, or else a paramount interest in the aesthetics of racial or general intellectual adjustment as expressed in the constant drama of collective human aspiration & frustration—or, of course, a special interest in some particular field whose strength drowns out the normal tug of egocentric emotions so far as that field is concerned. Since such cases of generalised personal emotion—or of drowned-out egocentric emotions—are so relatively uncommon, it follows that most of our policy & scholarship are indeed an ironic mixture of feeble truth-groping & unconscious personal bias. I would not make even a slight exception of *politics;* for when we behold the irrational ravings of smug capitalists & vindictive communists alike, we cannot but see that a blind, mindless clutching at immediate personal advantage—or an equally blind & mindless reflection of personal experience & background—lies behind the infantile view & fanatical zeal of both. Most lofty catchwords such as "human equality", "liberty", "defence of the constitution", "ideals of the fathers", "lights of mankind", &c. &c. &c. spring merely from the ape-like greed or fear or caprice or prejudice of ignorant, self-deluded, & clumsily rationalising egoists. So far as my own opinions are concerned—I have & can have no idea of how much part personal bias plays in them. There are, however, a few circumstances which can be cited in favour of their at least partial impersonalism. For one thing—I have held the same opinions in many cases despite great changes of actual situation in fields con-

nected with them, whilst in other cases I have radically changed my opinions without any corresponding change in situation. Furthermore—to cite a specific case—from the earliest times, & under the most widely differing conditions, I have always had a strong abstract interest in the situation & interactions of man as a whole, & in the question of human values & standards . . . their basis, strength, validity, fixity or variability, & psychological nature! Thus my attention to the subject of values & philosophic adjustment contains a strong element of active, personality-free, scientific curiosity which tends to stand apart from personal escape-psychology & rationalisation.

. . . . . .

Yr obt hble Servt
HPL

805. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Home—
Septr. 28, 1935

Dear Malik:—

. . . I have always preferred to use established folklore legends as little as possible, and see no reason to change my opinion. The weird artist should invent his own fantastic violations of natural law. Of course the growing body of genuine weird writing—Poe, Dunsany, Blackwood, Shiel, de la Mare, Machen, M. R. James, Wakefield, Benson, Hodgson, Ewers, etc., etc.—does narrow the field in a subtle way; just as the growing body of general literature makes it harder and harder for the realist or non-weird romanticist to say anything new. That is one of the inevitable aesthetic hardships of an aging civilisation. But this slow, vague narrowing has nothing to do with the sharp, definite exhaustion of the pulp formula field which deals with standardised ghosts, werewolves, and vampires. There is always a chance for the serious artist in weird literature. . . .

Peace of the Prophet upon you—
Abdul Alhazred

806. TO DUANE RIMEL

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Sept. 28, 1935

Dear Rhi'-Mhel:—

Price's letter interests me tremendously, and I feel sure there is much in what he says regarding the playing-out of commercial weird fiction. All the stock plots certainly have been worked into the ground, and all the actual folklore myths are done to death. Quinn alone has run the gamut of popular superstitions. Thus the task of finding a fresh theme is made vastly difficult for any weird writer *who depends on plot and incident* . . . . that is, for any writer working in the common pulp tradition. The sincere artist, however, is certainly not quite so badly driven to the wall. A *really serious* weird story does not depend on plot or incident at all, but puts all its emphasis on *mood* or *atmosphere*. What it sets out to be is simply *a picture of a mood,* and if it weaves the elements of suggestion with sufficient skill, it matters relatively little what fictitious events the mood is based on. Of course, the more obviously worn-out clichés (in *method* even more than in *subject-matter*) had better be avoided—but a true master of atmosphere and suggestion can do wonders with even the commonest sort of theme. It is well to avoid actually recognised myths such as vampirism, reincarnation, etc., and invent one's own obscure violations of cosmic law. What common myth, for example, does Blackwood use in *The Willows?* Or Chambers in *The Yellow Sign?* Or Hodgson in *The House on the Borderland?* These writers create a sort of distinctive awe of their own and manage to say something fresh despite all that has been said before. (Of course Wright would probably reject any such original stuff—but that's what makes good weird fiction!) Naturally it is not always easy to achieve such distinctive expression. Individual writers burn out now and then, and it is harder and harder to be original (though not even comparably as hard as in pulp formula fiction) as the bulk of weird literature grows . . . covering every sort of typical weird mood in human nature.

But there is always *a chance* for new material—or at least convincingly fresh material—as there is not in the field of hackneyed "plot and action" fiction. As for *me* in particular—I'm pretty well burned out in the lines I've been following . . . that's why I'm experimenting around for new ways to capture the moods I wish to depict. Price, I think, is a little premature in saying that my newer tales all concentrate on weird aspects of human character. He gets that idea from *The Thing on the Doorstep,* which he liked especially, but this story is not by any means typical of my whole output. It is only one of many *experiments*—each different from the other. *The Shadow out of Time,* for example, is nothing at all like this—being a straight *phenomenon* story close to the borders of science-fiction. *Nothing* is really "typical" of my efforts at this stage. I'm simply casting about for better ways to crystallise and capture certain strong impressions (involving the elements of *time, the unknown, cause and effect, fear, scenic and architectural beauty,* and other seemingly ill-assorted things) which persist in clamouring for expression. Perhaps the case is hopeless—that is, I may be experimenting in the wrong medium altogether. It may be that poetry instead of fiction is the only effective vehicle to put such expression across. But the only real way to find out is to try. At any rate, the point is that while the commonplace commercial weird field is certainly wearing thin, there is *always* plenty of scope for the sincere artist who has something weird to say in his own way. . . . . .

About that composite story—my section does *not* conclude it. It is a five-author affair, in the following order: Moore, Merritt, HPL, Two-Gun Bob, Frank B. Long. My section was probably the most difficult, since I had to plan out the general rationale and plot of the whole thing. All that Miss Moore and Abie did was to sketch out the background and plaster on atmosphere. There was no *story* up to the point where I was expected to begin, and at that stage (the third instalment out of five—i.e., the *central* section) it was imperative that somebody start something and give an idea of what it was all about. I fear I made a mess of it. The assignment reached me just as I was leaving St. Augustine, and I did the job in odd moments of Charleston sight-seeing. There was no chance for original creation, so I fell very reprehensibly into a hackneyed pattern. I surely hope that no one will judge me by this attempt! Amusingly enough, Abe Merritt very boldly dodged the

hard job of a central assignment. Schwartz had originally given Long the second part to do, and Belknap had prepared a rather clever development. That put Merritt third—where he would have had to build from Long's section. Well—when it came to that, he squirmed out in what both Long and I (and the Wandreis and others as well) think was a distinctly unsportsmanlike way. Claiming that Long had veered away from the subject-matter specified in the title, he refused to "play" unless Schwartz would kill Belknap's section and give him *second* place! That would of course give him a "snap" assignment—with no difficult threads to pick up, and no responsibility in developing the plot. Schwartz gave in and let him have his way—but I'll be damned if I'd have done so, despite his prominence. It was clearly up to him to abide by the rules of the game as originally laid down, no matter what difficult problems they may have created. That is the very essence of sport—and of course a composite yarn like this (*no* composite tale can have any real literary value) is nothing more or less than sport. Instead, Abie demanded that the rules be arbitrarily changed in his favour! Well—he got away with it—and as a result the third and most difficult section was wished on me! For a while Long refused to have anything more to do with the enterprise, but ultimately Schwartz and I persuaded him to tackle the concluding section. I shall be anxious to see the completed tale, and learn what Two-Gun and Belknap did with their respective sections. Schwartz tried to get Edmond Hamilton to participate, but could not. C. A. S. was also unable to furnish a section because of the grave illness in his home.

Johnny Perkins welcomed me upon my return—but it took me some time to recognise the overgrown young rascal! Bless me, what a boy! He's going to be a huge warrior indeed before he's through. He is just as handsome as ever on an enlarged scale, and his coat is the sleekest, purest black I have seen in many an age. His late brother Sam had tiger-stripes showing through, but John is absolute polished ebony except for his little snow-white necktie. He has been over at 66 a good part of the time since my arrival—purring and drowsing and playing. We've got some catnip for him, which he has learned to relish exceedingly. . . . . .

Yrs. by the tentacles of Sotho—
Ech-Pi-El

807. TO ALVIN EARL PERRY

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Oct. 4, 1935

Dear Mr. Perry:—

. . . . . .

The one thing I never do is to sit down & seize a pen with the deliberate intention of writing a story. Nothing but hack work ever comes of that. The only stories I write are those whose central ideas, pictures, or moods occur to me spontaneously—beforehand—& virtually demand formulation & expression.

These ideas, pictures, & moods come from every possible source—dreams, reading, daily occurrences, odd visual glimpses, or origins so remote & fragmentary that I cannot place them. Naturally they come in different stages of development—sometimes a bare incident, effect, concept, or shade of feeling which requires a whole fabric of deliberate story-construction to support it, & sometimes a sequence of incidents which forms a goodly part of the final story. In at least one case I dreamed a story in full—*The Statement of Randolph Carter* being a literal recording of what sleep brought me one night in December 1919.

If there is any one method which I follow, I suppose it is to be found by taking an average of my lines of procedure in all the cases where I have done a great deal of deliberate construction. For example—behind *The Whisperer in Darkness* lay only two initial impelling concepts: the idea of a man in a lonely farmhouse besieged by "outside" horrors, & the general impression of weirdness in the Vermont landscape, gained during a fortnight's visit near Brattleboro in 1928. Upon these notions I had to build a story—& in doing that I followed a course which may or may not be typical. Here, then, is what I did in that case—& what I do more or less in similar cases.

First, a coherent story—or a rough approximation of one—must be thought out. This is a mental process, before pen & paper are approached. It's not often necessary to fill in details, or even to carry the plot forward to a definite end. The point is to think up some sort of

definite series of developments which shall give the initial concept or concepts a plausible reason for existing, & make it or them appear to be the logical, irresistible outgrowth of some vital & convincing background. This "plot" or series of steps need not be a permanent one. Perhaps it will lose all its salient points during later manipulation—other & better ways of accounting for the central idea being discovered. But it is a useful starting point—something to work with & build upon. When it has attained some definite shape in one's head, the time has come to turn to writing materials.

Yet even the second—or first recorded—stage is not that of actual story-writing. Instead, one had better begin with a synopsis of the given plot—listing all developments *in the order of their supposed actual occurrence,* not the order in which they will finally reach the reader. This is to provide a logical working background for the writer, so that he can envisage his plot as something which has really happened, & decide at leisure what narrative devices to adopt in preparing a dramatic, suspense-filled version for the reader. In making such a synopsis I try to describe everything with enough fulness to cover all vital points & indicate all the incidents planned. Details, comments, & estimates of the *consequences* of certain points are often desirable. The result is rather like an official report of some chain of happenings—each event set down prosaically in precise order of occurrence. Often the previously-planned plot will suffer great changes in the course of this recording.

Then comes the next stage—deciding *how to tell* the story already thought out. This begins mentally—by thinking of various effective ways to arrange certain unfoldings & revelations. We speculate on what to tell first, & what to save for later presentation in order to preserve suspense or provoke interest. We analyze the dramatic value of putting this thing before that thing, or vice versa, & try to see what selection of details & order of narration best conduce to that rising tide of development & final burst of revealing completion which we call "climax." Having roughly made our decisions regarding a tentative arrangement we proceed to write these down in the form of a *second synopsis* —a synopsis or "scenario" of events *in order of their narration to the reader,* with ample fulness & detail, with notes on such things as changing perspective, modulated stresses, & ultimate climax. I never hesitate

to change the original synopsis to fit some newly devised development if such a devising can increase the dramatic force or general effectiveness of the future story. Incidents should be interpolated or deleted at will—the writer never being bound by his original conception, even though the ultimate result be a tale wholly different from that first planned. The wise author lets additions & alterations be made whenever such are suggested by anything in the formulating process.

The time has now come to *write the story* in the approximate language which the reader is to see. This first draught should be written rapidly, fluently, & not too critically—following the second synopsis. I always change incidents & plot whenever the developing process seems to suggest such change—never being bound by any previous design. If the development suddenly reveals new opportunities for dramatic effect or weird story-telling, I add whatever I think advantageous—going back and reconciling early points to the new plan. I insert or delete whole sections when I deem it necessary or desirable—trying different beginnings & endings until the best is found. But I always take infinite pain to make sure that all references throughout the story are thoroughly reconciled with the final design. Then—in completing the rough draught—I seek to remove all possible superfluities—words, sentences, paragraphs, or whole episodes or elements—observing the usual precautions about the reconciliation of all references. So open-minded do I keep during this stage of writing, that several of my tales (such as *The Picture in the House, The Dunwich Horror* & *The Shadow over Innsmouth*) end in a manner totally unforeseen when I began them.

Now comes the *revision*—a tedious, painstaking process. One must go over the entire text, paying attention to vocabulary, syntax, rhythm of prose, proportioning of parts, of tone, grace & convincingness of *transitions* (scene to scene, slow & detailed action to rapid & sketchy time-covering action & vice versa . . . &c. &c. &c.), effectiveness of beginning, ending, climaxes, &c., dramatic suspense & interest, plausibility & atmosphere, & various other elements. That finishes the story & the rest is merely the preparation of a neatly typed version . . . the most horrible part of all to me. I detest the typewriter, & could not possibly compose a story on one. The mechanical limitations of the machine are death to good style anyway—it being harder to transpose words & make the necessary complex interlineations when bound to

keys & rollers, while delicate prose rhythms are defeated by the irrelevant regular rhythms of line-endings & roller-turnings. Nothing was ever composed on a typewriter which could not have been composed better with pen or pencil.

Well—as I have said, this list of composition-steps is merely an average or idealized one. In practise, one seldom follows every step literally, often one or more of the things supposed to be done on paper can be better done in one's head—so that many tales (such as my *Music of Erich Zann* or *Dagon*) never had any kind of a written synopsis.

. . . . . .

I try always to keep a supply of story-ideas on hand—recording all bizarre notions, moods, dreams, images, concepts, &c. (& keeping all press clippings involving such) for future use. I do not despair if they seem to have no logical development. Each one may be worked over gradually—surrounded with notes & synopses, & finally built into a coherent explanatory structure capable of fictional use. I never hurry, nor seek to emulate the commercial writers who boast of their wordage per day or week. The best stories sometimes grow very slowly—over long periods, & with intervals in their formulation. *Too long* intervals, though, are to be discouraged; insomuch as they often alienate the writer from the mood & tempo of his task.

. . . .

I always endeavour to read and analyse the best weird writers—Poe, Machen, Blackwood, James, Dunsany, de la Mare, Wakefield, Benson, Ewers, & the like—seeking to understand their methods & recognise the specific laws of emotional modulation behind their potent effects. Such study gradually increases one's own grasp of his materials, & strengthens his powers of expression. By the same token, I strive to avoid all close attention to the prose and methods of pulp hack writers —things which insidiously corrupt & cheapen a serious style. . . . . .

Yours most cordially & sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

808. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Ancient Providentium—
8 days before All-Hallows
(Oct. 23, 1935)

Dear A. W.:—

. . . . . .

Well—*Sign of Fear* duly arrived, and I must thank you exceedingly for the pleasure its reading afforded. It surely makes a neat and tasteful appearance, and nobly carries on the Judge Peck tradition. Altogether, I really believe it is your best detective product thus far. It has the substance and solidity of *The Man on all Fours* without the melodramatic overcolouring of the later, while it equals *Three Who Died* in the rationality of the problem. The atmosphere is unusually convincing for a popular detective novel, and there is never a lack of interest. Indeed, the suspense occasioned by the suggestions of Inca background and Elder signs wears remarkably well. The secret of the murderer—or would-be murderer—is guarded better than in any of the other novels—though amply prepared for. I had my suspicions, but could not be absolutely certain till the very brink of the revelation. . . . . .

Yr. obt. grandsire,
HP

809. TO DONALD WANDREI

Acropolis of Leng
Nov. 10, 1935

O Mighty Melmoth:—

. . . . . There are, of course, persons difficult to adjust to any sort of marriage; but so far as the vast majority are concerned, I believe that a well-chosen & highly discriminating entry into that state (mostly possible, I suppose, only after one or more unsatisfactory trials & divorces) affords a greater promise of reasonable felicity, & a larger quota of high-grade emotional values, than any other arrangement which can be envisaged. Certainly, it does not provide an ideal happiness—but then, nothing else does, either! Still, it approaches so much more closely

to tolerableness than any other condition (always assuming that the right sort of partner has, through a combination of luck, intelligence, & persistence, been secured), that I would not advise its dismissal from the plans of any man young & attractive enough to command the interest of gentlewomen of suitable youth, beauty, & mental & temperamental endowments. . .

Yr. Obt. Grandsire,
Melmoth III

810. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Citadel of Leng—
Nov. 10, 1935

Dear A. W.:—

. . . Just finished a new story—*The Haunter of the Dark*—though I'm not sure it's worth typing. Acting on the suggestion of somebody in the *Eyrie,* I dedicated it to young Bloch. I'm killing him off in return for his delightful disposal of Grandpa in the *Shambler.* He left the old gentleman spattered all over the room, but I leave him in neater shape —as a body sitting rigidly at a desk and gazing out a west window, with an expression of unutterable fear on the twisted features. The scene is in Providence, and the abode of the victim is #66—indeed, I've described the place a bit. . . .

Blessings—Yr. obt. Grandsire,
HP

811. TO DUANE RIMEL

Citadel of Leng—
Nov. 12, 1935

Dear Rhi'-Mhel:—

. . . . . .

New England, after the chilliness of *early* autumn, turned around and gave us the *warmest* later autumn in years! Only in 1920 and 1928 do I

recall anything like it ..... it was eighty degrees on Oct. 29! Naturally, my season of hibernation was radically postponed—nearly every October afternoon giving me a chance to take my work out to the woods and fields. .....

.....

.. Did you get any reverberations of the recent earthquakes? Petaja was relatively near the centre of activity. Providence had a tremor early this month, but it wasn't manifest here on the hill. I've felt only one earthquake in the course of my existence—the shock of Feb. 28, 1925, when I was in New York.

Yrs. by the Pnakotic Seal—
Ech-Pi-El

812. TO WILLIAM LUMLEY

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Nov. 14, 1935

Dear Mr. Lumley:—

... Just received yours of the 12th telling of Alonzo's (*The Diary of Alonzo Typer*) acceptance. Congratulations!! Your reply to Wright's letter seems to me *exactly right.* I suppose he was curious about getting stories from several authors—Heald, de Castro, Reed &c (besides *parts* of mss. from Barlow, Bloch, Rimel, &c)—which contained earmarks of my style. I have no objection at all to Wright's knowing of my share in polishing off the MS. and I think that what you said was admirable. ...

Yrs. most sincerely—
HPL

813. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Citadel of Leng—
Last of November

Dear Malik:—

I presume your course in returning Old Dolph's story is the only possible one. His yarns haven't even the start of anything truly weird. Which reminds me—did I tell you that I patched up a story of Old Bill Lumley's, and that Satrap Pharnabazus actually *accepted* it? The good old boy was so pathetically anxious to get some sort of story in shape that I couldn't resist doing what I could. He really knows what *weird atmosphere* is—though he can't put anything in any sort of form. I'm letting old Bill keep all the cash he can get from the enterprise—he needs the encouragement. In appreciation of my help he gave me a very attractive copy of *The Book of the Dead*—translated by Sir E. Wallis Budge.

Benedictions and Peace—
Abdul Alhazred

814. TO ROBERT BLOCH

The Windowless Steeple
Dec. 4, 1935

Dear Ludvig:—

When I was young the Prov. Public Library had files of all the local papers in its stock—even the ancient *Providence Gazette and Country-Journal,* going back to 1763. I read the *Gazette* file completely through . . . down to 1820 or so. Nowadays these files are no longer accessible. Papers prior to 1880 will keep pretty well on account of the better stock, but as soon as the reign of wood pulp begins, maintenance becomes a problem. I have an *Evening Bulletin* of 1876—in as good condition as the day it was printed. . . . . .

Yrs. for the Black Pilgrimage—
Luve-Keraph.

815. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Dec. 5, 1935

Dear Shavius Vernonicus:—

..... Comte d'Erlette gave me a copy of *Sign of Fear,* & I thought it not half bad as such things go. It stands up well beside his other detective attempts. But of course this stuff is all mere pot-boiling. His serious novel, *Place of Hawks,* was very well received —& on the strength of it he has almost landed a contract with Scribner's. *Evening in Spring* & *People* remain unpublished—& perhaps in the end young Auguste-Guillaume will regard them as mere foundations or experiments. At present he is delving intensively into the history & antiquities of his native town—exploring attics, studying old letters, newspapers, diaries, & town records, &c.—preparatory to beginning a long series of historical novels perpetuating the life of his community from 1830 onward. This he will regard as his major work. Yuggoth, but the youngster surely is getting ahead!

Yes—little Bobby Bloch has killed Grandpa off for the second time! (You may recall that Belknap disposed of the old gentleman a decade ago, in *The Space-Eaters*). He is surely developing, & will get somewhere if the pulp formula doesn't get him first. I saw the *Shambler* in ms., but did virtually nothing to the text. The Latin phrase ought to be mine, but somebody (whether Bloch or the compositor) misprinted BUFONIFORMIS as BUF*A*NIFORMIS—thus destroying the meaning. I've now written a new story in which I leave Bloch as a staring corpse! *WT* has been generally lousy of late, though the Nov. issue—with 3 passable stories—is a pleasing exception. That thing of Stern's leads the issue—damn good stuff! I never heard of the author before, but he'll certainly be worth watching. He knows what atmosphere is—& knows how to make a sequence of events portentous even when the readers realise perfectly well what's coming. .....

I've just had quite a bit of unexpected good luck—both my *Mountains of Madness* & the new *Shadow out of Time* having been accepted

by *Astounding Stories*. This astonishes me considerably, since none of my stuff is in the pulp vein favoured by this popular enterprise. The $595 derived from the two sales is a veritable life-saver, for I was never closer to the bread-line than this year. The incident encourages me to attempt further writing—although I realise that acceptances can't keep coming. This dual placing is essentially a luck-shot. My new tale—*The Haunter of the Dark*—is now circulating in carbon form, & will reach you in course of time. . . . . .

The autumn has been almost record-breakingly warm hereabouts, so that my season of hibernation suffered a singular postponement. Despite my all-summer absence among palmettos & live-oaks, I have had such a long outdoor period amidst my own landscape that I hardly feel as if I'd been away at all! I fancy I sent you cards at various stages of my northward journey—St. Augustine & Charleston. I certainly hated to leave the far south, & damn near froze in Richmond—where, however, I had a delightful time amidst Poe sites & in picturesque Maymont Park. In Washington (i.e., ancient Georgetown) all day Aug. 31, & the next morning I struck Philadelphia in the grey dawn. Great time there—I visited the botanic garden of old John Bartram for the first time since 1924, & saw the quaint stone house which the great naturalist built with his own hands in 1731. The place is now a public park maintained in pristine glory—a typical colonial country-seat on the banks of the Schuylkill. It is, however, entirely encompassed by ugly terrain—gas house, cheap suburban villas, & wretched factories across the river. Reached N. Y. the same night, & was a guest of Donald Wandrei for nearly a fortnight. He was then living at 155 E. 10th St., in Greenwich Village, in a flat he had taken with his brother. The latter, however, was absent in St. Paul, so that I occupied his vacant room. (Howard is now married & living at 42 Perry St. while Donald has gone back to 88 Horatio St.). I took my meals up at Belknap's, & saw most of the weird tale & amateur journalism gang old & new—Morton, Talman, Kleiner, Loveman, Koenig, Sterling, Kirk, Leeds, &c. &c. By coincidence, Loveman's proofs from the Caxton Printers (of his coming book of poems) arrived during my visit, so that I helped him give them a searchingly thorough reading. I also met the son of that teeming hack & super-agent Otis Adelbert Kline—who is acting as his father's Manhattan agent. Oh, yes—& I called on young Hornig at the *Wonder Stories* office, though I didn't see Hugo the Rat. Well—on Sept. 14 I reached home,

& was damn glad to be back among my books & family possessions. But Yaddith, what a pile of accumulated stuff I had to dispose of! Three months of old newspapers & periodicals to read up—correspondence & jobs which had escaped forwarding .... Mehercule, it's a wonder I survived! But even so, my travels were not ended. Sept. 20-23 I visited my friend Cole near Boston, & we had a great series of rural outings in his well-heated Chevrolet—taking in rocky Nahant, ancient Marblehead, the spectral hills of brooding "Dunwich" (Wilbraham, Mass., in the Connecticut Valley), the sandy, willow-fringed reaches of Cape Cod, & so on. A delightful reintroduction to New England scenery!

Oct. 8 my aunt & I had a trip to New Haven in a friend's car—which gave me 7½ hrs. for exploration (I'd never been off a moving vehicle in the town before) while my aunt did some visiting. The day was ideally sunny (tho' I could have wished it warmer), & the ride through autumnal Conn. scenery (100 m = 2½ hrs.) delightful. New Haven is not as rich in colonial antiquities as Providence, but has a peculiar charm of its own. Streets are broad & well-kept, & in the residential sections (some of which involve hills & fine views) there are endless stately mansions a century old, with generous grounds & gardens, & an almost continuous overarching canopy of great elms. I visited ancient Connecticut Hall (1752—the oldest Yale College building, where Nathan Hale of the class of 1773 roamed), old Centre Church (1812—with an interesting crypt containing the grave of Benedict Arnold's first wife), the Pierpont house (1767—now Yale Faculty Club), the historical, art, & natural history museums, the Farnam & Marsh botanic gardens, & various other points of interest—crowding as much as possible into the limited time available.

Most impressive of all the sights, perhaps, were the great *new* quadrangles of Yale University—each an absolutely faithful reproduction of old-time architecture & atmosphere, & forming a self-contained little world in itself. The Gothic courtyards transport one in fancy to mediæval Oxford or Cambridge—spires, oriels, pointed arches, mullioned windows, arcades with groined roofs, climbing ivy, sundials, lawns, gardens, vine-clad walls & flagstoned walks—everything to give the young occupants that massed impression of their accumulated cultural heritage which they might obtain in Old England itself. To stroll through these quadrangles in the golden light of late afternoon; at dusk, when the

candles behind the diamond-paned casements flicker up one by one; or in the beams of a mellow Hunter's Moon; is to walk bodily into an enchanted region of dream. It is the past & the ancient motherland brought magically to the present time & place. The choicest of these Gothic quadrangles is Calhoun College—named for the great Carolinian (whose grave in St. Philip's churchyard, Charleston, I had visited less than 2 months before), who was a graduate of Yale. Nor are the Georgian quadrangles less glamourous—each being a magical summoning-up of the world of two centuries ago. Many distinct styles of Georgian architecture are represented, & the buildings & landscaping alike reflect the finest taste which European civilisation has yet evolved or is ever likely to evolve. Lucky is the youth whose formative years are spent amid such scenes! I wandered for hours through this limitless labyrinth of unexpected elder microcosms, & mourned the lack of further time. Certainly, I must visit New Haven again, since many of its treasures would require weeks for proper inspection & appreciation.

But even this trip didn't quite end my 1935 travels. Oct. 16 at 6 a. m. Samuel Loveman blew into town on the N. Y. boat, & after a session at 66 we both started out for Boston to absorb bookstalls, museums, & general antiquities. We stayed 2 nights—at Technology Chambers in Irvington St.—& managed to take in quite a few sights. Most of our time was spent in the Egyptian & Greek sections of the Museum of Fine Arts. Back to Providence on the 18th, & did all the local bookstalls. Discovered one so good that Loveman may be back in a month or so to patronise it. Had fine warm weather throughout the trip. On the evening of the 18th Loveman left for N. Y. on the boat. This really ended the travel season, though Cole for a while talked of a trip in his car over the Mohawk Trail & up a bit into Vermont. Vermont in *November!* Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat With a Thousand Young!

. . . . . .

Recently my aunt & I attended several lectures on art & allied subjects at Brown University—only a stone's throw from our door. One of them —on *Art, Economics, & the American Future*—was by Prof. Overstreet of N. Y., author of several interesting works on philosophy & psychology; & during the question period the speaker got into a spirited & almost acrimonious debate with the Governor of Rhode Island, Theodore Francis Green, who sat in the seat directly behind me. Green

argued that the highest art must be international & non-racial (he himself is a famous collector of Sino-Japanese prints & ceramic art); but Overstreet shewed clearly that every artist, in order to rise to truly universal & international heights, must work through the medium of his own cultural inheritance.

As I write, an especial friend of mine in the depths of a neighbouring easy-chair stirs in his slumbers & emits a few drowsy purrs. He is a huge black person, yet has never seen any year but 1935—having been born on the 14th of last February. Possibly I described him to you last spring as a tiny handful of black fur—but bless me, how the rascal has grown! Little Johnny Perkins! He belongs at the boarding-house across the back garden, but spends a good deal of his time over here. He knows who gives him catnip to chew & roll in—so he's a great friend of Grandpa's! He remembered me perfectly after my 3-month absence.

Well—all good wishes!—

Yr obt Servt
Ech-Pi-El.

816. TO WILLIAM LUMLEY

Dec. 6, 1935

Dear Mr. Lumley:—

. . . Some day I hope more will be known about the prehistoric civilisation of the Pacific. It seems to me certain that it came from south-eastern Asia and spread gradually across the islands—probably reaching America and forming the nucleus of Inca, Maya, and Aztec cultures. Some believe that old-world influences came to primal America across the Atlantic—borne by Phoenician navigators—but I am inclined to doubt this. It is significant that (except in Mexico and Central America, where the land is narrow) all early American culture traces are on the Pacific coast. Speculations as to ancient tongues and lore surviving in the Himalayas and Thibet are always interesting. . . . . The legend of the pre-human city of Shamballah, still surviving in the Gobi desert behind a veil of unknown force, occurs in the writings of the Theos-

ophists. It may be an actual bit of Oriental folklore, though one can never be sure. It is hard telling what the theosophists have taken from Hindoo and Thibetan sources, and what they have made up themselves.

. .

Yrs. sincerely—
HPLovecraft

817. TO KENNETH STERLING

Peak of Mt. Ngranek
—Dec. 14, 1935

Illustrious Khah-Es:—

. . . . . .

I guess the real secret of interest with me is *unusualness*. . . What bores me is the person of average *tastes & attitudes & performances*. I don't care what any bird's I. Q. is, so long as he is as original, independent, & sincere in his attitude & work as his own particular cerebrum will let him be. . . . Take Bob Howard. There's a bird whose *basic mentality* seems to me to be just about the good respectable citizen's (bank cashier, medium shopkeeper, ordinary lawyer, stockbroker, high school teacher, prosperous farmer, pulp fictionist, skilled mechanic, successful salesman, responsible government clerk, routine army or navy officer up to a colonel, &c.) average—bright & keen, accurate & retentive, but not profound or analytical—yet who is at the same time one of the most eminently interesting beings I know. Two-Gun is interesting because he has refused to let his thoughts & feelings be standardized. He remains himself. He couldn't—today—solve a quadratic equation, & probably thinks that Santayana is a brand of coffee—but he has a set of emotions which he has moulded & directed in uniquely harmonious patterns, & from which proceed his marvellous outbursts of historic retrospection & geographical description (in letters), & his vivid, energised & spontaneous pictures of a prehistoric world of battle in fiction . . . . pictures which insist on remaining distinctive & self-expressive despite all outward concessions to the stultifying pulp ideal.

It is, therefore, piquant & enjoyable to exchange ideas with Two-Gun or to read his stories. . . And yet, of course, when I say I like *distinctiveness,* I mean *genuine & harmonious* distinctiveness. I have no use for the shallow, self-conscious freak who grows long hair, or wears windsor ties, or cultivates boorish or affected manners. That isn't originality, but merely standardised mediocrity's effort to ape originality. I like a person to be quiet & unobtrusive, but really *individual* in his tastes & perceptions & intellectual or artistic expression. Nor do I like freaks whose differences from the average—even if genuine—are merely the result of callousness, stupidity, or disease .... the anti-social criminal or bum or ruthless leader, or the sadist or sissy or general sloppy mess. That isn't harmonious imaginative independence, but merely bad construction or malfunctioning. Perhaps I could define my favourite type by saying that it is a person of basically normal natural personality, with a strong sense of fitness, harmony, & social obligation, who is sincere in his thoughts & imagination & who refuses to let these qualities be modelled, dulled, or standardised by herd psychology or other irrelevant outside influences. He may be a damn fool, or an average guy, or a genius—but if he has this balance of qualities shewing in his correspondence or conversation or accomplishments I generally find him more or less interesting. . .

. . . . . .

Yrs. by the Green Shadow—
Ech-Pi-El

818. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Dec. 15, 1935

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

I was indeed glad to receive your letter & interesting cuttings. I believe I mentioned that the John Hay Library is next-door to #66—although I haven't yet dropped in on any cinematic projections of

books! There are, though, frequent exhibitions there (books & reliques of literary or historic interest) which I usually see. Not a very long trip to take! .....

Glad the travel notes & cards proved of interest. I surely was lucky to obtain such a varied pageant of New England scenery before the advent of cold weather. New Haven was a genuine high spot—I never suspected the haunting charm of the town from my previous hurried dashes through its central portions. The Yale quadrangles really form one of the finest architectural achievements of modern times—absolute poems in brick & stone—or crystallised fragments of dreams. I ought also to have mentioned the magnificent Gothic campanile on the old main campus—the Harkness Tower—whose summit I had previously seen from 'buses.

The sessions with Loveman were also delightful. No—his collection of poetry is not yet issued, although final proofs have been revised. It is scheduled for publication early in 1936.

Autumn lasted remarkably well—but coldness arrived at last. 66, however, heats as well as ever. Mr. John Perkins is indeed flourishing—a huge black giant whose little white necktie is more visible than it was in his infancy. His coat is the glossiest, most flawlessly black piece of fur that I've seen in many a day. He is a very musical gentleman—indeed, only two felines of my acquaintance (one of them Bobby's yellow Cyrus) can excel him in volume of purring. He spends a good deal of time here, alternately playing, drowsing, & sprawling in catnip, & is one of the most companionable beings alive. He has three little brothers now—for all of whom good homes have been found. As for the Barlovian Persians—at last accounts they were as flourishing as ever. I appreciated the pictures of Timmie & his canary friend—especially since Timmie looks exactly like my friend Peter Randall, president of the furry fraternity which meets on the shed roof beneath my window.

Glad your copy of Belknap's book has arrived. I had meant to show you my copy on my return trip, but absent-mindedly packed it in a home-bound bundle in St. Augustine. Barlow will surely appreciate any word of commendation you may bestow. The printing suffers from being his first job, but the binding is more representative. Long himself was delighted & astonished—the existence of the book having been kept a perfect secret till a completed copy was mailed to him. .....
.....

Glad the sonnet in *The Galleon* wears well. I have written one weird story of late, but have not yet sent it to a magazine. However, two of my older stories—novelettes written respectively in 1931 & last February—were lately accepted by *Astounding Stories* & will appear in the course of time. This acceptance was very encouraging to me. I don't go in much for essays—a few articles on widely scattered topics being all I have ever done in that line outside of letters.

As for your poetry—you'll be turning out some new specimens before you realise it. Gaps always occur in cycles of production. I wrote no stories in either 1929 or 1934. . . . . .

Thanks extremely for the delightful Thanksgiving card, which my aunt & I greatly appreciated. We passed the holiday very pleasantly—dining with friends at the house across the garden where Johnny Perkins lives. Hope your own holiday was a festive one.

Every good wish—
Yrs. most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

819. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Dec. 15, 1935

Dear Malik:—

. . About those tales of mine which *Astounding* has taken—I don't know when *The Shadow out of Time* will appear, but *Mts. of Madness* is scheduled for 3-part publication in the Feb., Mar., and April issues. Of these two, the *Mts.* is the only one rejected by Wright. The *Shadow* had never been submitted anywhere before.

. . . .

Hope *The Haunter of the Dark* won't bore you too badly. No—I wouldn't mind a critique of its salability aspects—in fact, such a thing would be very interesting as a study in contrasts. Thanks for the idea. But I couldn't guarantee to follow the directions, since my great aim is to break away from all cheap and conventional patterns and really express certain shadings of human mood as Blackwood and Poe and other sincere writers have done. I read as little pulp material as I can,

and try to purge my style of its influence—for such things affect one insidiously, and hamper genuine utterance. The Putnam editor, in rejecting a collection of my mss. in 1931, pointed to the traceable influence of the commercial pattern in my tales, and I have been trying to eradicate it ever since. If I can't get cash without twisting my writing, I'll willingly starve. Probably I shall fail in my attempt to create anything real—but I don't know of any reason for remaining alive except to try to do the only thing which to me seems worth doing.

Well—May the Prophet reward you!
Abdul Alhazred

820. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Dec. 20, 1935.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . You'll probably hear from young Barlow before long. He has been very busy with various things, & has had a debilitating touch of malaria—from which he is now emerging. He'll be glad to receive your card. Just now he is beginning to print my *Fungi from Yuggoth* as a small book like *The Goblin Tower*—though I tell him he ought not to waste his time on such trivialities. It will, of course, proceed at a leisurely pace—but you'll receive a copy in course of time.

Harking back to the enclosures—that account of the Horace lecture reminds me that my aunt & I heard a very pleasant discourse on the perennial bard Dec. 13 at the college—by Gordon J. Laing of the U. of Chicago. There is also an interesting exhibit of books &c. connected with Horace at the John Hay Library next door to 66. . . . . .

Our Christmas tree arrived yesterday, but will be kept in a cool closet to prevent deterioration until the 24th. I'm saving your sealed envelope to open with other parcels for the 25th—& must again thank you for the thoughtful message.

. . . . . Glad you have a tree, albeit a small one, & trust your Yule will be festive & pleasant.

With every good wish—
Yrs most sincerely
HPLovecraft

821. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

In N. Y. visting Long
Dec. 30, 1935

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

Glad the Clark Ashton Smith material proved of interest. Of the various volumes, *Ebony & Crystal* is still obtainable from CAS at $1.00, while *The Star Treader* can usually be procured by any enterprising rare book dealer at a somewhat higher figure. . . . . I believe I am right in deeming it the earliest of his media of artistic expression, & he has never quite deserted the Muse even in these days of intensive fiction & (beginning last summer) sculpture. Regarding the amatory verse—which, though good, does not quite equal his fantastic verse in power & sheer originality—I greatly doubt whether any of it was written to an actual damsel cherished above others. While I have never questioned CAS minutely concerning biographical details, I am inclined to think that his admirations have been varied & not too serious—in most cases of course idealised for literary purposes. He may have had real persons in mind when writing some of the odes—but whether any two of the latter were addressed to the same person is another matter. It is thus, I think, with most sentimental lyrists. Some of their products are more or less directed toward genuine objects, while others—& perhaps the best—are directed toward imaginary objects synthesised out of memories & idealisations of all the many real ones. . . . . Just now, miniature *sculpture*—in the softer stones of his region—forms CAS's principal medium of expression. He lately sent me a hauntingly grotesque head called *The Outsider* (based on my story), & sent Barlow a curious conception entitled *The Hyperborean Snake-Eater.*

****

Naturally, I was vastly encouraged by the two *Astounding* acceptances. I don't see the magazine regularly, but glance over odd issues when any of the gang are represented. Most of the stuff is hopelessly artificial, unconvincing, conventional, & hackneyed; although occasional things by Weinbaum & one or two others are worth reading. The recent cheques were indeed life-savers—so much so that I fear they can't be translated into travel, or anything less prosaic than food & rent! Possibly I mentioned writing a new story—*The Haunter of the Dark*—last month. It has not yet been professionally submitted, but a carbon is going the rounds & ought to reach you soon—from little Kenneth Sterling. No hurry about reading it—& when you're through with it you might send it on to *Richard E. Morse, 40 Princeton Ave., Princeton, N. J.* Hope it won't prove unendurably boresome. It is dedicated to young Bloch, as suggested by someone in the *Eyrie,* and leaves that rash youth as a rigid corpse staring out a window with glassy, sightless eyes —upon his face an expression of the most paralysing, unutterable fear! The house & westward view described are genuine . . . good old 66 & what I am now looking at out the west window above my desk. The distant church, however, is a less ancient & less sinister object in real life than in the story. It actually dates from the 1870's, & has no spectral associations—being St. John's Catholic (Irish, though the district has since become Italian) church. Federal Hill (the Italian quarter) as seen 2 miles away from my window is really quite a mysterious & picturesque sight—with the dark bulk & spire of St. John's rising against the remote horizon above the huddled roofs.

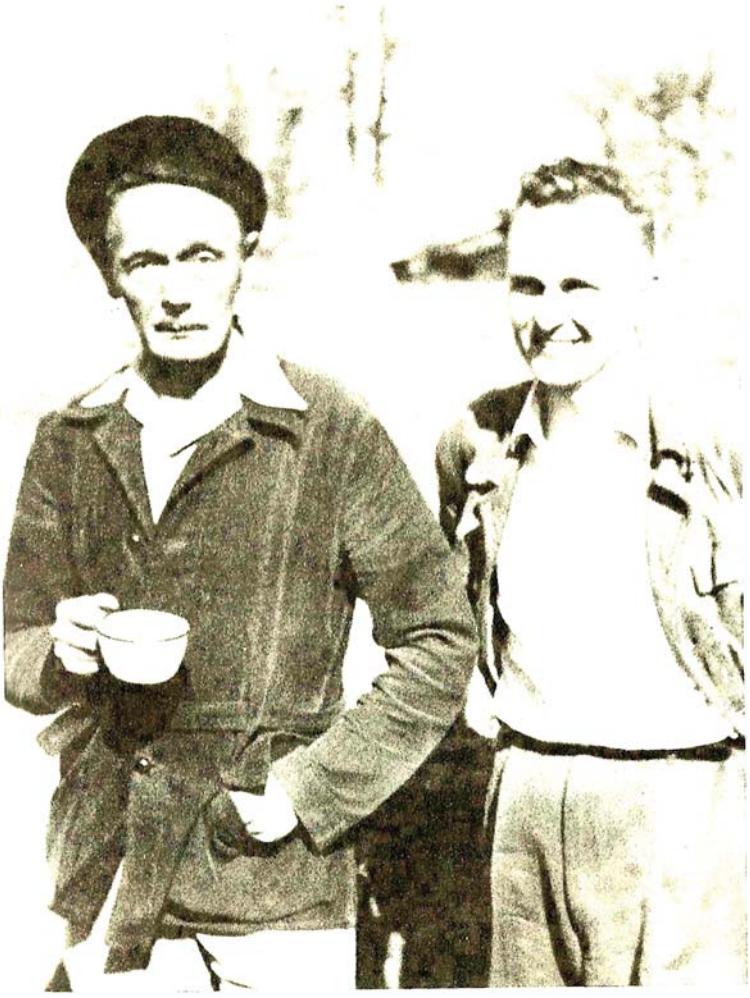
Yrs most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

822. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Old 66—
Jany. 17, 1936

Son:—

While I do not own a cat, I am very frequently a host to the young black gentleman, Mr. John Perkins (b. Feby. 14, 1935), who dwells at the boarding-house across the back garden. He is an elfin creature, with the long legs, large ears, and pointed nose typical of antique Ægyptus'



Clark Ashton Smith and Emil Petaja



H. P. Lovecraft, Robert Barlow, Mrs. Bernice Barlow
and Wayne Barlow

sacred felines. His spirit is exceptionally valiant, and his courtesy to enemies sometimes limited. He has the curiously canine habit of keeping his tail in restless motion—when pleased more than when angered. Indeed, it is a truly eloquent appendage. Mr. Perkins's eyes are large and yellow, and his conversation holds much variety. For minor requests he retains the hesitant apologetic little "eew" of his infancy—a characteristic almost amusing in so large a beast. For John has waxed mighty in size, and bids fair to form the leader of the local Kappa Alpha Tau fraternity. The K. A. T., by the way, has fared badly of late. First (last spring) its dauntless fighting champion and Vice-President—the tiger Count Magnus Osterberg—was slain in battle with a vile crawling canine. R. I. P. . . . he never feared any living thing, and is now doubtless dismembering dragons in Valhalla . . . yet he never attacked any adversary first. I weep as I think of his passing. And now—just this month—a further but less tragic loss has occurred—through the removal of the black and white President Peter Randall, Esq., and his tiger brother Stephen (Count Magnus's successor in the Vice-Presidency), from the neighbourhood in conjunction with their human family. Verily, I feel desolated—and the adjacent shed roof seems bleak and barren without the familiar furry forms spreading in the sun! I must find out where the Messrs. Randall now live, and pay them a call.

Some of my friends and correspondents have marvelous felines. Out in California Clark Ashton Smith's coal-black Simaetha has attained an astonishing age and matriarchal dignity—so that her wizard-master can scarcely recall a day when she did not exist. Not far away the weird writer E. Hoffmann Price has two cats, including old pure-white Nimrod, the most intrepid battler and fabulous eater who ever slew and devoured a civilian gopher in a single night. Down in Florida young Barlow has a teeming feline menagerie whose high spots are two yellow Persians, Cyrus and Darius; whilst in the Boston zone the amateur E. H. Cole boasts a truly royal tiger-angora companion—Peter Ivanovitch Romanoff whose purr surpasses in volume any other recorded in history or zoology.

. . . . . .

Dec. 31 I arrived at Sonny Belknap's for a week of sociability with the old gang, and succeeded in exchanging greetings with most of the veterans—Morton, Kleiner, Kirk, Loveman, Talman, Leeds, Wandrei, [illegible], etc., etc. . . . . .

On two occasions—once with Sonny and once with Sonny and Wandrei—I visited the new Hayden Planetarium of the Am. Museum, and found it a highly impressive device. It consists of a round domed building of two stories. On the lower floor is a circular hall whose ceiling is a gigantick orrery—showing the planets revolving round the sun at their proper relative speeds. Above it is another circular hall whose roof is the great dome, and whose edge is made to represent the horizon of N. Y. as seen from Central Park. In the centre of this upper hall is a curious projector which casts on the concave dome a perfect image of the sky—capable of duplicating the natural apparent motions of the celestial vault, and of depicting the heavens as seen at any hour, in any season, from any latitude, and at any period of history. Other parts of the projector can cast suitably moveable images of the sun, moon, and planets and diagrammatick arrows and circles for explanatory purposes. The effect is infinitely lifelike—as if one were outdoors beneath the sky. .....

With usual benedictions, and compliments to Skipper,
Mr. Brotam, and everybody, I remain yr. obt. Servt.,
Grandpa.

823. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Jany. 31, 1936

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Communications duly arrived—& many thanks for the generous plenitude of cuttings in each. The first was forwarded to me in N. Y., where I visited the author of *The Goblin Tower* from Dec. 30 to Jany. 6. My visit was highly enjoyable, & included glimpses of all the old group. Loveman shewed me his new book of poems, just out, of which I read the proof last September. Enclosed is a circular describing it. I surely hope it will receive favourable reviews. On two occasions I visited the new Hayden Planetarium of the Am. Museum, & found it a highly impressive device. .....

Glad your Christmas was pleasant. My own surely was. I think I mentioned that we had a tree again. Your cards, as I said before, were

enormously appreciated. Barlow's surprise—*The Cats of Ulthar*—did not arrive till I had left for N. Y., but I saw Long's copy there. I surely appreciated Bobby's thoughtfulness & industry! His health, by the way, seems to be much better—so if I were you I would notify him about the change in your poem. He is now working on another *Dragon-Fly*.

. . . . . .

Yrs most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

824. TO HENRY GEORGE WEISS

Providence, R. I.
Feb. 4, 1936

Dear HG:—

. . . . . .

. . . I've had a hand in over half a dozen recently published or accepted yarns of others, but wouldn't under any circumstances let my name be used in connexion with them.

. . . .

. . . Around New Year's I visited Long a week in N.Y.—seeing all the gang & visiting the new Hayden Planetarium (a tremendously interesting device) for the first time. Reaching home Jany. 7, I found myself engulfed by an utterly prostrating flood of insistent work—& then came this damned grippe & general exhaustion. Beastly cold weather —I shall certainly welcome the spring!

Yrs. most cordially,
HPL

825. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Citadel of Irem
(February 12, 1936)

Dear Malik:—

Glad you found the *Mts. of Madness* readable. That was my attempt to pin down the vague feelings regarding the lethal, desolate white south

which have haunted me ever since I was ten years old. It was written in 1931—and its hostile reception by Wright and others to whom it was shown probably did more than anything else to end my effective fictional career. The feeling that I had failed to crystallise the mood I was trying to crystallise robbed me in some subtle fashion of the ability to approach this kind of problem in the same way—or with the same degree of confidence and fertility. But it is some consolation to have the damn thing printed at last—as a posthumous effort, if nothing more. There are several inexcusable errors in the text—such as "palaeocene" for *palaeogean*—but the illustrations are excellent. The artist visualised the archaean entities perfectly from the written description—proving that he really read the text, which is more than most of Satrap Pharnabazus's picture-bunglers do.

. . . . .

I read with great interest and appreciation your careful analysis of the recent alleged story, and must thank you for the time, energy, and attention given to what is essentially only a trifle. I realised from the outset that the thing is a failure—as everything since the *Mts. of Madness* has been. I simply lack whatever it is that enables a real artist to convey his mood. The sole purpose of this attempt was to crystallise (a) the feeling of strangeness in a distant view, and (b) the feeling of latent horror in an old, deserted edifice. Evidently I did neither. I don't know why I kept the thing after destroying dozens of similar attempts without shewing them during the past few years—but now and then one has a streak of ego. However, I don't know that there's much use in further experimentation. I'm farther from doing what I want to do than I was 20 years ago. The peculiar faculty which Blackwood and Dunsany possess simply isn't mine.

. . . . . .

Peace and prayer—
Abdul Alhazred

826. TO RICHARD F. SEARIGHT

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Feby. 13, 1936

Dear Ar-Eph-Es:—

. . . . . Exact data regarding the *Pnakotic* Mss. are lacking. They were brought down from Hyperborea by a secret cult (allied to that which preserved the *Book of Eibon*), & are in the secret Hyperborean language, but there is a rumour that they are a translation of something hellishly older—brought from the land of Lomar & of fabulous antiquity even there. That they antedate the human race is freely whispered. Curious parallelisms betwixt them & the Eltdown Shards have been pointed out—as if both were remote derivatives of some immeasurably anterior source, on this or some other planet. They are perhaps too far back in the abyss of time to cover such secrets as that involved in *The Coming of Owai-Adun* (whose appearance I eagerly await), since this latter incident is a relatively recent episode of the age of mammals.

. . . . . .

With every good wish—
Yrs by the Thirteenth Shard—
E'ch-Pi-El

827. TO J. VERNON SHEA

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Feby. 14, 1936.

Dear Shavius Vernonicus:—

. . . . . Yes—keep that Barlow picture of me if you like. I think it's a fairish resemblance. No—I doubt if the position of the lips comes from any hypertrophy of conscience. Natural contours &

badly placed teeth form a likelier explanation! I don't take much stock in the details of physiognomy—most of which are mere literary conventions. For example—as you yourself point out, I am far from mournful in temperament—& yet, when in repose, my countenance suggests a cross between cosmic grief & brooding ferocity. I recall one time when I attended a dinner of the Hub Club, back in 1920, & was seated opposite a gentleman (Charles A. A. Parker, now editor of the poetry magazine *L'Alouette*) who prided himself on his bluff, rough-&-ready playfulness. I was enjoying the occasion—& the baked beans—tremendously, yet all of a sudden Parker leaned forward & enquired with mock-solicitude, "Why so pensive"? I replied—"Oh, these are just *lachrymae rerum*" . . . but that shews what a woebegone sort of cuss I seem to be! I am my saddest when delivering a comic after-dinner speech—myself moved to sighs; my victims to yawns. Be it said in self-defence that I never make a public address except under the most inescapable compulsion. It hurts me even more than it hurts the crowd.

. . . . . .

Yrs by the Elder Sign—
Ech-Pi-El

828. TO HENRY KUTTNER

Feby. 16, 1936

Dear Mr. Kuttner:—

. . . . . Clark Ashton Smith & I frequently use each other's hellish books & devil-gods—giving Tsathoggua & Yog-Sothoth a change of environment, as it were! Some time I'll quote darkly from your *Book of Iod*—which I presume either antedates the human race like the Eltdown Shards and the Pnakotic Manuscripts, or repeats the most hellish secrets learnt by early man in the fashion of the *Book of Eibon, De Vermis Mysteriis,* the Comte d'Erlette's *Cultes des Goules,* von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten,* or the dreaded & abhorred *Al Azif* or *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred.

Yours by the Elder Sign—
Ech-Pi-El

829. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Antient Hill
Feby. 23, 1936

Ultimate Upland of Universal Unriddling!—

. . . I think only under compulsion—when the rewards are great, or the penalties of non-thinking extreme. That goes for chess, too. An ancient and picturesque game, which I'd be sorry to see vanish from the stream of western tradition . . . . but I'm no good at it and can't keep awake over it. I've learned and forgotten the rules three separate times . . . . . and wouldn't have tried at all if I hadn't inherited a set (two sets, in fact) of ivory chessmen which I thought I ought to live up to for tradition's sake. A gentleman must play (or have play'd) chess, just as he must fence and ride (I didn't get around to these, except with wooden swords and on a bike, so I ain't no gent) (or have fenc'd and ridden), and know (or have known) Latin and Greek. Well—congrats to your household on its collective progress in these intellectual trimmings!

And so Ed Baird is still alive! Bless my soul! There's a bimbo as never rejected a manuscript of mine, and once accepted seven all in a bunch! Just my ideal editorial type . . . . . except where the financial end is concern'd. Hope ya kin get your *Black Cat* file. I used to buy that reg'lar-like, and recall the swell weird stuff it had. That and the old *All-Story* were the first sources of *contemporary* weird material I ever stumbled on!

. . .

Sir, Yr. obsequious and ever-grovelling foot-scraper—
Father Theobaldus

830. TO FREDERIC JAY PABODY

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Feby. 28, 1936

Dear Mr. Pabody:—

Your enquiry regarding the source of the name *Pabodie* in my recent story has just been forwarded by Street and Smith. In reply let me say that—although I am not personally acquainted with anyone of this patronymic—I chose it as a name typical of good old New England stock, yet not sufficiently common to sound conventional or hackneyed. I try very much to be realistic in fictional nomenclature—to select everyday names characteristic of the regions in which they are supposed to occur, and to avoid the cheap practise of using overdone, ambiguous, or pseudo-romantic names supposedly "appropriate" to the various characters. Thus instead of having a central figure named "Jack Strong" or "Richard Manly" or "John Cavendish", I try to have him named something like "Walter F. Hazard", "Henry S. Valentine", if from the neighbourhood of Richmond, Va., "Thomas B. Rhett", if from the Carolina low country, "Charles N. Sanchez" if from St. Augustine, "John R. Legris" if from New Orleans, etc. etc. etc. . . .

I suppose I hit upon the name *Pabodie* by a very indirect process. Most of my tales centre in an imaginary Massachusetts town (vaguely reminiscent of Salem, but with an imaginary college—"Miskatonic"—added) called "Arkham", in Essex County, hence I am rather partial toward Essex surnames—Pickman, Royes, Derby, Peabody, Keezar, Wingate, Upton, &c. It was probably this Essex County leaning which made me think—at first—of *Peabody* for my engineering professor; but upon reflection I decided that the great fame of this name (in museums, philanthropic foundations, &c) made it a little too conventional for the realistic atmosphere I wanted. So I turned to a variant of it which used to be quite well represented in my own city, and which even now is not wholly extinct here—the name which, with a slight orthographical variation, you have the honour to bear.

. . . . . .

I am, Yours most sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

831. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
March 15, 1936

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

I am indeed sorry to learn that you have been ill, & hope most profoundly that you are now back at your usual health-level. My sympathy is all the more acute & concrete because *this* household has been hard hit by illness. No sooner had I recovered from a late-January touch of grippe than my aunt came down with a far severer version of the same malady—so that ever since mid-February I have been a sort of combined nurse, secretary, market-man, butler, & errand-boy. Complications have prolonged the case, & now it seems likely that my aunt will have to spend some time at an hospital—perhaps transferring to a less formal nursing home after a fortnight, but not returning to #66 for a month or so. It is certainly a very trying thing for her—but I hope she will be fully on her feet again in time to enjoy the late spring & summer.

. . . . . About *Weird Tales*—too bad you bothered to send for copies, since weird fiction really isn't in your line. I could have lent you copies of any of my tales. If the magazines haven't arrived by this time, I'll drop a line to Wright & ask what the trouble is. Another tale of mine—*At the Mountains of Madness,* with an antarctic scene—is running as a serial in *Astounding Stories,* the final instalment being on the stands today. Still another tale—*The Shadow out of Time*—will appear in *Astounding* in June. My *Shadow over Innsmouth* will be brought out as a booklet by the publisher of *Marvel Tales.*

. . . . . Mr. Perkins is indeed flourishing—& so is his younger brother Gilbert John Murray Kynynmond Elliot, 4th Earl of Minto. Lord Minto was born in September, & is still very playful. He was named by one of his friends in the boarding-house who spends the summer in New Brunswick & was a great admirer of the 4th Earl during his Governor-Generalship of Canada. The feline Gilbert is black & white, & presents a very graceful aspect. He was intended to be given away, but at the last moment the boarding-house decided to keep him. I am surely glad of his continued presence in these parts, for the local feline element has just been depleted by the removal from the neighbour-

hood of two of my favourite furry patriarchs—whose human family migrated elsewhere.

With every good wish for restored health—
Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

832. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

March 16, 1936

Dear Malik:—

Glad the good impression of *Mts. of Madness* holds. I'll ask Wollheim not to quote you regarding the story's original rejection—but appreciate the opinion nonetheless! Yes—I'd be pleased to hear opinions on the trouble with my writing, although my own tripartite view seems to me pretty valid. That is (a) lack of general ability (my stuff *never was* much good—its appeal, such as it was, being largely meretricious) (b) too much reading of pulp fiction, whereby I acquired mental patterns fatal to genuine expression, and (c) the fact that *fiction* is *not* the medium for what I *really want to do.* (Just what the right medium would be, I don't know—perhaps the cheapened and hackneyed term "prose-poem" would hint in the general direction.) Minor added factors are lack of the freshness of novelty in my efforts, and the subconscious effect of criticism—with the inhibitions it imposes on the spontaneous creative process. Probably I need another 9-year vacation from this type of thing—like my silence of 1908-1917. It will be time to begin again when I have forgotten all about magazines—pulp and genuine—and reading publics, and have returned to the complete state of isolation and spontaneous self-suiting which I possessed in 1905 and 1917 .... in each of which years I began a series of tales which virtually wrote themselves. All good work must come from the subconscious, and pay no attention to any external standard or demand—to nothing but the instincts and taste of the creator as imperceptibly moulded by the education and impressions he has received. However—I doubt if I have the native capacity to do any first-rate work even under favourable conditions. If I

had such, I would never have read pulp fiction, nor unconsciously acquired the taint of its perspective and materials—nor would I have persisted in a medium unsuited to my major (albeit unconscious) objectives.

. . . . . .

Well—may all the Djinns serve you, and may the triple sun Bzlah-eoh'ya beam auspiciously upon all your undertakings.

Abdul Alhazred

833. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
March 27, 1936

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Despite the chaos engulfing me, I will try to make haste in commenting on the delightful poem which came yesterday. Let me say that my aunt is doing very well at the hospital—now taking good meals, & sitting up each day a little. Yesterday morning she was wheeled on the sun porch for a glimpse of the park-like grounds. I call on alternate days, but so far she has received no other visitors. She still has, of course, much discomfort—digestive stress, sleeplessness, & the irritation of reclining in one fixed position. The length of her stay is not yet certain—but she likes this hospital so much better than the one where she was in 1933 that she has not the same nervous anxiety to get away. Her present abode is on the same grounds as the other hospital, but is a wholly different building—only remotely connected with the R. I. Hospital proper. It is a select institution—the best hospital in the state—called the Jane Brown Memorial, & was recently honoured by the presence of the president of Brown University, who underwent an appendicitis operation. My route over there & back is of course the same as in 1933, & I am getting reacquainted with the geography of a section I have not visited in the interim!

. . . . . I was surely sorry to hear of your illness, & am glad you are now well out of it & taking at least brief excursions in the genial spring air. . . . . Milk is always good for one—although I don't like it except in coffee or in connexion with other foods. I get my own meals very largely—even when my aunt is here—picking up something good at a delicatessen, or using the increasing variety of good things which come in cans.

. . . . . Wishing you the best of luck—

Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

834. TO MRS. BERTHA RAUSCH

March 30, 1936

Dear Mrs. Rausch:—

I visited my aunt at the Jane Brown Hospital this afternoon, and she was greatly interested in your coming return to Slater Avenue. She has thought of you very often, and when I mentioned your call she announced quite suddenly that she would really enjoy and appreciate seeing you, despite the fact that she has hitherto been seeing no one but myself. Hence to you comes the compliment of being the very first person she has invited since her advent to the hospital!

. . . . .

Yours very sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

835. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

The Garden House
#1, Ely's Court
Over-against John Hay Library
66 College Street
Providence, R. I., U.S.A.
1st April, 1936

Miss M. F. Bonner
The Arsdale
55, Waterman Str. (East Side Station)
Providence, R. I., U.S.A.

Dear Miss Bonner:—

. . . . . .

The word was *ailurophile,* and signifies one who, like myself, possesses an extreme fondness for the feline species. It is, of course, derived from the Greek αἴλουρος, a cat—this term meaning literally "wag-tail", from αἰόλος, quick-moving or changeable (cf. Αἴολος—Lat. Aeolus—the God of the Winds), and οὐρά, tail. (If it be objected that the felidae are not habitual tail-waggers, except in anger or disapproval, I respectfully refer you to Mr. John Perkins of The Arsdale, whose eloquent caudal appendage is in a constant state of gentle vivacity even when he is most contentedly rounding out a catnip gorge.) I cannot guarantee the presence of this word in Webster (I have no edition later than 1890, and this gives only the word *ailuroidea,* a zoölogical term signifying the general catlike group of carnivora), but it has in the last twelve years been greatly popularised by the amiable and innocuous Professor William Lyon Phelps in his *As I Like It* column of *Scribner's* (vide periodical room, P. P. L.); this eminent Victorian being himself enthusiastically ailurophilic. The coinage of the word follows the most regular laws of philology—αἴλουρος, cat, and φιλέω, I love. Whether any single word αἰλουρόφιλος exists in Greek to signify "cat-lover" I am frankly ignorant. It is not, however, in the tattered unabridged Liddell and Scott which I inherited from my uncle. But if it did not exist in the classic Attic speech, this surely signifies a grave oversight on the part of the ancients. . . . .

. . . . . .

Yr. most oblig'd & obdt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

836. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

April 4, 1936

. . . . . .

Dear Miss Bonner—

. . . . . .

The K. A. T. Educational Board extends no academic demerits for failure to identify *ailurophile,* since knowledge of the word is necessarily largely accidental. . . .

Third: this Board disclaims all imputation of being a collector of "firsts". Indeed, no one could despise mere editions *as editions* more than said Board. We accumulated volumes for what is recorded in them—not for the date somebody happened to print them. Of all obtainable editions of a book, we would choose not the first but the last—which had the benefit of all the additions and revisions the author chose to make. In many cases bibliophily and literature are not merely unrelated but actually antagonistic—and I am among the keenest appreciators of Mr. Addison's 158th *Tatler* (for Thursday, April 13, 1710), wherein he gently ridicules the title-page pedantry of Tom Folio the Book Broker. . .

. . . . . .

. . As fast as one vessel or implement is used, I cleanse it for re-use—never having in the house any soiled item except that from which—or with which—I am taking nourishment. Thus I use but one plate, one fork, one knife, one spoon, one cup, one saucer, and so on . . . . . washing and reëmploying as needed. This I consider the only civilised policy in the absence of a proper staff of servants—for a sink full of used and engreased objects is anathema to me. . . Thus, while appreciating in the extreme the philanthropic offer of yourself and the Chief Ailurophile to coöperate in an Augean-Stable ordeal, I am happy to state that the non-existence of any accumulation makes it needless for the Board to impose on your joint generosity. At this moment—and indeed at all moments save during meals—there is not a soiled dish or article of cutlery in the upper half of the Garden House!

. . . . . .

Most faithfully yours,

The Board of Education, Kappa Alpha Tau.

Per H. P. Lovecraft

3d Assistant Under-Secretary.

837. TO ARTHUR F. SECHRIST

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
April 15, 1936

Dear Ar-Eph-Es:—

. . . . The revision job I ought to be doing now—the one on which I obtained the time-extension—is a manual of English usage, and involves some interesting cataloguing of typical mistakes . . not of spelling, but of syntax, pronunciation, and rhetoric. . . . . This book is rather an interesting job as a whole, and I hope I can arrange my programme in such a way as to let me go ahead with it. Another task is to fix up a list of fifty common *stock phrases* to be avoided.

Yrs. by the Elt-down Cromlech—
Ech-Pi-El.

838. TO HENRY KUTTNER

April 16, 1936

Dear Mr. Kuttner:—

. . . . . .

. . . . As to the relative merits of exotic & mundane settings—I fancy it depends on both writer & reader. Actually, there is room for each—though some *do* the one better than the other, while others *like* the one better than the other. A serious weird tale is, necessarily, not so much a chronicle of events as simply a picture or crystallization of a certain human mood. Since our moods include both utter strangeness & strangeness linked to familiar scenes, it follows that both types of fantasy have a legitimate place. However, because moods with a mundane setting are more common, it is undoubtedly easier to create an effective story on that pattern. This, indeed, is the guiding principle of M. R. James—& Blackwood's & Machen's best work seems to bear it out. But in the long run

each author has to write exactly what's in him. . . . . I don't agree about the importance of plot. Indeed, I believe that—because of the foundation of most weird concepts in dream-phenomena—the best weird tales are those in which the narrator or central figure remains (as in actual dreams) largely passive, & witnesses or experiences a stream of bizarre events which—as the case may be—flows past him, just touches him, or engulfs him utterly. It must be remembered that the canons of cheap pulp fiction have absolutely nothing to do with good writing. The two fields are for the most part definitely antagonistic, & he who seeks deliberately to write salable stories is lost to literature. . .

. . . . . .

Yours by the Black Tower of Leng,
H. P. Lovecraft.

839. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

K. A. T.
Central Offices

April 17, 1936

Dear Miss Bonner:—

. . . .

The fraternity is greatly flattered by your commendation of its second issue of stationery, though it entertains no designs. So far as drawing goes, we consider the drawing of regular pay a far rarer and less easily attainable feat in this age! We are, however, glad that President Perkins and the Chief Ailurophile were given an opportunity to inspect the work.

. . . . . .

Let me thank you most abundantly for the "Bekes"—to use our local colloquialism (based on the sketchy phonetic value of the signatory initials) for the diurnal columnar essays of Bertrand Kelton Hart, Esq. I always peruse these with extreme pleasure when they are passed down to me—and I, in turn, pass them along to a learned friend of mine in the distant metropolis of Milwaukee. He—a teacher of English in the West Division High School—uses many of them as a basis of classroom exercises, saves many in a scrap book, and constantly carries a pocketful for years, to measure distance by "Bekes". Thus the trolley trip from his

home downtown is two Bekes. The train ride from Milwaukee to Chicago is ten Bekes, etc. He is coming East next summer, and I expect to see him in person after many years. When he does I shall ask him the distance in Bekes from Milwaukee to Providence. . . .

. . . . . .

Yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

840. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

KAPPA ALPHA TAU
MAIN LIBRARY
1, Ely's Court, Providence
April 26, 1936

. . . . . .

Dear Miss Bonner:—

. . .

Turning to recent topics in logical order—pray extend my sincerest gratitude to President Perkins for his appointment of me as official Limner of the Local K. A. T. chapter. I shall proceed with the initial task —the portraits of all the members—just as soon as I can induce the latter (including the restless executive himself) to grant me suitable sittings. The list of suggested poses has been very carefully filed, and is most profoundly appreciated. . . . The right-hand panel consists of hieroglyphs interpretable only by members of the fraternity. The *lettering* involves the resurrection from my autobiographical museum of two rubber-stamp alphabets which formed my pride and joy some forty years ago. Many of my earlier works—such as *Wilkes's Explorations* (1902), *Ross's Explorations* (1902), *Antarctic Atlas* (1903), and *Astronomy* (1903), have title-pages printed from these old reliable devices, and I never could bear to discard them. To the best of my knowledge, the recent letter-head forms the first impression made from these alphabets since the year 1904. . . . .

Regarding the possible transmission of my recent "Beke" remarks to that sprightly essayist himself—I'm sure I have no possible objection

. . . nor do I think that Maurice Winter Moe, Esq., of Milwaukee, would object in the least to the identification of the scene of his labours. . . . . .

As to the manner in which I used to rant and rave through such passages as

> "What! shall th' aspiring Blood of Lancaster
> Sink in the Ground? I thought it wou'd have mounted!
> See how my Sword weeps for the poor King's Death!
> O, may such purple Tears be always shed
> From those that wish the Downfall of our House!
> If any spark of Life be yet remaining,
> Down, down to Hell, and say I sent thee thither!"

. . . . . I believe I dwelt more upon the metrical form than the moderns are accustomed to encourage. I was a heavy tragedian of the old school, and verse was verse so far as I was concerned. I was not insensible of the demands of the meaning, yet the *rhythm* would never leave my subconsciousness. Not that I made a real pause after each line (Lancaster, shed, etc.), but that I realized the pause myself so fully as to make a microscopic difference in the rendering. I also gave the pronoun *my* its old-fashion'd value "me" or "mih" when it did not call especial attention to the quality of possession—as recommended in Walker's (eighteenth century) *Rhetorical Grammar*. Thus in the above, I would ironically and leeringly whine:

> "See how mih Sword weeps for the poor King's death!"

Ah, me—tragedy isn't what it was when I was young! Nowadays we hear young whippersnappers preaching quiet, realistic technique, and frowning on the vigorous, orotund delivery that Booth, Barrett, and I used to sling from the stage of Forbes' Theatre, Smarts Hall, Harrington's Opera House, and the Providence Opera House!

. . . . . .

Yes—my general ocular trouble is short sight, coupled with a muscular maladjustment in the left eye. I hope fervently that I shall not again be driven into the full-time wearing of spectacles. . . .

Yr. most obt. hble. Servt—
H. P. Lovecraft—
3d Asst. Under-Sec.—K. A. T.

841. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

66 College Street
Providence, R. I.
May, 1936

Dear Miss Bonner:—

. . . . .

Aye, it is indeed lonely without ex-President Peter Randall—and his tiger brother Stephen, who so closely resembled the late Count Magnus Osterberg. Even now I occasionally forget their departure, and look expectantly at the clubhouse roof to see if any of my old friends are there. Old Peter was always like me—never visible in cold weather! He, by the way, was the first living being I ever saw in these ancient gardens, when exploring them three years ago with a view to future tenancy. In those days he fled at my approach—but in time he came to know and tolerate the other old gent, and would purr and roll over when Grandpa drew nigh . . . . still imbued with some sportive recollection of his long-vanished kittenhood. And *what* a kitten he must have been, with that white spot at the tip of his tail!

. . . . . .

Yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

842. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
May 2, 1936

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

. . . . . Religious superstition is fastened on the race only because of the blind, thoughtless handing-down of obsolete myths concocted in ages of total ignorance. Today we not only know the natural forces behind all phenomena once thought supernatural, but realise also the psychological & anthropological forces which caused early man to invent the various myths of gods, cosmic purpose, &c. Modern psy-

chologists know that *any* sort of belief, true or false, can be fastened on the inexperienced emotions of a small child through inculcation—hence realise that religions keep alive only through seizing on each new generation before it can reason for itself, & deliberately hypnotising or crippling its infant judgment in favour of the dominant faith. The very fact that religions are not content to stand on their own feet, but insist on crippling or warping the flexible minds of children in their favour, forms a sufficient proof that there is no truth in them. If there were any truth in religion, it would be even more acceptable to a mature mind than to an infant mind—yet no mature mind ever accepts religion unless it has been crippled in infancy. I believe there should be a law prohibiting religious instruction of any sort for persons under 21. The young mind should be taught only *one* thing—the honest & open search for *truth* irrespective of consequences. Nobody's belief in a given thing means anything unless it is entered into with an open & freely reasoning mind. But religion shrinks from the test of *truth*. It is unwilling to present its case without loaded dice—hence continues to insist that infant minds be crippled in its favour. The fact is, of course, that no active & uncrippled mind could possibly accept any sort of religion in the light of today's scientific knowledge. The whole basis of religion is a symbolic emotionalism which modern knowledge has rendered meaningless & even unhealthy. Today we know that the cosmos is simply a flux of purposeless rearrangement amidst which man is a wholly negligible incident or accident. There is no reason why it should be otherwise, or why we should wish it otherwise. All the florid romancing about man's "dignity", "immortality", &c. &c. is simply egotistical delusion plus primitive ignorance. So, too, are the infantile concepts of "sin" or *cosmic* "right" & "wrong". Actually, organic life on our planet is simply a momentary spark of no importance or meaning whatever. Man matters to nobody except himself. Nor are his "noble" imaginative concepts any proof of the objective reality of the things they visualise. Psychologists understand how these concepts are built up out of fragments of experience, instinct, & misapprehension. Man is essentially a machine of a very complex sort, as La Mettrie recognised nearly 2 centuries ago. He arises through certain typical chemical & physical reactions, & his members gradually break down into their constituent parts & vanish from existence. The idea of personal "immortality" is merely the dream of a child or of a savage.

However, there is nothing anti-ethical or anti-social in such a realistic view of things. Although meaning nothing *in the cosmos as a whole,* mankind obviously means a good deal *to itself.* Therefore it must be regulated by customs which shall ensure, *for its own benefit,* the full development of its various accidental potentialities. It has a fortuitous jumble of reactions, some of which it instinctively seeks to heighten & prolong, & some of which it instinctively seeks to avoid or shorten or lessen. Also, we see that certain courses of action tend to increase its radius of comprehension & degree of specialised organisation (things usually promoting the wished-for reactions, & in general removing the species from a clod-like, unorganised state), while other courses of action tend to exert an opposite effect. Now since man means nothing in the cosmos, it is plain that his only logical goal (a goal whose sole reference is to *himself*) is simply the achievement of a reasonable equilibrium which shall enhance his likelihood of experiencing the sort of reactions he wishes, & which shall help along his natural impulse to increase his differentiation from unorganised force & matter. This goal can be reached only through teaching individual men how best to keep out of each other's way, & how best to reconcile the various conflicting instincts which a haphazard cosmic drift has placed within the breast of the same person. Here, then, is a practical & imperative system of ethics, resting on the firmest possible foundation & being essentially that taught by Epicurus & Lucretius. It has no need of supernaturalism, & indeed has nothing to do with it. However, an ethical system is always hard to enforce, so that moralists are constantly looking for powerful agents of compulsion. Some favour armed force (& armies & policemen will always be needed), while others look to pride or fear or reason or aesthetic taste. Primitive man used force as a matter of course, but he also realised the powerful compelling nature of superstition. If he could hook up ethical precept with the myth (in which he then believed) of cosmic purpose & will, he would have the most potent of influences working with him to make people accept his preferred code of conduct. It was easy for him to persuade himself & others that the gods liked the various instincts & types of conduct & rational compromises (kindness, honesty, non-encroachment, coöperation, &c.) which make for general harmony among men, & that they disliked the various lawless instincts & types of conduct (egotism, treachery, cruelty, encroachment, lack of social coöperation, &c.) which

act in an opposite direction. Hence arose the illusory concepts of "right", "wrong", and "sin" as cosmic matters—& the general popular tendency to identify religion & ethics. Really, of course, there is no essential connexion between religion & ethics. Ethics can stand on its own feet without religion, & the time has come in which it must do so to an increasing degree. Its enforcing agencies—aside from physical power—should be reason & taste & pride; as indeed they are now among the enlightened. It is interesting to observe that many of the world's religions tacitly recognise the lack of connexion between faith & ethics by loftily ignoring the latter. Hellenic religion tended to leave ethics more or less to the philosophers, while even Protestant Christianity had its Antinomian sect (in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638 *et seq*) which proclaimed that "salvation" was a matter of sheer faith irrespective of conduct. Religion has served its purpose, & is meaningless in the light of today's understanding of the universe. We now perceive *that there is no "why" of things*—that, indeed, the whole concept of a "why" is based upon an obsolete perspective. Things simply are——forming momentary phases of ceaseless rearrangement of forces which always have existed & always will exist. Why should they be otherwise? The existing patterns are merely basic conditions of entity—which have nothing to do with the transient ideas & wishes of the negligible organisms of our planet. We now understand the origins of those ideas & wishes, & realise that they are simply automatic nervous phenomena having nothing to do with reality. If it amuses any childish mind to juggle words & apply the name "god" or "the gods" to the automatic principle of regularity in the cosmos, no one need object. Words are pretty things to play with. But we must remember that this pattern principle has not the slightest resemblance to the various deities of traditional religions. It is not a "mind". It has no consciousness or purpose. It doesn't know we exist or care what we do. It has nothing to do with the aesthetic or utilitarian human concepts of "right" & "justice". It is simply a *condition*—like the existence of an atmosphere around the earth. Epicurus vaguely realised all this when he said that although the gods may exist, they never concern themselves with the affairs of mankind.

Today time spent in considering religion is simply wasted. What is needed is *scientific social vision & coöperation,* with the rational happiness & balanced development of men, individually & collectively, as

its sole object. That is, we need to cultivate a practical morality based on common sense, good taste, & modern sociology .... doing which, we may well leave supernatural belief & the grovelling worship of unconscious force-patterns to the ignorant & the hyper-emotional. .....

..... Man is indeed by far the most advanced product of the cosmic flux of which we have any direct knowledge—*but what has this high status to do with the quality of permanence* (*i.e.,* the mythical condition of "immortality") *or with the kind of relationship which the species has with the basic force-patterns of cosmic entity?* It is absurd to think that any being very highly developed must be essentially different *in principle* from beings of much lower development .... or, conversely, that it is a slur upon the greatness of a high species to declare that it is not the especial & eternal pet of a conscious & personified cosmos. .....

Yrs most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

843. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

The Garden House
1, Ely's Court
Providence-Plantations
4th May, 1936

Dear Miss Bonner:—

.....

Does the K. A. T. Library have a Dept. of Fantasy? (I don't know of any word on the order of "Americana" or "Shakespeariana" which quite covers the broad field including supernatural horror-fiction and its penumbra). Yes—in a measure, it does. Not so much a deliberate collection as a spontaneous growth—but enough to catalogue, anyhow. It is, indeed, the only section of John Hay's competition which *is* catalogued (that is, catalogued *now*. Between 1903 and 1911 I tried to maintain a *general* catalogue of my library.)—this listing being for the benefit of distant members of the "weird fiction gang" who wish to borrow spectral volumes not obtainable in their home-town biblio-

thecae. Enclosed is a copy of the list—any item of which is at your disposal if your interest and curiosity run in this direction. You will recognise many titles as standard classics—*Udolpho, The Monk, Melmoth,* etc. Regarding our own attempts—there is no single rule of composition. Some are "dashed off," some are mentally planned ahead, and some involve endless correction and pen-chewing. The more laboured they are, the worse they generally turn out to be. No—we are never scared of the dark *now,* though we used to be prior to 1895 or '96. Our grandfather cured us of this tendency by daring us (when our years numbered approximately five) to walk through certain chains of dark rooms in the fairly capacious old home at 454 Angell. Little by little our hardihood increased—and by the time we graduated from the fully-inhabited 2nd floor to the merely servant-and-store-and-guest-room-occupied 3d floor, we were reasonably hard-boiled so far as the Amorphous Entities of Shadow were concerned. *Actual nightmares,* though, were another story. We still have one or two per year—though even the worst is pallid beside the real 1896 product. I invented the name of *Night-Gaunts* for the Things I dreamed of in '96 and '97.

. . . . . .

Yr. most oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft—
3d Asst. Under-Secy.—K. A. T.

844. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
May 7, 1936.

Dear R E H:—

. . . . .

As for the term "enemy of humanity" as I used it—I think there is always present in society a small minority to whom that term can be applied in the given sense. While not all of this minority would care to lower the prevailing life-level to the wholly savage state, it is undeniable that they would like to see it pulled down to an intolerable degree of mediocrity. This actual hostility to the best human achieve-

ments is found in many proletarian groups and peasantries, and was markedly manifest in the earlier stages of both French and Russian revolutions. It also exists in the theories of many "back-to-nature" cults which stem from Lord Monboddo and Rousseau—and is of course strong among a good many of the backward races themselves, who hate the white man and all his works. . . .

. . . . . .

I believe I can now see where your idea of my unjust attitude arose—although I later disavowed the initial mistake which gave rise to the misconception. At a time when I believed the southwest not *essentially* different from the rest of the country (of course, *every* local area has its *minor* individualities), you pointed out certain grave evils connected with corrupt law enforcement—evils involving the frequent unjust arrest and physical mistreatment of innocent persons. These seemed very strange to me, because no parallels exist in regions which I know. Naturally I sought an *explanation* of such a difference from familiar conditions; and at that early stage of the debate it seemed natural to ask whether some peculiarity of the local tradition might not be responsible for the phenomenon—a phenomenon involving lack of respect for the inviolability of the human person. It was only a theory and a query—sustained at the moment by a parallel discussion in which the late survival of primitive conditions had been mentioned. In the course of time that theory was proved wrong—it being shown by you that the given acts of lawlessness and violence were perpetrated by large *non-southwestern* corporations, and that even the personal agents were to a great extent alien to the southwest. (This matter, by the way, influenced considerably the slow leftward swing of my social and political attitude since 1931.) However, I suppose my original advancing of the local-tradition theory conveyed the impression that I was attacking the southwest —an impression which lasted long after I had abandoned the theory which gave it rise. . . .

. . . . . All barbaric nations are brutal beyond description, and few civilised groups can prevent themselves from reverting to this condition under the stress of certain particular conditions. War is an universal brutaliser; and once a group is committed to a policy of wholesale killing, it tends to maker fewer and fewer distinctions between the types it shall kill and the types it shall spare. So far as I can see, modern warfare is not only *not more* ruthless in intention than ancient

or savage warfare, but is in certain instances *less* so. I am certainly no defender of brutality, and wish most ardently that some way existed to limit the violence with which international disputes are settled, or national ambitions gratified. When I *seem* to excuse atrocities I am really not doing so at all—but am merely criticising the justice of singling out *one nation's* conduct when *all nations as a whole* have done exactly the same thing under parallel conditions. Exceptions to the general rule are *so rare, and so purely local,* that I cannot see how they may justly be set up as criteria. The pioneers of the southwest, or the English under Williams in Rhode Island, or the Georgia settlers under Oglethorpe, did not indeed follow the course of the Celts in neolithic Britain, or the Germans in Gaul, or the Italians in Abyssinia, or the Abyssinians in other parts of Abyssinia than their own, etc. etc. etc. But can whole nations be expected to share the special ethical attitudes which from their very nature are peculiar to small, compact groups under the strong influence of local traditions? Obviously—since the basic instincts of the human animal are against it—they cannot. The *bulk* of every racial and national group on earth has always acted just about the same, and always will, under the given conditions. The growth of civilisation lessens the frequency of such outbursts, but can scarcely abolish them altogether. The only way to lessen international brutality is to let *all* weak groups be absorbed by the strong ones which covet them, and to teach the surviving strong ones that the status quo can be disturbed only at a frightful cost which affects the victor as well as the vanquished. Now and then terrible and brutal wars *will* break out despite every precaution. Indeed, one or two more may end the present phase of western civilisation. But an increased use of reason can conceivably reduce immensely the number of *occasions for war;* so that the net amount of brutality will be decreased, and the chances for civilisation's survival strengthened. The worst provocative force is that of commercial greed, and I believe this will lessen as the internal government of the nations grows more and more socialistic—as it inevitably must. In future centuries the government and economic structure of nations will probably be such that their inhabitants will have *much less to gain* from any extension of territory, or any capture of a foreign market or trade route, than they have at present. A fully capitalistic America under the rule of big-business puppets like Hoover or Landon or Knox would provoke a war with Japan to keep the

Chinese market open, whereas a reasonably socialistic and self-sufficient America would fight Japan only *defensively*—to resist some Japanese attempt to seize territory inhabited by Anglo-Saxons. If Italy had evolved a stage or two more along the road of social development she would not have been so eager to conquer Abyssinia—but we cannot hurry the processes of sociology beyond certain limits. The same uncontrollable forces which in some cases lead ultimately to a sound equilibrium also produce trying intermediate stages, awkward temporary compromises, and now and then utter national collapses. We have had to go through our capitalistic and land-grabbing stages, and so must Italy. No one of the great nations averages much worse than any other —for where one is backward in one way, it is likely to be ahead in another way. Just now the most repellent and exasperating of the great powers are Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany—and yet each of these grotesquely situated nations embodies many *isolated* points of superiority which the others (though superior in other respects) would do well to copy.

Regarding *degrees of brutality in war*—this is a subject involving very complex psychological processes, and certain utterly different sets of emotional distinctions. There are the differences in feeling in different culture-groups regarding the limitation of warfare in actual or potential combatants, the differences of attitude determined by the racial and cultural status of the enemy (an average white would sanction deeds against Indians or Negroes or Arabs or Mongolians—or even against whites of a despised or sharply differentiated group—which he would not sanction against whites of his own kind), and the differences determined by the *mode of combat.* This latter point is subtle but potent. As war grows more mechanical and impersonal—interposing elaborate barriers and distances between attacker and attacked—certain natural scruples of humanity seem to lessen. Thus a general who would not think of stabbing a non-combatant himself, and who would hesitate long before ordering his men to stab non-combatants, might conceivably consent to a bombing campaign in which thousands of non-combatants would perish. The *scale* and *remoteness* and *impersonality* of a wholesale bomb or gas attack tends—emotionally—to break down the natural scruples of the civilised human being regarding the inviolability of the human person, and the aesthetic repugnance to the blotting out of the defenceless. One who would never slay a non-combatant whom he could

see, or whose name he knew, or whom he could directly envisage as a helpless human being, might very conceivably sign an order for the gassing of a whole city—an action on so vast a scale that the idea of individual deaths becomes lost in the almost abstract concept of *clearing up a mathematical area.* Not that this makes death any easier for the victims—but it certainly involves a genuine distinction in the emotional attitude of the attacker from the attitude of a conqueror who *personally* rides down a civilian crowd and bathes his sword in the blood of the innocent. It is part of the whole shift of emotional values produced by the machine age—the increasing trend toward the collective and impersonal viewing of mankind. All this is something we can't stop. What we must try to stop as far as possible is the *initial precipitation* of major wars. As to the term *sadism*—I forget just how I used it, but I'm sure I didn't apply it to anything other than an attitude which finds positive *pleasure* in the infliction of violence . . . i. e., violence *for its own sake* as distinguished from advantages obtained *through* violence. I couldn't have said that "all pioneers were sadists"—for no such absurd idea crossed my mind. I might have said that a regime of violence *tends to bring out sadistic qualities in those who might not otherwise exhibit or develop them* (and the anecdotes of all warfare, both frontier and international, seem to contain enough instances of wanton butchery and disregard of the inviolability of the human body to sustain such an assumption), but I don't see how I could have said more than that. I certainly *do* think that it takes a lower grade of coarseness to slay or mutilate a human being with one's own hands, except in self-defence or in organised battle, than to plan for the annihilation (with as little pain as possible) of persons in certain areas for some purpose which one honestly believes to be of vast and transcendent importance. Probably I express this so clumsily that it seems like poor ethics—but there's a very definite idea behind it. What I mean is that the greatest justification of any killing or injury of a human being is *worthiness of object.* The less a death-dealer thinks of the joy of personal vengeance or victory or blood-lust, and the more he thinks of some vast ideal outside himself (such as the furtherance of a racial, moral, or national cause) which makes the infliction of death on certain persons a stern and regrettable necessity, the higher he stands in what we may regard as an universal ethical scale. At least it seems so to me. I realise that this kind of idealistic impersonality is not the same as the other sort of imper-

sonality—arising from scale, distance, and mechanical media, and distinctly inferior in ethical status—which I mentioned previously. This lower or mechanical impersonality (whose basis is really *lack of imagination*) has dangerous possibilities in its temptations toward the irresponsible infliction of widespread death—though even so it involves less coarseness and callousness than does personal killing. Even the more idealistic sort of death-dealing impersonality has its perils—when fanaticism overcomes judgment, and the killer mistakes a purely personal conviction for a truly necessary cause. No—we can't justly endorse any sort of killing except in defence of oneself, or of some racial or national fabric representing one's larger self. When we fail to become actively indignant at some example of aggressive warfare it is not that we approve the action, but that we recognise in it the operation of an universal tendency which all groups practice equally at the present stage of civilisation—as during past stages. What checks our acutest sympathy for the weaker party is our sadly certain knowledge that he would behave exactly like his oppressor if he had the chance. Thus in the case of a war which does not involve our own country—and in which no prejudice of ours is involved—we tend quite logically to dismiss the ethical side and judge it solely by *its result as related to the welfare of western civilisation in general.* Altogether, many of the most ethically indefensible wars—like the snatching of the two Americas from the Indians—have been of the greatest value to the white race and its culture; giving it ampler room for development and expansion, increasing its natural resources, and providing a setting for the growth of new and beneficial cultural variants. Who would truly wish North America restored to its aboriginal tribes, or Australia to its blackfellows, or South Africa to its Negroes? Many technically "unjust" wars are waged against races so low or degraded or mutually murderous that the conquered people are actually benefited in the end by the change. The sodden Hindoos, warring corruptly against one another and with their masses in a state of the most incredible degradation, have been much better off under British rule than they would have been if left to stew in their own rottenness. Nor have the Abyssinians suffered any more in their conquest by Italy than they formerly suffered through constant tribal warfare, habitual cruelty and treachery, and omnipresent filth and loathsome disease. The statesman or diplomat who really wishes to help the human race will pay less attention to colonial

wars against backward peoples than to the paramount problem of averting wars among civilised nations. Certainly, all wars of conquest ought to be *discouraged* as far as possible—but is it worthwhile to embroil the great powers (and lead millions to the slaughter for a cause which scarcely concerns them) for the sake of preventing a minor act of aggression which would not in itself sacrifice nearly as many lives or work even an eighth or sixteenth as much harm to civilisation? It seems to me that each different international crisis will have to be considered separately by each of the great powers. When a power is not originally involved, its future course ought to be determined by the probable effect of various possible outcomes upon itself, or upon the type of civilisation it represents. Only when it sees itself menaced—or when it sees peril for the larger cultural unit to which it belongs—is it really justified in entering a war which it could keep out of. Some conquests —such as that of the far eastern mainland by Japan—are not essentially illogical. We have no business trying to keep Japan out of China or Mongolia or Soviet Russia, for our culture suffers no direct blow thereby. But resistance to the death *is* justified when Japan turns against *us* and threatens Australia or California or Hawaii or New Zealand. In Europe the smaller states have constantly changed hands in the past and will probably do so in the future. Any change which involves an interference with a developed race's folkways and language and cultural integrity is cruelly deplorable—but in each threatened case it is up to each neutral power to decide whether armed intervention is really justified in the interest of general civilisation. However—in practice, most nations do instinctively draw a line betwixt the civilised and the definitely non-civilised. Russia never extirpated the native culture of Finland, Poland, and the Baltic states as she did that of the barbarous Mongol tribes which she met in her long march across Siberia, nor did Spain try to Hispanicise the Netherlands when she controlled them. There are of course exceptions like Alsace-Lorraine under German rule—but most of these exceptions are on a very small scale involving *parts* of nations rather than whole ones. Sometimes a nation forms a sort of borderline case—Mexico being an example. *As a whole,* Mexico has enough of an established Hispanic civilisation to win it a place in the instinctively favoured category, but this is not true of *all its parts.* When at various times the U. S. took sections of its southern neighbour, these sections

were among the least settled and civilised—hence the gradual Americanisation. But if we were to conquer the *entire country* in some future war, it seems certain that the intensively developed central area containing the capital would be granted a cultural autonomy like that enjoyed by Puerto Rico. The same distinctions existed in the ancient world. Very deep-seated cultures were seldom displaced by conquest—that of Egypt, for example, persisting (save for the Alexandrian region) under Persian, Grecian, and Roman rule. Rome also never disturbed Greek culture in any conquered region which possessed it. A barbaric province would soon be Latinised—but a Greek region remained Greek. Thus you may see that the establishment of tacit distinctions between the civilised and the barbaric isn't quite as ambiguous a matter as you assume. There *is* a certain vague agreement on the subject among the dominant culture-groups of the world. Certainly, a profound and well-defined national civilisation is a vast aid to group-survival. It forms something which most conquerors respect. But even so, the best guarantee of a continuous cultural welfare is the military strength to defend one's own soil against any possible aggressor.

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. . . . . THE WHOLE SECRET OF GREATNESS IN THE PIONEERS IS THAT THEY VALIANTLY BATTLED AMIDST A SET OF HARSH CONDITIONS UNSUITED TO HUMAN HAPPINESS AND PERMANENT WELFARE. The way to honour them is to appreciate the fabric of law and order and security *which they built through their own sacrificial endurance of lawlessness and hardship and insecurity*. Don't wish the lawlessness and hardship and insecurity back! I really can't see how this remark of mine could have been taken as a guess that the pioneers would wish their descendants to succumb to oppression! Naturally, the very *reverse* is true. The evil conditions now existing—through the pressure of unscrupulous corporations and otherwise—are *today's unavoidable obstacles* (corresponding to the famines and Indian raids and outlaws and lack of protection of the past) which must be met just as bravely as the older unavoidable obstacles were met when they existed. Therefore the pioneers would urge their sons *to face and fight the new troubles, but without wishing the old troubles back*. The *ultimate goal* cannot well be other than a law-abiding and orderly state, in which each citizen will have a natural place, a just return for his services, a decent amount

of leisure, proper facilities for education and the development of personality, and reasonable guarantees of physical safety in times of peace in exchange for law-abiding and non-encroaching conduct. . .

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Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,
H P L

845. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
May 8, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . My aunt's improvement has continued, & on April 21 she returned to 66 College. Each day shows some increase in strength, though she still requires some coöperation in household tasks. She takes walks each sunny day—& on April 30 we were treated to a delightful motor ride through the country to Westport Point, Mass. I have so far been too busy to take long rural walks, but hope to begin before long. Barlow has invited me down to De Land again, but I have my doubts as to whether I can go. Duties here, & lack of finances, make the outlook rather dim. . . . . .

Last Monday the R. I. Tercentenary observances began—with a parade in colonial costumes which started at the college gate only a stone's throw from #66. The marchers descended College Street hill, at the foot of which they were joined by Gov. Green in a genuine colonial coach. The party then proceeded to the ancient colony-house (1761), where they reënacted—in the selfsame room—the tragic session of the rebel legislature held May 4, 1776, when the treasonable hotheads disavowed the lawful authority of our Sovereign & Parliament. In this mock-session the parts of the old deputies were taken in each case by their direct lineal descendants—Gov. Green representing his ancestor Col. Arnold, who presented the rebel resolutions 160 years ago. The 175-year-old building was too small to admit many spectators, but I was lucky enough to get in & secure an excellent vantage-point. Costumes & procedure were so well-arranged that the illusion was perfect.

I could almost imagine the calendar turned back, & had hard work not to hiss the rebels & applaud the loyal minority who stood firmly by His Majesty's government. Later in the day—at a State House ceremony which I did not attend—Gov. Curley of Mass. presented to Gov. Green a copy of the recent revocation of Roger Williams's banishment in Oct. 1635. After 300½ years, I am sure that Roger highly appreciates this work of consideration!

With all good wishes, & hoping you are much better,

Yr most obt hble Servt
HPLovecraft

846. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Antient Hill
May 9, 1936

Luminous Lanthorn of Lithological Lucidity:—

Yuggoth, what a year! 1936 is just about blotted out for Grandpa! Not merely completely sunk, but tunnelling a mile under the sea-bottom! Letters since February unanswer'd—borrow'd books piled ceiling-high unread—N. A. P. A. duties shoved on Kleiner—revision jobs return'd unperform'd—in short, general hell and damnation! My aunt's illness proved severe and protracted, so that she was at the Jane Brown Hospital March 17th to April 7th. From April 7th to 21st she was at a convalescent home, but now she is back at #66 and well on the road to recovery. She still, however, requires considerable coöperation in household administration. My own grippe attack concluded in early February, but cold weather and the strain of recent events have kept my energies at a low ebb. I am about "all in" nervously, and have so little power of concentration that it takes me an hour to do what I could ordinarily do in about five minutes. Some good hot weather, though, will help to set me on my feet at least tolerably—that, and some uninterrupted leisure free from responsibility. Barlow has invited me to De Land again, but I greatly doubt my ability to accept. As for my general programme of activities—it is an utter mess, and will never be cleaned up save through the relentless exercise of neglect and repudiation.

Concerning recent climatick conditions—I have no language at my command which can express my opinion of them. After a year in the Marine Corps, or among the stevedores of South Water Street, I might possess a store of adjectives and metaphors capable of embodying my sentiments .... but lacking such educational opportunities, I can do no more than choke and sputter and clench a futile fist. In March I *thought* there was going to be some spring—and then came the return engagement of January which the calendar ironically call'd "April". "Oh, to be in CHARLESTON, now that April's here ..." But alas, no CHARLESTON for Grandpa! Well—the sun slowly swung north after the long arctick night. The grass grew green, the boughs budded, the flavous forsythias flower'd—and on April 28th came a day warm enough to go out! Open water in the Yukon! Since then there have been several tolerable days, and I can now walk up the hill without exhaustion or cardiack thumpings. ....

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Recent lectures of interest have been on Plato's Republick, modern art, Gilbert Stuart, Rhode-Island silversmiths, archaick Greek art, Philosophy and Poetry, early classical sculpture, Mayan ruins, and the Michelson-Morley experiment. The last-named, deliver'd at the college Monday night, was by Prof. Dayton C. Miller, former colleague of Morley and present continuer of the experiment. He furnish'd startlingly convincing proof that the *real* results of the experiment do NOT shew that *total* absence of effect of the observer's motion on the speed of light which forms the underlying assumption of the Einstein theory. Instead, there is merely a lack of the *full* difference which the observer's motion ought (according to the old theory of time and space) to make. Prof. Miller very pertinently asks whether Einstein—and Eddington and Jeans and all the rest—ought to assume (and base a whole theory of cosmick entity on that assumption) that the Michelson-Morley experiment always gives *zero* (reckoning any difference from that as *error*), *when in truth it always gives a fairly constant difference from zero; in the direction that the earth's motion (in orbit, and in cosmick space with the sun) wou'd indicate (according to the old pre-Einstein concept), tho' not of the* AMOUNT *demanded by that motion* (in the absence of unknown complicating factors). Miller himself offers no dogmatic solution, but suggests that *a drift in the luminiferous aether* (assuming, contrary to Einstein, that such exists) in the direction of

the earth's motion would account—on the basis of *the old pre-Einstein universe of non-relativity*—for the fact that the observer's change of place in space gives *some* of the effect demanded by the old concept, but not *all* of the required amount. If Miller is right, the whole fabrick of relativity collapses, and we have once more the absolute dimensions and real time which we had before 1905. Just how his experiments—of incredible care, elaborateness, frequency, and repetition under every conceivable change of conditions—are regarded by the bulk of recent physicists and mathematicians, I do not know—but his explanation of them seemed to indicate a more serious challenge to Einstein than any previously offer'd by other non-relativitists. I shall be eager to learn what the disciples of relativity have to say of him and his work. Prof. Miller's lecture was illustrated, and was mark'd by a singular and felicitous clearness of expression. Of the laymen who attended it, most departed with a better idea of the famous experiment than they ever had before.

Turning to puzzles of a more artificial sort—I surely recognise the unaffected enthusiasm with which many persons pursue them. Of the *fact* there can be no doubt. That which is—in itself—a puzzle to me is the *reason*. I am of course sensible of the current explanation that puzzles form (a) an intrinsick exercise for the mental faculties, and (b) an escape from reality which surpasses any *idle* or *easy* diversion in potency by reason of its *totally engrossing* those faculties which wou'd otherwise be dwelling on wearisome or unpleasant facts. That artificial puzzles *can* be both of these things I have no doubt. What amazes me is their ability to captivate mankind *when much superior exponents of both functions exist in readily accessible form.* By such superior exponents I mean, of course, *problems in genuine knowledge* of a sort outside the habitual pursuits of the given follower. I term such problems superior because they not only discharge *both* functions of the artificial puzzle—affording cerebral gymnasticks and engrossing the consciousness in a pleasantly impersonal way—but *in addition* provide their pursuer with a sense of *genuine adventure* (the zest of pushing ahead into *real* territory hitherto unoccupied), of gratify'd curiosity (about *actual* things in his environment, in the past, and in the cosmos which had before been seal'd mysteries), of substantial conquest (the mastering of obstacles *of importance and genuineness,* instead of the mere mental boon-doggling incident to the overcoming of needless

and artificial straw-men and set-ups), of improved adjustment to life and the universe (resulting from a better understanding of more and more regions of the *real* external world, and a lessening of the groping, fragmentary mental life of the herd, which is a mere ignorant drift down a dark river with unseen banks), and of a generally heighten'd status in the cosmos (as of one whose range of vision and of comprehension constantly increases, whose sense of *real* values is constantly exercised and whetted, and whose feeling of *power* is augmented by the steady acquisition of *important* and *genuine* information and by the subtle consciousness of having great *actual* resources). Now all these *added* advantages involve no sacrifice of any of the advantages of artificial puzzles. The *mental exercise* is there, and the *escape* is there if one takes care to expand his horizon in directions remote from his usual work. What more *variety* in intellectual exercise may a man ask, than that afforded (for example) by a breathless chase after the secrets of the Dark Ages in Italy and elsewhere (when did Latin give place to the vulgar tongue in common speech—when did Greek gain ascendancy in the border provinces of the Eastern Empire—to what extent did Roman institutions persist in Britain between the fall of the southeastern parts (ending with Anderida (Pevensey) in A. D. 491) and the final defeat of "Condidan" or Aurelius Candidanus at Dirham in A. D. 582—etc., etc., etc.); an attempt to grasp the doctrine of relativity and to appraise the Michelson-Morley experiment as in ol' Dayt Miller's recent lecture; a tracing of archaic Greek cultural influences (independent of the Minoan) from Assyria through Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Rhodes by means of ivory artifacts which incidentally prove the existence of *elephants* (whether African or Indian nobody knows) in Syria; a quest for knowledge of the general condition of the other planets of our system; a probing of the rocks of our planet (this had orta hit you!) for evidence as to its evolution; a survey of the mysterious processes of human life, as in a reading of Wells's *Science of Life* and cognate works; an adventurous glance into man's unknown past—such as Sonny used to take before he went bolshevik-businessman; an intensive glance at the growth and folkways of any region (Charleston, St. Augustine, New Orleans, Newport) for the sake of the drama and pageantry involv'd; a *correlated* survey of world history in order to get oriented to surroundings and preceding influences; vicarious adventure in far lands of mystery (page good ol' Arturo) like Thibet and

Borneo and Rhodesia; a conquest of new lands in the empire of taste—musick (still ahead of *me,* alas!), painting, sculpture, architecture; efforts to understand the spirit and literature of some alien culture; a glance at philosophy to try to uncover that galling eternal question "what is anything"?; a realistick and disinterested attack on the problems of social institutions and economicks to see what extremists at both ends like Sonny and Let 'em Starve Hoover are really driving at; a fling at genealogy to chase down some actual genes and chromosomes; a guess at the megalithick secrets of Easter Island; a study of the sources of familiar words (what connection is there betwixt the god Æolus and the Greek name—αἴλουρος—for a nice kittie?); chilling speculations on the Witch-Cult in Western Europe; delvings into the origins of folklore; tracing of physical and mathematical laws thro' interesting and adventurous chains of facts and deductions; plunges into literature and recaptures of lost moods and attitudes whose surviving vestigia have always proved puzzling; explorations of myths and conjectures as to their origins in nature ..... etc., etc., etc. Why, hell's bells, what greater *refreshment* can any tired mind want than a fling at one or more things like these ... things that *really have a meaning* instead of being cardboard and tinsel set-ups, and that can differ just as much from one's regular mental activities as any rebus in the *Sunday Journal* or charade in the old *Farmer's Almanack?* How in thunder can anybody —with the millionfold questions of the *real* cosmos pressing in upon his curiosity and mocking the tragically short instant he has for their solution—waste his few brief years in chewing pencils over framed-up anagrams and synthetick word-squares and puppet acrosticks? Bridge, golf, baseball, and puzzles ..... and this is what the neo-Americans call a civilisation! Well—that's what a pack of acquisitive tradesmen *would* turn to! And the deadly clock ticks on, and another generation goes down into the dust without ever having comprehended the world around them or the past behind them. ..... How can a man bear to die without having done *all in his power* to learn where he stands in space and time and the historick stream? How can he spend *laborious, brain-fatiguing, energy-consuming hours* figuring out empty and unrevealing artificialities, and yet go to his grave (as many brilliant men have done) with half his horizons clogged with vagueness, ignorance, illusion, and unsatisfy'd curiosity? Gawd knows I know little enough—but I go as far as my peanut brain allows! When I want to show off

my rudimentary 2 and 2 faculty to myself, I want something *real* as well as the feeble ego-titillation of a mere *demonstration*. I am a miser of my low-flickering energies. When I have to exercise reason, I want it to take me somewhere—to alleviate some of the cosmic curiosities and historick bewilderments which assail me on every hand. I am oppressed by not knowing how thousands of things came to be—by not knowing what actual forces and linkages lie beyond familiar appearances—by not knowing what larger relationships bind the apparently isolated trends and phaenomena around and behind me—by not grasping the drama and pageantry of a million unread epicks of age-long historick evolution—by all those lacunae which the shortness of existence and the fatigue of my not-so-hot cerebrum conspire to leave in my scroll of comprehension. So when I feel like stretching the scant grey matter a bit, I'm damn'd if I want to do it in vacuo! When I want a tough nut to chew on, I don't choose a wooden one carved to order by a Connecticut craftsman. Instead, I merely turn to one of those *real* puzzles in nature which are always tormenting me. . . .

. . . . . .

Yr. obt. Servt.—
Theobaldus Perkins

847. TO HENRY KUTTNER

May 18, 1936

Dear Mr. Kuttner:—

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. . . . As to an *absolutely non-mundane* story—of course, it would have to have a certain amount of human filtration or interpretation (the events being witnessed by a human being, or roughly translated into parallel events comprehensible to mankind), but I still think it could be written by the right author & made a tremendously powerful thing. I don't know anyone who could do it *now* (Blackwood comes the nearest), but believe the suitable genius might arise in the course of time. All that is necessary to provide the sought-for artistic quality or emotional effect is a potent conveying of the impression of *libera-*

tion & strangeness—of transcended boundaries, or suspended or infracted natural laws. There need be no connexion with man, earth, solar system or galaxy so long as the abstract idea of liberation—escape—contravention—can find some pseudo-concrete embodiment or parallelism capable of human comprehension. As to the preferability of a pictorial over a printed medium—in some cases this might be true, although there is really nothing which words cannot capture if employed by the right artist. What is more—there are many things which *nothing but words* can capture. Pictures are useful only as long as the given concepts remain dominantly *visual*—but in the handling of remote themes none of the senses of terrestrial mammals might be involved. Your suggestions that certain unrealities are best hinted at by *their effects on familiar objects* is a very sound one. Indeed, that is the *only* way in which certain classes of conceivable phenomena can be convincingly handled. How closely an "outside" tale needs to bring in ordinary events depends upon many things. Bloch is certainly right in saying that a tale does not need to be written from the standpoint of conventional human values & emotions (which are themselves largely artificial & fictitious)—indeed, the main trouble with cheap weird junk is that it *does* adhere to these values & emotions. The result is commonplaceness. I have long wished that someone might write a tale from the angle of one opposed to the existence of mankind—or something of that sort. This would not necessarily be *incomprehensible* to human readers. The basic alienage would make it all the more convincing, because there is always an aura of theatrical unreality about representations of non-human, non-terrestrial beings with commonplace human desires, perspectives, standards, social institutions, & even *names*. I can imagine a magnificently powerful story written—though not by me—from the angle of Wilbur Whateley's utterly non-human brother. . . .

. . . yrs. by the Windowless Tower—
Ech-Pi-El

848. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

KAPPA ALPHA TAU
May 22, 1936

Dear Miss Bonner:—

. . . . . .

Adverting to matters described as "amazing"—we may say that our non-personal-acquaintance with B. K. H. is merely a typical example of our traditional policy of unobtrusiveness. The canidae bark and fawn and slobber over eminent persons on every possible occasion—but we felidae keep to our policy of non-encroachment, and continue to walk our fence-tops independently and unexcitedly until we have some definite and specific reason for exchanging purrs with the King Toms of the neighbouring fences. Certain young friends of ours have written to dignitaries like H. G. Wells, Machen, Dunsany, etc., and have spent good postage mailing copies of their first books (usually printed at their own expense) to Santayana, the late Mr. Kipling, the late George Sterling, H. L. Mencken, and other high lights—including the book departments of all the leading newspapers and magazines. Not so the members of the Kappa Alpha Tau. We appreciate the great, but we are sceptical of their possible interest in our crude attempts. It is wiser, we think, to keep our minds on those attempts themselves. Time enough to know the great when our work speaks for itself and spontaneously attracts their notice . . . . and if it never does that, we are just as well off in our merciful obscurity.

No—weeding out poor work is not a very painful process. Far more painful is the ordeal of beholding a stilted, bombastic piece of junk and being forced to admit that one wrote it oneself. Now and then the magazine *Weird Tales* drags out some early atrocity which I have long since repudiated, and reprints it for the benefit of a gaping yokelry. I can't stop them—for they own the copyright. But in such cases I thank the dark gods Nyarlathotep and Yog-Sothoth that relatively few civilised persons ever see *Weird Tales!*

The modernity—or, rather, the timelessness—of Mr. Flaccus is assuredly a striking phenomenon. . . That first satire against misers is

assuredly as timely in 1936 as in B. C. 36—for both ages represent an economic crisis in which the concentration of wealth has produced an impasse requiring new and drastic remedies and a readjustment of perspective and ideology.

Yr. most obt. hble. Servt.—
H. P. Lovecraft

849. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

The Antient Hill
May 29, 1936

Dear Bernardus:—

. . . . . One can't expect to revolutionise an entire temperament in a day—hell! it took about 20 years to pull me out of the weak, excitable, easily-fatigued, violent-tempered state which characterised my middle teens, and produce the plodding, easy-going, mild-mannered old gentleman of the last decade! The great secret of victory over emotions—whether exaggerated and ill-proportioned normal emotions or actually abnormal emotions—is *a transference of the basis of life to the plane of logic and analysis,* and a consequent ability to view all emotion objectively as something relatively trivial and irrelevant. Thus my early rages faded into nothingness when I became impressed by the principle of cosmic determinism—the utter automatism of all human events, and the meaningless, almost impersonal nature (organic reflexes determined by accidents of heredity and environment) of those hostile acts of others which had formerly provoked me to sputtering, fighting extremes of anger. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Benedictions—Grandpa

850. TO RHEINHART KLEINER

May 29, 1936

Thrice-Literate St. John:—

Age brings reminiscences. With all the drawbacks of 169 Clinton (including the purely theoretical nature of the steam heat, which forc'd me to depend on a Perfection oil heater—which I still retain!) that aera of 1925 is not without its idyllick glamour! The long informal sessions at various rendezvous—the complete disregard of the clock—the quaint familiar landmarks (Scotch Bakery—Chatham—78 Columbia Heights, etc.)—the spirited weekly meetings (alternately with Leeds and Mac because of the celebrated feud)—the then burning issues and no less burning arguments—the bookshops and the tours of exploration—surely they glow with a golden light in the perspective of eleven long years. That age was the last of youth for our generation—the last years in which we could feel that curious sense of the importance of things, and that vague, heartening spur of adventurous expectancy, which distinguish the morning and noon from the afternoon of life. . . .

I am ever yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servt.—
Theobaldus

851. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
June 5, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . Mr. Perkins & the Earl of Minto call now & then (I especially enjoy having them both at once), but my programme remains in a state of considerable congestion & chaos. Several warm days have improved my health considerably, & I have managed to be outdoors now & then. I very much doubt my ability to get south this year despite young Bob's generous invitation—indeed, I fancy any amount of travel in 1936 will not be great. . . . . .

Had a tremendous file-cleaning the other day, & threw away about a ton of old letters & papers. My files had become absolutely unmanageable, so that I had to take time off & set them in order. . . . . .

Yr most obt humble Servt
HPLovecraft

852. TO AUGUST DERLETH

June 5, 1936

Dear A. W.:—

. . . Speaking of astronomy, I lately stumbled on about the most interesting genealogical discovery I ever made . . . . when I unexpectedly learned for the first time that I am a great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson of the Elizabethan astronomer who introduced the Copernican theory into England! For one who has always been an amateur devotee of celestial science, this was certainly quite a find! Ordinarily I'm not much of a genealogist, being content to take what existing charts tell me and let it go at that. The other day I ran into a caller of my aunt's—an old lady related to us in the Field and Wilcox lines—and she mentioned how proud I ought to be of our common forbear, the astronomer John Field or Felde. That had me quite floored, since our charts carried the Field line back only to the original Providence settler John Field, who died in 1686, and I knew damn well that *this* bird was no stargazer! Well—it soon turned out that the ancestry of this settler has been known for ages among genealogists, though I had no inkling of it. The 16th century astronomer (whose 1557 Ephemeris contained the first English account of the Copernican system, and who has been called "The Proto-Copernican of England") was the Prov. colonist's own grandfather—hence my 9-times-great-grandfather. It surely gave me a kick to get a real man of science in my pedigree—which as a general thing is lousy with clergymen but short on straight thinkers. (But I'll be hanged if this new discovery hasn't added one more damn divine to the bunch—for it seems that the Providence settler's maternal grandfather was the Rev. John Sotwell, Vicar of Peniston in Yorkshire!) Later I looked up the

standard Field genealogy (by F. C. Pierce, 1901) at the Historical Society, and found out all about the line. It comes from one Sir Hubertus de la Feld (of the family of Counts de la Feld, seated near Colmar in Alsace), a follower of William the Conqueror who took lands in Lancashire in 1069; the Prov. stock springing from the Yorkshire branch centreing around Sowerby, Ardsley, and Thurnscoe in the West Riding. I've copied a lot of notes, and now have my Field lineage straight back—in exactly 20 generations—to Roger de la Feld of Sowerby, born in 1240. But it's the *astronomer* who interests me—and about whom I mean to enlarge my knowledge. I have a triple allotment of Field blood, being descended from no less than three grandchildren of the Providence settler. . . . . .

All good wishes—
Yr. obt. Grandsire,
HP

853. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

June 9, 1936

Dear Miss Bonner:—

. . . . . .

As for the K. A. T. policy toward celebrities—we could name quite a few contemporaries who share it. So far as our long recollection goes, we have been actually introduced to only one celebrity of the first rank (except the magician Houdini, for whom we did some revision work in 1924-25 . . . but he was an idol of the crowd rather than one of the solid achievers of the age)—this being the late astronomer Percival Lowell, who lectured here in 1907. We didn't butt in on him—but having arrived early at Sayles Hall, we were espied amidst the prematurely gathered handful by Prof. Upton; who, knowing our devotion to celestial science, most considerately hailed us and made us known to the eminent Martian discoverer. Dr. Lowell no doubt remembered our existence fully five minutes after his courteous handshake.

. . . . . .

Yr. most oblig'd obt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft—
Lib'n/K. A. T.

854. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

The Antient Hill
June 13, 1936

Mighty Ar-Ech-Bei:—

. . . . . .

. . I've given up trying to read recent fiction. Someday, if I ever have any leisure, I'll ask one of you bright young fellows to fix me up a list of "the 25 most important novels since 1920"—or something like that. . . . . I know all too little of these continental novelists—and must include them in that hypothetical future reading which I never get around to. For the most part I tend to *admire* continental literature without acutely enjoying it. My only real favourites in that field are Balzac, Gautier, Flaubert, de Maupassant, Baudelaire, Leconte de l'Isle, and a few other Frenchmen. Oddly enough for a pure Nordic, I seem to turn to the French the moment I get off the British Isles and their cultural offshoots. This may or may not be because my basic tastes are Graeco-Roman—hence oriented toward that culture from which French culture is derived. The *one* exception, of course, is the *weird* field—where my type of vision is pre-eminently Gothic and Teutonic. It was either Galpin or Belknap who remarked years ago that *there* is where my classical heritage gives place to my Northern racial heritage . . . . the heritage of dark mysterious woodlands and auroral arctic twilights. Oddly—for one whose Devonian and Welsh and Cornish lines imply a good proportion of Celtic blood—my weird imagination is not at all Celtic. I not only lack but dislike the Celt's whimsical angle toward the unreal world. When the genes were juggled around in the formation of my cerebral cells, the Teutonic ones seem to have pre-empted the fantastic division! However, I like to apply that Teutonic imagination to *themes* which may be far from Teutonic. The fact is, my instinctive loyalties and area of interest seem to follow cultural rather than biological lines . . . a tendency directly opposed to the Nazi tribal ideal. Undeniably, my own blood kinsfolk on the continent interest me less than my *cultural* kinsfolk—whose blood diverges sharply from my own as the stream recedes in time. The northern nations—biologically akin to me—seem foreign and of minor interest; whilst France, Italy, and

Greece—the successive *cultural* precursors of the Anglo-Norman civilisation around me—seem close, ancestral, and of vital personal interest. To me the Roman Empire will always seem the central incident of human history—and this perspective cannot but colour (both consciously and unconsciously) my national interests and literary appreciations in connexion with the modern world. Incidentally—this perspective was quite typical of the 18th century, to which I am so inextricably bound. The conflicting inclinations and tastes of a composite civilisation —where race and artistic-intellectual heritage spring from different sources—form a curious study. Conscious, objective interests tend to follow the line of culture rather than of race; but *inward* mental and emotional processes (ethical concepts and compulsions, social-political preferences, trends of imagination, modes of every-day living, &c) gravitate toward the line of race. An Anglo-American can talk art and history and philosophy with a Frenchman better than with a German . . . yet his unconscious habits and outlook and way of life make him vastly closer to the German in practical, every-day matters. I'll have to read your Scandinavian masters some day. Of their solid importance there can be no doubt. Indeed, those specimens I have read (including Ibsen, Strindberg, and others) have left an impression of great power. As for the trash one dabbles in—*WT* &c—that really has no relationship to solid reading. It is like the cheap popular songs one whistles either through idleness or through association with pleasant bygone times and events. The only mistake is to take it seriously.

Yrs. by the Dark Sign—
HPL

855. TO FREDERIC JAY PABODY

Out on Prospect Terrace
June 19, 1936

My dear Mr. Pabody:—

. . . . . .

. . Nothing exhausts and exasperates me more completely than a session at the machine, and I never use the thing except under compulsion—as when preparing material for an editor, or writing someone

with poor eyesight or poor deciphering ability. I couldn't possibly write anything important on a typewriter. The process impairs my creative imagination and prevents the instant and detailed revision which I always apply to material destined for publication. I have only a huge and archaic (non-visible-writing) Remington which I bought as a rebuilt machine in July, 1906. . .

About Atlantis and kindred matters—you seem to be ahead of me in data on this point. I can't recall any allusion in Herodotus, although I read him through once and have dipped into parts again on other occasions. The *Atlantes* referred to in Book IV, 184 (who are vegetarians and who *never dream*) are merely the North-African tribes around the Atlas Mountains. After receiving your letter I thumbed over my old copy of the Father of History (Beloe's translation—1855), but failed to come across any Atlantean tales in the vivid "Euterpe" section. Possibly my aim was careless—in any event, if you can recall the precise part of Herodotus containing the allusion, I'd be tremendously grateful to know of it. And just to reveal the abysmal depths of my ignorance —I never even heard of Nicander Nucius before! Who was he? The only Nicanders I know of are the very ancient Spartan king and the Colophonian physician-poet of the 2nd century B. C. I suppose Nicander Nucius was an early geographer—but I'll admit I've missed him so far. Here, again, any information will be vastly appreciated. The principal classical references to Atlantis that I know of are in Plato's *Timaeus* and in Diodorus Siculus. Plato represents Critias as having heard from his grandfather that Solon learned about Atlantis from the Egyptian priests at Sais. Accounts of a *still-existing* western land—perhaps springing from such vague knowledge of America and only slightly overlapping the standard Atlantis myth—are more common in the Graeco-Roman writers. Those are mixed up with the notion of "Fortunate Isles" in the west—a notion which antedates the historic discovery of the Canary, Madeira, and Cape Verde Islands, but which caused these groups to be associated with it. Homer's Ogygia or Isle of Calypso belongs in the class of fabulous western lands, as do the Isles of the Hesperides mentioned frequently beginning with Hesiod. Aristotle heard Carthaginian accounts of a western *continent* (De Mir. Ausc. 84) and Diodorus repeats the account—carefully distinguishing it from the Fortunate Isles or Hesperides. Seneca (Suasoria I) accepts the idea as a matter of course, saying "Fertiles in Oceano jacere terras,

ultraque Oceanum rursus alia litora, alium nasci orbem." &c. Plutarch attempts to place both Ogygia and the great western continent and adds that the inhabitants of the latter regard the old world as merely a small island. By the beginning of the middle ages these vague hints of western regions had begun to fuse with certain Celtic myths and give rise to the well-known medieval conception of the Isles of the Blessed where departed spirits dwell—the Hy-Brasil Floth Innisi, or Thir-na-n'og of Irish legend, so delicately woven into Dunsany's recent novel, *The Curse of the Wise Woman.* Avalon—though really the quasi-island in the windings of the river Brue on which Glastonbury is situated—has also been identified with the Blessed Isles. The Byzantine historian Procopius seems to be the first who fused the classic with the Celtic legends of western lands. Probably both have an origin in pure mythology—the notion of a glorious western land of happiness (after death or otherwise) arising from the glories of the sunset—although I suspect they were coloured by prehistoric rumours of both America and such islands as Iceland, the Canaries, the Madeiras, and the Cape Verdes. It would have been almost odd if such navigators as the Phoenicians and Carthaginians had not heard of these regions or perhaps come across them. Aristotle and Diodorus assume that the Carthaginians were in free communication with the western continent. There is very little possibility that any western land has sunk beneath the sea since the period of man's existence began. In past geologic ages, of course, land and water areas were constantly shifting; but a comparison of the fauna and flora of America, of the West Indies, of the Canaries and Madeira, and of Europe and Africa, proves almost conclusively that they have been widely separated throughout the age of mammalian dominance. Thus I feel sure that the Platonic Atlantis is a sheer myth (based on America perhaps)—unless, as recent scholars have suggested, it is a case of *confused identity* . . with some region in North Africa, of which parts became inundated by the encroachment of the Syrtis Major (just as the sea washes away the east coast of England, parts of Cape Cod and Nantucket, and the island of Jamestown, Va.) as a basis. If the new theory is correct, Atlantis must have been somewhere in the Tunis region. One may add that these European legends have nothing to do with the early Hindoo myths on which the theosophists draw. The identification of the lost world Kusha with "Atlantis" was a mere gesture of the 19th century mystagogues. According to eastern lore—as

doctored by theosophist interpreters—"Kusha" included a great part of the world both existing and sunken. It embraced northern Asia—above the great sea now the Gobi desert, and extended eastward to include China and Japan; then occupying the North Pacific basin nearly as far as the present American West coast. In the south it coincided with India, Burma, and Malaysia, and westward it included Persia, Arabia, Syria, and the Red Sea, and Il Duce's new Abyssinian province. It filled the present Mediterranean Sea and covered Italy and Spain—and, projecting out to sea from Ireland and Scotland, stretched westward over the present Atlantic to cover that area and much of North and South America besides.

... Yrs. most sincerely,
HPL

856. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

June 19, 1936

Dear Miss Moore:—

. . . . . .

I am definitely opposed to orthodox communism as a solution of the western nations' problems. In spite of the shrill thundering of my little grandchild Belknapovitch Longievsky (a true young Trotsky who loves the proletariat except when the maid burns the sirloin or is slow in answering the bell!) I have three major objections to bolshevism which leave me relatively cold toward his cherished Briffault and Strachey and Calverton.

(a) Orthodox Marxian communism is founded on a basic philosophy and metaphysics whose erroneousness is virtually certain—a system involving false and artificial values, postulating non-existent linkages and interdependences betwixt different fields of human consideration (as economics, literature, science, and art), and maintained with just as emotional and unintelligent a dogmatism as is the supernatural religion it repudiates.

(b) It aims (outside Russia, where the callow phase is disappearing) at extreme and international goals which are not only incompatible with the normal situation of mankind in nature and in the

present world of groups and races, but which violate profound psychological principles (such as the maintenance of a certain continuity in folkways, attributes, aesthetics, intellectual discipline, etc., and the exercise of independent thought and art without restriction or ulterior motives) on which the basic happiness, proper adjustment, and maximum life-rewards of sensitively organised persons depend.

(c) It sanctions and encourages methods so violent, unlawful, illiberal, arbitrary, intellectually unsound, and irresponsibly destructive, that any application of them is likely to produce infinitely more harm than good—a harm to be measured not merely in cultural and material damage, but in a subtle and more irreparable damage to human habits in thought, emotion, ethics, and social polity.

Thus I stand today somewhere among the Fabian socialists—having ideas in common with Wells, Shaw, Norman Thomas, Bertrand Russell, etc., but still believing that the only way to put rational ideas in force is to hammer them little by little into the programmes of the existing major parties and bring about their adoption through traditional avenues of legislation. If the Socialist party of Thomas (or its almost indistinguishable right wing which lately split off) had a chance of winning, I'd advocate efforts toward its election to power. Since it *hasn't* such a chance, I advocate throwing all progressive votes to whatever potentially successful party may have made (under popular pressure, to retain the votes which the smaller parties and the sporadic mass movements like Coughlinism, Townsendism, and Huey-Long-ism would otherwise capture) the most concessions in the direction of a planned economy, a guaranteed social security, and a public ownership of large resources and processes. This year I'm for the New Deal. If the La Follette party were national in scope I'd probably be for that. Little by little. Old doddering judges will die off, and new vigorous men will demand new interpretations—or amendments—of the Constitutional Sacred Cow of 1790. Methods of administration will improve when the capitalists understand that their system will never again receive public support, and release their technical experts for socially constructive purposes. England is slowly moving in the same direction, and Scandinavia is even further advanced. With patience and judgment, a rational order can be secured (barring destructive wars, or revolutions precipitated by such wars or by capitalistic reaction) in the United States in from fifty to one hundred years—and without any of the blows and

setbacks to general culture which Russia has experienced. Belknap, like Trotsky, will be disappointed—but I fancy the grief of the few is less important than the welfare of the many! Scarcely had I completed the preceding postscript when your card of the sixteenth arrived—with its depressing and staggering news from Cross Plains. I'm surely glad the books look interesting— but for the moment am engulfed by the melancholy bulletin. It seems incredible, as you say. I had a long normal letter from R. E. H. written May 13. He was worried about his mother's health, but otherwise seemed perfectly all right. If the news is indeed true, it forms weird fiction's worst blow since the passing of good old Whitehead in 1932. Scarcely anybody else in the gang had quite the driving zest and spontaneity of Brother Conan. Crom, what a year of disaster is '36! ....

..... Well, anyhow, I think he realised how keenly his work was appreciated. I hope the *Phantagraph* boys had told him about their plan to issue his *Hyborian Age* as a separate pamphlet. That ought to prove popular among Conan's thousands of admirers. Incidentally—since E. H. P. was the only one of us who ever talked with R. E. H. in person, I'm telling him that he ought to prepare a brief obituary and appreciation for *Weird Tales* as I did when good old Whitehead (whom I alone had met personally) died. Some such word is a necessity—and he is the logical author.

All good wishes—
Yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
E'ch-Pi-El.

857. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

June 20, 1936

Dear Malik:—

.....

Just had a most depressing and staggering message—a card from CLM with the report (source not given) that good old Two-Gun Bob has committed suicide. It seems incredible—I surely wish I could get a bulletin saying that the report is a mistake. 1936 certainly is a hellish

year! This loss will probably seem a more acute bereavement to you than to the others, since you are the only one of the group to have seen REH in person. But if you can feel worse than I do about it, you'll be going some. Damnation, what a loss! That bird had gifts of an order even higher than the readers of his published work could suspect, and in time would have made his mark in real literature with some folk-epic of his beloved southwest. He was a perennial fount of erudition and eloquence on this theme—and had the creative imagination to make old days live again. Mitra, what a man! It is hard to describe precisely what made his stories stand out so—but the real secret is that *he was in every one of them,* whether they were ostensibly commercial or not. He was greater than any profit-seeking policy he could adopt—for even when he outwardly made concessions to the mammon-guided editors he had an internal force and sincerity which broke through the surface and put the imprint of his personality on everything he wrote. Seldom or never did he set down a lifeless stock character or situation and leave it as such. Before he got through with it, it always took on some tinge of vitality and reality in spite of editorial orders—always drew something from his own first-hand experience and knowledge of life instead of from the herbarium of desiccated pulpish standbys. He was almost alone in his ability to create real emotions of fear and of dread suspense. Contrast his *Black Canaan* with the pallid synthetic pap comprising the rest of the current issue of *W. T.* Bloch and Derleth are clever enough technically—but for stark, living fear .... the actual smell and feel and darkness and brooding horror and impending doom that inhere in that nighted, moss-hung jungle .... what other writer is even in the running with REH? No author can excel unless he takes his work very seriously and puts himself whole-heartedly into it—and Two-Gun did just that, even when he claimed and consciously believed that he didn't. And this is the giant whom Fate had to snatch away whilst hundreds of insincere hacks continue to concoct phony ghosts and vampires and space-ships and occult detectives! I can't understand the tragedy—for although REH had a moody side expressed in his resentment against civilisation (the basis of our perennial and voluminous epistolary controversy), I always thought that this was a more or less impersonal sentiment—like Belknap's rage against the injustices of a capitalistic social order. He himself seemed to me pretty well adjusted—in an environment he loved, with plenty of congenial souls (like the "Pink"

Tyson and Tevis Clyde Smith of whom he spoke so often .... did you meet either of these when visiting Two-Gun?) to talk and travel with, and with parents whom he obviously idolised. His mother's pleural illness imposed a great strain upon both him and his father, yet I cannot think that this would be sufficient to drive his tough-fibred nervous system to self-destructive extremes. Nor was his financial state at all desperate so far as I knew. I wonder if he was alive when my last letter arrived—that must have been a week ago. Probably he never saw its 32 pages, that ended with an enthusiastic tribute to his serial and to *Black Canaan,* which I had just read. Hell! ...

Salaam—
Abdul Alhazred

858. TO WILLIAM LUMLEY

June 20, 1936

Dear Mr. Lumley:—

.. My dream of the black cat city was very fragmentary. The place was built of stone and clung to the side of a cliff like some of the towns drawn by Sime for Dunsany's stories. There are towns more or less like it in Spain. The place seemed to have been built by and for human beings aeons ago, but its present feline inhabitants had evidently lived there for ages. Nothing actually happened in this dream—it was just an isolated picture of the place, with the cats moving about in a rational and orderly manner, evidently in the performance of definite duties.

Yrs. most sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

859. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
June 25, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Very recently two of Providence's most notable colonial mansions—the John Brown & Edward Carrington

houses—were thrown open as public museums—albeit at exorbitantly high admission rates. Yesterday afternoon I explored both of them, & was not disappointed. The Brown house excels in sheer magnificence any mansion I have ever explored—from Quebec on the north to St. Augustine & New Orleans on the south. The closest parallel, perhaps, is the Brewton-Pringle house in Charleston. I enclose a folder, of which I obtained a large supply. The Carrington house (built 1809) is less classical in its symmetry, but is remarkably homelike. With its stables, courtyard, coach-houses, & extensive grounds it forms one of the finest domestic units of the Early-Republic period now on exhibition. This estate has been given to the R. I. School of Design by the last of the family (who lives in another colonial mansion coming down through another ancestral line) as a permanent museum . . . with all its original furniture, china, &c. undisturbed. I could not obtain any pictures of this place, though I am told that some will be available later. Recently I was informed of a new historical map of R. I. about to be published in connexion with the state's tercentenary, & shall endeavour to secure copies of it. I am now reading the very excellent life of Roger Williams by Emily Easton—a work which possesses particular value because of its ample delineation of its subject's London background. Aside from its depiction of colonial history, it sheds a fascinating light upon Jacobean England.

Wretched weather hereabouts—I am now shivering over an oil heater. 1936 bids fair to be a year without a summer!

Best wishes—

Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

860. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
July 1, 1936.

Dear Wright:—

Young Schwartz has persuaded me to send him a lot of manuscripts for possible placement in Great Britain, and it occurs to me that I'd

better exhaust their cisatlantic possibilities before turning them over to him. Accordingly I am going through the formality of obtaining your official rejection of the enclosed**—so that I won't feel I've overlooked any theoretical source of badly-needed revenue. In the absence of other American markets for purely weird material, I won't need to try them elsewhere—hence, if you don't mind, you might send them on after rejection to *Julius Schwartz, 255 East 188th St., New York, N. Y.,* instead of returning them to me.

. . . . . .

Yrs. most sincerely—
H. P. L.

** *The Thing on the Doorstep* and *The Haunter of the Dark.*

861. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

The Ancient Hill
July 5, 1936

Dear Malik:—

Alas—the tragic news is now all too well authenticated. A letter and local papers from Dr. Howard tell the whole sad story—which by this time you may have heard directly. If you have not received first-hand information from Cross Plains, I'll send you the material I received. Like you, I feel clubbed on the head—or as if the whole thing were a nightmare from which one might suddenly awake. In case duplicate data hasn't reached you, I'll say briefly that grief about REH's mother *was* the cause. When he was told that she could not live more than 48 hours, he entered his car, closed the doors, and shot himself through the head—never regaining consciousness and dying 8 hours later. That was June 11. His mother died the next day without regaining consciousness or knowing of his act. The shock to Dr. Howard must be devastating—wife and splendid only child gone in one dread blow. I only hope he can weather it successfully. I've just written him a letter of sympathy. His letter showed tremendous bravery, and the paper spoke of his being about to visit relatives in Missouri. One can imagine

his suffering—as well as the degree of grief which drove REH to his own desperate act. REH's library will go to his alma mater—Howard Payne College in Brownwood—as the nucleus of a Robert E. Howard Memorial Collection which will later include letters, mss., etc.

Poor old Two-Gun! His sombre, moody side—or else his general sensitiveness—must have gone deeper than we ever realised. Heaven knows the loss of a cherished parent is bad enough, but most can accept it as part of the inevitable order of things. REH's idolisation of both his parents was always manifest, but the present sad extreme was hardly to be looked for—although his father says he feared it for some time. I suppose that, in the last analysis, his desperate reaction to his grief came from the selfsame endowment of sensitiveness and imagination which made his stories stand out so. He saw everything in the heightened light of its dramatic relationships to things behind and around it, and subjectively *felt* the events of history, and the spirit and overtones of scenes and personalities, as very few are able to see and feel. Turned on the sorrow in his immediate life, this faculty must have given things an intolerable aspect and precipitated the fatal act. One could wish that, for once, he had been less of a sensitive artist!

Your impromptu reminiscence or obituary sheds a marvellously vivid light on good old Two-Gun—forming at once a revelation, and a confirmation of the impressions derived from letters. Certainly, no more vivid and likeable individual ever existed—and I can scarcely wonder that at the moment your sense of personal loss transcends that of literary loss. Even without having met REH face to face, I feel an acute individual bereavement. He had the fundamental honesty, simplicity, sincerity, and directness—the preëminently Aryan qualities—which have become so distressingly rare in modern urban life. While I basically disagreed with him regarding the superiority of barbarism over civilisation—and argued endlessly with him on that point—I respected his personality to a tremendous extent, and placed it miles above the "sophisticated" type of character. Indeed, I used him as a sort of model and example in arguing with persons like Long and Wandrei, who uphold a more disillusioned and decadent tradition. I told him how often I held him and his position up to extremists on the other side, so that he undoubtedly realised the depth and sincerity of my respect, even when I tore most vigorously into his pro-barbarian arguments. Well—he had the last word in our six-year debate, since the date of

the tragedy makes it certain that he never saw my final 32-page letter. I don't begrudge him that advantage—although I am damn sorry he couldn't have seen the two solid pages in praise of his recent work—especially *Black Canaan*—with which my bulky communication concluded. . .

But is is damn hard to realise that there's no longer any REH at Lock Box 313! I first became conscious of him as a coming leader just a decade ago—when (on a bench in Prospect Park, Brooklyn) I read *Wolfshead*. I had read his two previous short tales with pleasure, but without especially noting the author. Now—in '26—I saw that *W. T.* had landed a new big-timer of the CAS and EHP calibre. Nor was I ever disappointed in the zestful and vigorous newcomer. He made good—and how! Much as I admired him, I had no correspondence with him till 1930—for I was never a guy to butt in on people. In that year he read the reprint of my *Rats in the Walls* and instantly spotted the bit of harmless fakery whereby I had lifted a Celtic phrase (for use as an atavistic exclamation) from a footnote to an old classic—*The Sin-Eater,* by Fiona Macleod (William Sharp). He didn't realise the source of the phrase, but his sharp eye for Celtic antiquities told him it didn't quite fit—being a *Gaelic* (not *Cymric*) expression assigned to a South British locale. I myself don't know a word of any Celtic tongue, and never fancied anybody could spot the incongruity. Too charitable to suspect me of ignorant appropriation, he came to the conclusion that I followed a now-discredited theory whereby the Gaels were supposed to have preceded the Cymri in England—and wrote Satrap Pharnabazus a long and scholarly letter on the subject. Farny passed this on to me—and I couldn't rest easy until I had set the author right. Hence I dropped REH a line confessing my ignorance and telling him that I had merely picked a phrase with the right meaning from a note to a Scottish story while perfectly well aware that the language of Celtic South-Britain was really somewhat different. I could not resist adding some incidental praise of his work—echoing remarks previously made in the Eyrie. Well—he replied at length, and the result was a bulky correspondence which throve from that day to this. I value that correspondence as one of the most broadening and sharpening influences in my later years. We were constantly debating sundry historical and philosophical points, and through these arguments (as well as through many passages of sheer description) I gained a much clearer perspective on various phases of

history than I would ever have had otherwise. He made the southwest and its traditions live before my eyes—supplementing his descriptions with generous batches of pictorial matter (all now in my files) whenever he made a trip to any place of historical or scenic interest. He also sent various pertinent odds and ends such as rattlesnake rattles—with one set of which he included a page of comment so vivid and so finely phrased that I'd like to publish it some day as a prose-poem. (Indeed, I'd like to publish all his letters with their descriptive and historical riches.) I was glad to be able to reciprocate in a small way by sending him material from various points of interest which I visited. I owe to Two-Gun my pleasant sessions at 305 Rue Royale, and indeed my general introduction to the Sultan of the Peacock Throne—since as you'll recall, it was he who telegraphed you of my presence in ancient Nouvelle-Orleans in 1932. I had hoped to get to Cross Plains some time —but now I shall probably never see the village whose name I have so frequently written on envelopes and postcards.

As for his work—while the King Kull series probably forms a weird peak, I do not think the *best* of the Conan tales involve any radical falling-off. Some were pure adventure-yarns with the touch of weirdness rather extraneous, but that is not the case with *Hour of the Dragon.* His best work would probably have been regional and historical, and I was greatly pleased by his recent tendency to employ his own southwestern background in fiction. As a poet, too, he was phenomenally gifted—so that I always hoped to see a collection of his verse. His scholarship in certain lines was truly remarkable. I always gasped at his profound knowledge of history—including some of its more obscure corners—and admired still more his really astonishing *assimilation* and *vitalisation* of it. He was almost unique in his ability to *understand* and *mentally inhabit* past ages—including many without any resemblances to our own. He had the imagination to go beyond mere names and dates and get at the *actual texture of life* in the bygone periods which he studied. He could visualise all the details of every-day existence in these periods, and subjectively enter into the feelings of their inhabitants. As a result, the past was as alive for him as the present—while his grasp of *general* historical and anthropological principles enabled him to construct from pure imagination those prehistoric worlds of mystery and adventure and necromancy whose lifelike convincingness and consistent substance won such universal praise. No matter how assiduously the

profit-motivated critics and editors tried to warp him, he was always a step ahead of them—and a step ahead of himself when he seemed to listen to them. He had something to say—and all the hackneyed patterns and conventional technique in the world couldn't stop him from saying it. Nothing could squeeze the life and zest out of his work.

"He was a man—take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again."

Peace and prayer—
Abdul Alhazred

862. TO J. K. PLAISIER

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
July 8, 1936

Dear J. K. P.:—

. . The background surrounding me (despite some wavering on my aunt's part in response to my repeated arguments) is solidly old-guard Republican, whereas I myself have been increasingly a left-winger ever since the advent of the depression began to force me into real thought on the subject of economic and political trends.

I used to be a hide-bound Tory simply for traditional and antiquarian reasons—and because I had never done any real *thinking* on civics and industry and the future. The depression—and its concomitant publicisation of industrial, financial, and governmental problems—jolted me out of my lethargy and led me to reëxamine the facts of history in the light of unsentimental scientific analysis; and it was not long before I realised what an ass I had been. The liberals at whom I used to laugh were the ones who were right—for they were living in the present while I had been living in the past. They had been using science whilst I had been using romantic antiquarianism. At last I began to recognise something of the way in which capitalism works—always piling up concentrated wealth and impoverishing the bulk of the population until the strain becomes so intolerable as to force artificial reform. Sparta before Agis and Cleomenes. Rome before the Gracchi and Caesar. Al-

ways the same story. And now accelerated a thousandfold through the unprecedented conditions of mechanised industry. Well—I was converted at last, and in the spring of 1931 took the left-wing side of social and political arguments for the first time in a long life. Nor has there been any retreat. Instead, I have gone even farther toward the left—although totally rejecting the special dogmatisms of pure Marxism, which are certainly founded on definite scientific and philosophical fallacies. I am all for *continuous development* and revolutions—and it seems to me that the nations with a naturally orderly and liberal tradition have a very fair chance of developing in the proper direction without any cataclysmic upheavals. Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries are far ahead of the United States, but even the latter is coming along despite its ingrained tradition of harsh acquisitiveness. So today I am a New Dealer—perfectly conscious of the waste and bungling necessarily connected with experimentation, but convinced that open-minded experiment with all its faults is vastly better than efficient and economical progress toward the *wrong goal.*

. . . . . .

Yrs. most sincerely,
H. P L.

863. TO RHEINHART KLEINER

The Ancient Hill
July 11, 1936

Dear St. John:—

. . . . . .

I am writing this in the grey dawn as I struggle with temptation. Shall I take advantage of the increased mental power brought by the hot weather and get some work done, or shall I take advantage of the glorious days and squander 10 hours—and 50¢—on a boat trip to Newport, with 6 hours allotted to the exploration of that ancient seaport? The absence of a postcard following this epistle will indicate that duty has conquered. A Newport card will attest the triumph of the siren pleasure!

Patriarchal blessings—
Theobaldus

864. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

The Antient Hill
July 23, 1936

Venerable Ar-Ech-Bei:—

. . . .

On July 18-19 came the long-heralded visit of good old Moe—and *this* time I was properly on hand to receive him instead of 1500-odd miles away! He came with his gifted electrical-engineer son Robert of Bridgeport, Conn.—the latter the youth who was here with his car in the spring of '35. It was my first sight of the old boy in 13 years, and I fancy he found more change in Grandpa than I did in him. Young Bob brought him in the car, and we covered quite a bit of scenic and historic ground in the all-too-brief span of 2 days. We went to the quaint quondam fishing village of Pawtuxet (on a picturesque cove 6 m. S. of Providence's civic centre—now overtaken by the expanding network of city streets. I watched Sultan Malik eat a clam dinner there in '33), ascended old Fort Independence (on the bay's W. shore, with a magnificent view of the city skyline on the N. and of the blue water and green shores on the S.), wound through the foliage-shaded driveways of Roger Williams Park, traversed the deep woods and colonial farm-lands N. of the city, and as a climax repeated the Warren-Bristol drive which young Bob and I took in March of last year. This was infinitely more enjoyable in July than in March, and the ancient seaport villages (e. shore of the bay) displayed their colonial doorways and giant elms to maximum advantage. We also took the seaside drive on Poppasquash Neck—a sub-peninsula attached to the main Bristol peninsula. In Warren we had an all-ice-cream dinner at Maxfield's (that famous gang headquarters where Cook, Morton, Munn, Wandrei, and many another titan has gorged)—mine consisting of grape, pineapple, peach, raspberry, banana, and chocolate chip. Old Mocrates fell down after 2½ pints, but his son downed 3 pints with ease and avidity, and would have been good for 3 pints more. Weather favoured us greatly, for we had warmth and sun throughout—whereas the very next day was cold and rainy, with Grandpa heavily blanketed and shivering over an oil stove.

Last night I had an interesting view of Peltier's comet through the 12″ telescope of the Ladd Observatory (of Brown U) a mile north of here. I used to haunt this observatory 30 years ago—the director and his two assistants (all dead now—save one asst. now at Wesleyan U. in Middletown, Conn.) being infinitely tolerant of a pompous juvenile ass with grandiose astronomical ambitions! The present object showed a small disc with hazy, fan-like tail. I could have seen it through my own small telescope were the northern sky less cut off from the neighbourhood of 66. The first comet I ever observed was Borelli's—in Aug. 1903. I saw Halley's in 1910—but missed the bright one earlier in that year by being flat in bed with a hellish case of measles!

Yrs. by the Elder Sign—
HPL

865. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Antient Hill
July 25, 1936

Dauntless Defender of Devious Deciphering:—

Turning to melancholy matters—mourning prevails in Kappa Alpha Tau circles. Alas—my best friends are no more! A month ago both Mr. John Perkins (born February 1935—coal black save for a tiny white cravat) and his younger brother the Earl of Minto (born October 1935—black and white) succumb'd to some malady which is afflicting all the local felidae—a thing which may be an obscure epidemick, yet which may reflect the malign activities of some contemptible poisoner. The sad end of the brothers seem'd connected with some digestive disorder, and recall'd the equally sad fate of their bygone black brother .... little Sam Perkins, whom you met ..... in September, 1934. If this *is* the mark of some wretched neo-Borgia, I hope to gawd somebody feeds him a slow pizen a thousandfold more painful than that with which he has subtly supply'd his innocent furry victims! For a time it looked as if there'd be no more kittens at the house across the garden, since a coupla months ago the white-and-black matriarch of the clan was given away to the psychological laboratory of Brown University, where it was expected she would round out her days in ease and luxury, being used (in

conjunction with other felidae, canidae, etc.) in tests of instinct, intelligence, perception, and what-the-hell for the benefit of successive generations of students. Since the tragedy, however, old lady Perkins has been recalled from her academick career, and once more roams her accustom'd and-where—serenaded by all the gallant swains of the Kappa Alpha Tau, including the night-black, rangy Mr. Perkins Sr. She call'd here t'other day, and was duly regaled with catnip purchas'd for younger mouths!

. . .

. . The more I observe the abysmal, inspissated *ignorance* of the bulk of allegedly cultivated people—folks who think a lot of themselves and their position, and who include a vast quota of university graduates—the more I believe that something is radically wrong with conventional education and tradition. These pompous, self-complacent "best people" with their blind spots, delusions, prejudices, and callousness—poor devils who have no conception of their orientation to human history and to the cosmos—are the victims of some ingrained fallacy regarding the development and direction of cerebral energy. They don't lack brains, but have never been taught how to get the full benefit of what they have. They squander energy on the vapid and meaningless intricacies of bridge whist, yet gape like bewildered yokels at the historical and sociological changes taking place around them. They potter around with crossword and jigsaw puzzles, yet look upon the vestigia of the past with no more comprehension than that provided by flashy guidebooks and superficial (and biassed) history courses. They mull over the technicalities of football, yet lay aside only half-understood the *Harper's* to which they ostentatiously subscribe. They memorise useless gossip about people and families as commonplace as themselves, yet know no more about atoms, nebulae, and genes than a stevedore—and no more about *minerals* than *I* do! They grope blindly through a world whose landmarks are hidden from them—throwing the beams of their lanthorns on some trivial object or objects pulled out of their pockets, instead of letting those beams shine on the terrain around, behind, and ahead. They are more ridiculous than the peasants and coal-heavers they despise—for instead of merely pure ignorance they possess the hypocritical combination of ignorance plus baseless pride and complacency. As I survey the existing state of society, I am inclin'd to be more and more sympathetick with the view of such radicals as Sonny Belknap and

Briffault, that the very basis of western culture—its "ideology", as the Child wou'd say—needs some sort of overhauling and rationalisation to bring it into line with what is now known of the universe, of the trends and values in human life and organisation, and of the structure and processes of human thought and emotion. An ignorantly drifting race needs to be taught what to do with itself and its potentialities. Not that I wou'd recommend quite the *same* sort of upheaval which Belknap and Briffault advocate. They are such systematick uprooters that they wou'd like to throw overboard the useful and still-valid along with the useless and fallacious, just for the fun of throwing. Moreover, they advocate violent and sudden methods likely to cause as much avoidable harm as good. My idea wou'd be simply a sharper attention to the subject of human values and current knowledge, a systematick educational campaign among teachers and academick authorities, and a breaking-away from conventional smugness, complacency, acquiescence, and supine worldliness on the part of the essayists, journalists, and commentators who play so vast yet quiet a part in the moulding of publick opinion. However, I recognise with Belknap and Briffault that all rational improvement is vastly hampered by the prevalence of the profit-motive. Commercial aims and ideals are the death of rationality and beauty in human life. As I advance in years and reflect in a more and more impersonal way, I realise that *socialism* of some kind is essential to any genuine, profound, and humane civilisation. I do not think that Marxian communism is the right sort, since it involves as many fresh fallacies as remedies. But certainly competitive plutocracy must be dethroned somehow. The only decent government is one which keeps economick affairs within its control; assuring a livelihood to all, and preventing the waste and duplication of competitive effort. It ought to be administered by a small board of highly trained executives with centralised power, of the same race and background as those of the nation as a whole, and chosen (after psychological and educational tests necessary for candidacy) by the vote of such citizens as can pass a certain reasonable set of mental, scholastic, and cultural examinations. Whether such a kind of government can ever be attained by any existing Aryan nation, we cannot say. All that we know is that it is the only kind of government worth working toward. Our generation can never hope to see it—but we can at least favour every slight feasible change which leads toward it, and oppose every slogan-inspired force of reaction which leads away

from it. I am not for Earl Browder's Communist Party but for the New Deal—yet, after all, my cleavage from the basic ideals of Belknap and Briffault is probably not as great as my cleavage from those of Hoover and Landon and Ogden Mills and J. P. Morgan. The only points where I line up with the Republican-plutocratick corpses and racketeers against the Marxists and Calvertonians are (1) my insistence on a general preservation of the mainstream of western culture, and (2) my repudiation of widespread social revolution as a shortcut to a rational political and economick order. . . . .

. . . . . .

Yr. obt. Servt.—
Theobaldus Perkins

866. TO WILLIS CONOVER

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
July 29, 1936

Dear Mr. Conover:—

. . .

. . Years ago I wrote voluminously for the *amateur* press under a dozen or more different aliases, although some of my revisory or "ghost writing" jobs for others virtually amount to stories of mine written under other names. Don't mention this latter point in print, though, for it would be rather bad professional ethics to claim virtual authorship of work done for clients. No stories in magazines other than of the weird or science group—except a fantasy in *The Galleon* a year or so ago. Bits of verse here and there at very infrequent intervals. Am also active in the National *Amateur* Press Association (of which I'll send you details if you like), contributing criticism, etc. . . . .

Now about the "terrible and forbidden books"—I am forced to say that most of them are purely imaginary. There never was any Abdul Alhazred or *Necronomicon,* for I invented these names myself. Robert Bloch devised the idea of Ludvig Prinn and his *De Vermis Mysteriis,* while the *Book of Eibon* is an invention of Clark Ashton Smith's. The

late Robert E. Howard is responsible for Friedrich von Junzt and his *Unaussprechlichen Kulten.* . . . . . .

As for seriously-written books on dark, occult, and supernatural themes—in all truth they don't amount to much. That is why it's more fun to invent mythical works like the *Necronomicon* and *Book of Eibon.* The magical lore which superstitious people really believed, and which trickled down to the Middle Ages from antiquity, was really nothing more than a lot of childish invocations and formulae for raising daemons etc., plus systems of speculation as dry as the orthodox philosophies. It was merely a lot of ill-assorted odds and ends—memories of Graeco-Roman mystery-cults, Pythagorean speculation (embodying ideas from India), Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, and Jewish magic, and the Neoplatonism and Manichaeism of the late Roman Empire. The Alexandrian Jews were probably most active in keeping it alive—hence the preponderance of Jewish Kabbalism in the puerile mixture. The Byzantines and Arabs also clung to such stuff—to which was added the scraps of popular European superstition (Latin, Teutonic, Celtic), and the dark lore of the furtive Dianic cults (responsible for witches' Sabbats etc.) which perpetuated the revolting remnants of a lost pre-Aryan nature-worship. All this lore was disconnected and fragmentary, and there was never any especial *book* holding a large amount of it. . . It is not until *modern times* that we see any attempt to collect and codify these scraps. What the mediaeval and renaissance philosophers and "magicians" wrote is mostly namby-pamby stuff of their own devising—plus the popular folklore of their day. (cf. Paracelsus, etc.). The first serious collection of ancient magical scraps was Francis Barrett's *The Magus*—published in 1805 or so and reprinted in 1896. The first *really scholarly* material of the sort was the work of the eccentric Frenchman Alphonse-Louis Constant (middle of 19th century), who wrote under the pseudonym of "Eliphas Levi". More compilation of the same kind has been done by Arthur Edward Waite (still living, I believe)—who has also translated "Eliphas Levi's" books into English. If you want to see what the actual "magical" rites and incantations of antiquity and the Middle Ages were like, get the works of Waite—especially his *Black Magic* and *History of Magic.* Sorry I don't own these—if I did I'd be glad to lend them. Other stuff can be found in Waite's translations of "Eliphas Levi". There is a more popular history of sorcery by "Sax Rohmer" (Arthur Sarsfield Ward), whose title I

forget. But you will undoubtedly find all this stuff very disappointing It is flat, childish, pompous, and unconvincing—merely a record of human childishness and gullibility in past ages. Any good fiction-writer can think up "records of primal horror" which surpass in imaginative force any occult production which has sprung from genuine credulousness. . . .

. . . . . .

Yrs. most sincerely—
H. P. Lovecraft

867. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

July 29, 1936

Dear Malik:—

. . As for *W. T.* reprints—I can't, as I believe I said once before, quite bring myself to endorse your position. The primary purpose of any legitimate enterprise is to fill a need—and there is a need of making certain old-time weird material available for a new generation of readers who could not otherwise gain access to it. Anything which tends to defeat the supplying of that need is, as I view it, to be deplored. All *artificial restriction*—of any kind—grates on some facet of my personality . . . . indeed, the A.A.A.'s efforts toward crop control form the one thing about the New Deal whose basic principle I cannot endorse. I believe that surplus crops should be purchased by the government for charitable distribution instead of merely not grown. There is something wrong in any economic order which encourages the act of *keeping things away from people* for reasons of profit. I believe in doing everything possible toward securing the widest possible circulation for everything which is worth circulating. If such a course makes it impossible for the creators of material to secure an adequate return, then the system needs repair or oversight of some sort. But the creation of an artificial scarcity is not the proper course. Of that, I am convinced. The longer I live, the more tolerant I tend to become toward Belknap's radical position. Not that I could swallow orthodox Marxism as he does, but that I do believe in the adoption of a more or less socialistic pattern in which individual survival can be assured with less sacrifice of the general wel-

fare. Socially useless competition, and profit secured through depriving others of what they might readily have, represents a fundamental *waste* of something or other which alienates me. A better economist or sociologist could phrase my vague position better than I can—but perhaps the general drift is comprehensible. I believe in adequate payment for service performed—but service is not *restriction*. Anything which is good for the public ought to be made as widely available to the public as it reasonably can be. When restriction becomes necessary for anyone's survival, something is wrong somewhere.

Getting back to the case of *W. T.*—of course Wright ought to pay for the reprints (as he once *did* pay Quinn), and the only reason for letting him make them free at the present juncture is the precarious fiscal state of the magazine. That aspect of the matter is frankly a *favour* extended as an extraordinary measure at a time of extraordinary emergency. But there cannot be any valid objection against *paid reprints* in reasonable proportion. Every decade or so a new crop of readers arises and becomes curious about the stories of the past. Among those stories are several which the new-comers (especially in view of the highly special nature of the field) really ought to see. If the material is easily available in book form, well and good. If not, it ought to be reprinted. Not to reprint it would be an injustice to the faithful circle of readers. That the demand is genuine is proved by the vast number of youngsters who have asked me to lend them my old mss.—which I have always done at a terrific cost of wear and tear. Of course this does not apply to *some* of the reprinting which Wright has done—using up space on famous old classics which any public library could supply. But it *does* apply to certain obscure but desirable items which have anciently appeared in *W. T.* or elsewhere. It would have been simply barbarous to prevent the present generation from reading *The Canal, The Night Wire, Bells of Oceana, The Floor Above, Beyond the Door,* etc. If this is "poor business", then I say damn business!

Academically, I can see your side of the matter—but the contrary view is rooted deep in my basic philosophy of life. I can never countenance commercialism as an ultimate object, nor feel any lasting or genuine sympathy with its methods. It is of course necessary that every individual be provided with food, clothing, and lodging, but I can never accustom myself to the idea of acquisition as a primary object. That is, I can never think of the expenditure of effort in direct terms of profit. With

me, objects are (1) the creation of something of intrinsic excellence if possible, and (2) the supplying of genuine needs. If my own survival cannot be ensured as an incidental to the pursuit of these objects, then I feel that something is wrong. Just what to do about it I cannot tell—but the acknowledgment of the difficulty does not alter my basic instincts and emotions. My tentative idea of a solution is to *separate* the problem of food, clothing, and lodging from one's most serious effort—putting forth *secondary* efforts toward physical survival while keeping primary efforts dedicated to the original objects of intrinsic excellence and general contribution. The "business spirit" and I can never have any point of contact. Much as I have laughed at Belknap's avowed attitude, there is probably a less impassable gulf betwixt it and my own than betwixt the commercial attitude and my own. My aesthetic and scientific feelings are equally outraged at the *waste of human energy* involved in competitive, profit-seeking effort which neither creates anything of excellence nor concerns itself with the maximum service of existing needs. Of course cheap weird fiction is a pretty small field, and some might think it a bit absurd in me to link its peanut problems with any expansive philosophy of life. Be that as it may. Some have a tendency to appear comical by seeing the general in the particular and the minute. I can't help the way I'm made! I recognise the theoretical absurdity of acting in accordance with a standard not generally adopted or recognised—of being uncommercial while all who deal with me are commercial. Wright undoubtedly wants to reprint things for *commercial* reasons, and I shall let him for *uncommercial* reasons. Paradoxical? Undoubtedly! But the fact remains that I am always at a lethargic standstill except when acting from one or the other of the motives which seem valid and rational to me—the creation of something as good as I can make it, and the performance of a service which needs performing. That most others aren't similarly constructed is damn fortunate for them! I can objectively envisage the purely commercial attitude as regards the production and marketing of fiction, and could sympathise with it more if I were less interested in good writing and the circulation of sincerely written material as ends in themselves. . . Even as it is, I can understand why those who *do* regard writing as a business are anxious that its marketing operations be conducted according to the ethics traditionally recognised in competitive commerce. I can sympathise with such anxiety as long as it does not adversely affect the things I regard as paramount—excellence

and faithful recording of material, and maximum circulation of anything worth circulating. Thus, while holding the attitude I do, I have not the least quarrel or criticism to offer those who hold the opposite attitude. They are probably more sensible realists than I. Certainly, they will get farther in the world! But Yuggoth, what a lot of talk about imponderables!

. . . . .

I endorse all that you say of the superior intelligence of the felidae. Never have I been able to associate the docile servility and satellitism of the canidae with mental power. Zoölogists seem to consider the cerebration of cats and dogs about 50-50—but my respect always goes to the cool, sure, impersonal, delicately poised feline who minds his business and never slobbers—the aristocratic, epicurean philosopher who knows what he wants and tells interlopers to go to hell. There is no credit in having a dog attached to one—for a dog can be conditioned to become anybody's slave and property. But a cat is nobody's slave. You do not *own* a cat. If one lives in your home, it is because he regards your way of life favourably, and accepts you as a friend, as one gentleman accepts another. He takes no kicks or insolence from anyone. If you are not worthy to associate with him, he will depart to seek an environment more suited to a gentleman's taste. Therefore he who retains the respect and companionship of a feline has proved himself to be essentially a superior citizen. For a human being, membership in the Kappa Alpha Tau forms a badge of distinction. Many are the eminent names on that membership list—Mahomet himself, Richelieu, Poe, Baudelaire . . . . one could catalogue them endlessly. Certainly, I ask no greater honour than to be accounted a citizen of Ulthar beyond the River Skai!

Well—Salaam alietum!
Abdul Alhazred

868. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
July 31, 1936

Almost simultaneously with RHB came a loan-exhibit of Clark Ashton Smith's grotesque miniature sculpture. It includes some magnificent items —as Barlow & I agree.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . About that "Director of the Providence Observatory" business—it is a *pure joke.* There never was such an observatory, & I've never been the director of anything! It all arose when the editor of one of the "fan" magazines saw a childhood amateur paper of mine—the *Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy,* which I issued on a hectograph when I was 12 & 13 & 14 years old. In those days I childishly called my own set of astronomical instruments "The Providence Observatory", & named myself as "director". The "fan" editor, not realising that the paper was a "kid" venture, published as an item that I was once "Director of the Prov. Observatory"—a thing which evoked many laughs until I officially explained & contradicted it. . . . . .

The recent spell of warm weather helped me greatly—making me feel really active & vigorous for the first time in 1936. I made the most of it & succeeded in getting more work done in a *week* than I can ordinarily get done in a *month.* Also took an interesting trip to Newport by boat—enjoying the ancient town, & getting considerable writing done on the rocky oceanward cliffs.

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Of the latest pleasant news you are probably aware already, since the visitor who creates it paused to see you in Washington. Little Bobby arrived here July 28, & I was so glad to see him that I forgave him the fierce moustache & side-whiskers! He has taken quarters at the boarding-house across the garden, & is surely a most congenial neighbour! Hope

I shan't bore him shewing him sights! Just now he seems intent on buying up all the old books in Providence's myriad shops.

All good wishes—
Yrs most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

869. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

August, 1936

Dear Miss Moore:—

. . . . . What do the taxpayers expect—a stable nation while millions starve and move toward justified revolt because of an obsolete governmental policy favouring individual accumulation by the few people lucky enough to get any of the decreasing number of jobs? If such taxpayers aren't willing to let their net incomes be lowered for the sake of greater national stability I hope to gawd some new government will withdraw the protection whereby their artificial ideas of what they "ought" to earn were formed! Of course, this is not to say that all tax laws—passed hastily and against savage self opposition—are theoretically perfect in their equitability, or that the disposition of funds is always wise and efficient. What does one expect in an age of bewildered transition and novel situations—an age when neither men nor methods can be thoroughly appraised in advance of suddenly-needed steps? The most faults of the New Deal are those to which the stupid mass of voters force it. Certainly, it is a desperate matter to get the money needed for civilised governmental activities when vast amounts are hoarded and diverted into socially useless channels as private profits. *That* is the true "waste"—allowing the large-scale commerce and manufacture of the nation to corral for useless private gain the resources and profits which logically and ethically belong to the public for social use. But so far the herd is too dull to back up any sudden and universal acquisition of basic industry by the government. It demands that resources still be wasted in private channels. Hence no government can get in power unless it attempts seemingly incompatible things—the feeding of the people on the one hand, and the continuance of private industry and profit on the other hand. For years it will be necessary for govern-

ments to continue this farce—socialising industry imperceptibly and under cover without using the *name* of "socialism" (how my doddering generation of has-beens shudders at the name!), and voluntarily acquiescing in waste and inefficiency for the sake of the dying ideal of capitalism. We can't blame them for this—for if any party *called* itself "socialistic", the herd would turn against it and vote in a gang of blind reactionaries who would quickly starve them into a red revolution ten times more radical and sanguinary than the peaceful change they rejected! That's merely human nature . . . what a piece of work is man! It is, then, absolutely necessary that imperative changes be adopted *slowly and half-secretly*—just as the wise Octavianus Augustus established a vitally imperative imperium Romanum whilst preserving in every outward detail the forms and rituals and nomenclature of the obsolete and unworkable senatorial respublica. Shrewd ol' Gus—he had himself "elected" consul of the "republic" year after year, whilst the conscript fathers doddered emptily on in the old Hooverite (or Catonian or what-have-you) way without any further power to cause poverty and mischief and revolt! Well—if anybody is treading the commonsense Via Octaviana any better than the consul Franclinius is treading it today, I have yet to recognise him. He has what no mere profit-grabber on the one hand, or sullen peasant or artisan on the other hand, could possibly have—the *historick perspective* of the scholar and gentleman. It is not by chance that the best popular leaders (Agis, the Gracchi, Caesar,—take your pick!) come from the educated, far-seeing, and relatively disinterested gentry as opposed to the trading and working classes. It is one of the great excuses of aristocracy that it educates well-perspectived leaders capable of curtailing its own privileges—and those of the plutocracy—in favour of the whole social fabric. F. D. R. may have his weak points—love of approval, choice of tortuous methods where boldness might succeed, etc. etc.—but I certainly think he has three essentials which make him the only rational choice of the nation at this juncture: (1) *A genuine conception of the changes needed at this historic period;* (2) *A clear determination to work toward a goal historically right rather than momentarily expedient;* and (3) *a sensible willingness to humour the stupid herd and work slowly and imperceptibly—thus making his reforms actually possible in the long run.* . . . . . .

As for the Republicans—how can one regard seriously a frightened, greedy, nostalgic huddle of tradesmen and lucky idlers who shut their

eyes to history and science, steel their emotions against decent human sympathy, cling to sordid and provincial ideals exalting sheer acquisitiveness and condoning artificial hardship for the non-materially-shrewd, dwell smugly and sentimentally in a distorted dream-cosmos of outmoded phrases and principles and attitudes based on the bygone agricultural-handicraft world, and revel in (consciously or unconsciously) mendacious assumptions (such as the notion that *real liberty* is synonymous with the single detail of *unrestricted economic license,* or that a rational planning of resource-distribution would contravene some vague and mystical "American heritage"—economic oversight, price-fixing, "government in business", etc. recur often in American colonial history.) utterly contrary to fact and without the slightest foundation in human experience? Intellectually, the Republican idea deserves the tolerance and respect one gives to the dead. With the physically surviving corpse—now and then a menace as it appeals to greed, timidity, inertia, ignorance, and dissatisfaction—one must take such steps as one usually takes against social obstacles. The facts are plain. We know today that the conditions of intensively mechanised industry, swift transportation, and wide-area commercial organisation are such as to intensify and accelerate a thousandfold the natural tendency of free capitalism to concentrate resources and opportunities in the hands of a few persons of exaggerated greed and shrewdness, while stripping more and more persons of any chance whatever to exchange their services or abilities for the basic necessities of life. Throughout history—even in agricultural-handicraft times—the general drift toward explosive concentration has existed and has had to be checked by periodic New Deals with "government in business"—hence Agis, Cleomenes, the Gracchi, etc. Any sane person over five ought to know this—and to recognise also how hideously and stupendously this drift is magnified and speeded up when automatic machines, administrative consolidation, "high-pressure salesmanship", and other developments of recent years become more and more universal. The laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith, Herbie Hoover, H. L. Mencken, et al. offer not the slightest hope of relief or the slightest inkling of solution. The natural curves of the "business cycle" become exaggerated until each inevitable depression is a world wide calamity for countless millions, and the mechanisation of industry throws more and more workers *permanently* out of all employment as processes of indefinite duplication make



William R. Sprenger, secretary-treasurer of *Weird Tales*; Farnsworth Wright, editor; Henry Kuttner, Robert Bloch



Kenneth Sterling

it possible for a minimum of man-power to supply every conceivable human demand in *indefinite quantity*. (Increases in demand *do not mean corresponding increases in necessary man-power*.) Never again in a laissez-faire mechanised world will any person have more than a gambler's chance of being able to exchange his skill and services for the necessities of life. For millions—more millions every decade—there will never be any "natural" jobs—not even at the wildest peaks of "business prosperity" when the lucky part of the people are riding on the crest. There were 900,000 unemployed in 1928-9, at the height of the American boom, and of this vast number only a modest fraction were bums or "unemployables". Most of them were decently able citizens for whom no place could be found under a business-man-Republican scheme of things. Since then mechanical efficiency has doubled and trebled. If tomorrow we were to have a boom of Coolidge proportions, with all the rich and their lucky employees rolling in luxury, there would be at least 5,000,000 unemployed under a regime traditionally Republican. . . . .

. . . .

We know absolutely today—as absolutely as anything can ever be known—that *nothing* will ever provide employment for the entire population of a nation save the direct governmental supervision of large-scale industry and the deliberately artificial allocation of jobs to an increased number of individuals through drastic curtailments of working hours *irrespective of profits*. Governmental supervision has to be provided because private profiteers have shown their stubborn unwillingness—if not inability—to take such a line of action themselves. If private industry can meet the needed governmental terms, it can conceivably survive despite the essential silliness (tolerated, like supernatural religion, only because vestigially surviving from an earlier and obsolete milieu) of private profit. If it cannot or will not, it must be taken over (preferably peacefully—or through freezing-out by government competition) by the government and operated for the public benefit. That is a later stage—which supervision must precede. The New Deal tried to establish such supervision in the form of the N. R. A., but was so savagely opposed (and perhaps so lacking in boldness) that the effort was defeated before attaining fruition. Hence the Republican boasts of N. R. A.'s failure. Yet some precisely similar attempt will be absolutely necessary if the millions of reliefers are ever to be returned to regular industry. What have the Republicans done to provide for this

problem? As usual, nothing—except to boast that their regime would restore employment . . . which it didn't do in 1928 and could do even less today! The truth is that no nation can ever survive in the future except through a strong centralised government with full control over economic and industrial processes. To call such centralisation and control "oppressive tyranny", or to claim that it postulates a corresponding oversight over the details of private life, opinion, expression, art, intellect, etc., is simply to lie or be a fool. I do not think the Republicans can delude many when they try to claim that a decent economic control by the government implies a Nazi-like cultural purge or interference with free scholarship and utterance and general individual folkways. That is as silly as their claim that a rationalised world would not allow distinguished ability to reap a fairly-proportioned reward—as if even Soviet Russia did not pay her executives and scientists more than she pays her ditch-diggers! But then, Republicans seem to resent the loss of *unearned* rewards (profit to merely sharp and lucky grabbers) more than any possible loss of *earned* rewards! Another irony . . . when Dr. Tugwell tries to help certain families by aiding their voluntary settlement in new regions, Republicans howl about the invasion and control of private life by the state. How about the slavery in which *private corporations* hold their victims until they finally cast them adrift penniless? How about the arbitrarily assigned cottages, company stores, etc. etc. encountered by industrial vassals in mining and mill villages? Is this freedom? Perhaps not, but the staunch Americanism of the Republicans never seems to rebel at slavery imposed by their private business favourites. Business is the beloved juggernaut beneath which anything—even "freedom"—may properly be sacrificed. Supervision or aid in private life offends Republicans only when rendered by the state for decently humane ends. When similar supervision, colonisation, regimentation, etc. are imposed by greedy private corporations for indecent and inhumanly acquisitive ends, no good Hooverite ever takes offence! Thus it goes—the Republican principle always standing squarely in the way of all necessary progress. It is the principle of retrogression, chaos, and death—demanding the retention of vicious and meaningless values and practices which must be superseded if the nation is to escape explosion. Its only remaining appeals are those of sentimental yearning for vanished and impossible social adjustments; ignorant efficiency-respect based on the neatness with which its fa-

vourites and officials (because of long training) serve their respective limited (not the people's) ends; and frank private greed of the "*après moi, le deluge*" type. As ultimately crystallised, it is the heritage of the vulgar "Flesh Age" of coarse and traditionless cut-throatism which followed the Civil War. Its greatest contemporary need is a decent burial.

. . . . . .

But I am far from uncritical of the present administration. It seems to me to have the twin faults of poor coördination and timidity. It has held over too much of traditional political methods—Farleyism, etc.—and has tolerated distinct incompatibilities and inefficiencies. It is also too subservient to capitalism. Probably even now, despite an instinct in the right direction, President Roosevelt is unwilling to introduce the amount of real socialism demanded by circumstances. He probably speaks the language of capitalism even more than the temper of the public demands. Nor has he met the Supreme Court and other reactionary influences as boldly and decisively as he might. He knows the way and follows the people in it, but is not quite a leader. However—what better man is on the scene? What other party has even approximately the right goal? If the New Deal isn't moving the country forward *much,* what other system seems likely to move it forward *at all,* or even to keep it from retrograding and going on the rocks? History —both ancient and contemporary—shows what is taking place. Socialism is inevitable in an industrially mechanised world. How shall we achieve it? By revolution, and perhaps with a chaotic upheaval destructive of our choicest traditions, or by gradual development, with a full preservation of our way of life and cultural heritage? It is for the people to choose. The voter may look about, analyse, and decide for himself what major organised party (i. e., what party with any chance of seating its nominees) represents least imperfectly the line of social and economic evolution which the nation certainly *must* follow in the end.

Yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
E'ch-Pi-El.

870. TO MRS. MAYTE E. SUTTON

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.
August 6, 1936

Dear Mrs. Sutton:—

. . . . . The hot spell of mid-July was certainly welcome, and I really think it saved me from a sort of general breakdown, nervous and digestive. I was just about "all in" with the exhaustion of cold weather when the life-giving heat struck Providence on July 8. In two days I was in splendid shape—fatigue vanished, nerves relaxed, and digestion rapidly cleared up. In the 6 days of really hot weather I accomplished more than in all six *weeks* preceding. When the heat waned, my extra vigour and alertness declined—but I have not fallen back into quite the morass I was in before. I am certainly an idiot to continue living in this subarctic climate—but that's what attachment to native and ancestral soil will do! My aunt (who likes cold as well as I do heat) continues to improve in a very satisfactory way. . . . . .

H. P. Lovecraft

871. TO WILLIS CONOVER

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
August 14, 1936

Dear Conover:—

. . . . . .

About reproducing parts of letters—I don't know of anything especially private in mine, except that I wouldn't wish any opinion or implication derogatory to a fellow-writer to appear. . . .

. . . . . .

Your catalogue of hellish and forbidden books sounds highly impressive, and the very names make me shudder. Of only one have I ever heard before—this being (can I bring myself to write the dreaded

words?) Mülder's infamous *Ghorl Nigral.* I even saw a copy of this once—though I never opened or glanced within it. It was many years ago in Arkham—at the library of the Miskatonic University. I was in a shadowy corner of the great reading-room, and noticed a huge volume in somebody's hands across the table from me. The reader's head was completely hidden by the massive tome, but on the book itself I could descry the words "Ghorl Nigral" in an archaic Gothic lettering. What I knew of it made me shudder—and I felt vaguely alarmed when others began glancing at the silent reader and quietly edging out of the room one by one. When I saw that I was wholly alone but for the unspeaking page-turner, my feeling of disquiet became almost overpowering—and I too edged toward the door .... keeping my eyes resolutely away from the reader for some unknown reason or other. Then I saw that the room was growing very dark, though the afternoon was by no means spent. I stumbled over a chair, and gave vent to a wholly involuntary cry—but heard no answering sound. At this point came a horrible glare of lightning and a deafening stroke of thunder, though those outside the building observed no sign of a storm. Attendants came running in, and someone brought a candle after the lights were found out of commission. The man who had been reading was dead, and his face was not pleasant to contemplate. He had a queerly foreign look, and his hair and beard seemed to adhere in unhealthy patches. The book, from which all eyes were sedulously averted, was tightly clasped in the brown, bony hands—and the attendants seemed slow in trying to dislodge it. When at length they did so, they encountered something very singular. For the hands, instead of releasing the book, came irregularly off at the wrists amid a cloud of red dust—whilst the body, pulled forward by the attempt, collapsed suddenly to a powder, leaving only a heap of greenishly mouldering clothes in the chair. Those clothes were later identified as belonging to a man buried 30 years before—whose tomb in Christchurch Cemetery was found to be empty. Never since that day has the *Ghorl Nigral* been taken from its locked vault in the library basement.

Yrs. most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

872. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

The Ancient Hill
August 27, 1936

Dear Malik:—

Yours of July 30 and of Aug. 7 found the Mad Arab doubly mad with a turmoil of conflicting social, epistolary, and near-literary duties. A certain revision job *must* be done by Sept. 1st—letters *must* be answered—and guests *must* be kept entertained. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young! For be it known, the young sage Ar Ech-Bei is not the only lettered visitor to brighten my ignoble threshold. On August 6 there loomed ponderously on the horizon the microscopic but venerable figure of our versatile old college chum Adophe de Castro—whom I had not seen in person since 1928! He was returning from a melancholy pilgrimage to Boston to deposit his late wife's ashes in the sea in accordance with her ante-mortem request, and spent 5 days in Providentium's archaic atmosphere. One afternoon he, Barlow, and I sat on a tomb in the hidden churchyard and wrote rhymed acrostics on the name of *Edgar Allan Poe*—who 90 years ago wandered among those selfsame slabs and mounds when visiting the town. . .

. . . . .

Salaam—
Abdul Alhazred

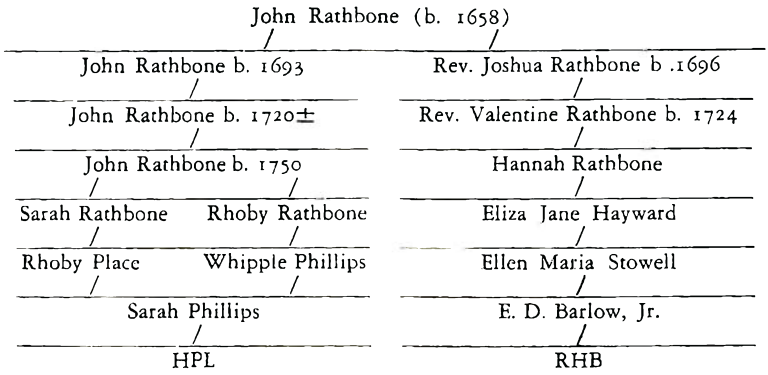
873. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
August 27, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

I surely was pleased to see young RHB when he breezed in—although I think he'd look a bit better minus the whiskerage. I'm an advocate of the 18th century clean shave. We've been seeing all the local sights & museums, & have done some research on the New England

lines in the visitor's ancestry. It appears that Barlow & I are *6th cousins* —our lines of descent from a common ancestor being as follows:



..... Many thanks for that series of articles on the Crow Indian rehabilitation—with the description of the "American Stonehenge", which I had never heard of before. This latter must be a tremendously impressive sight. I am keeping this material in my files for possible literary use. Barlow & I took a sail to Newport Aug. 15, enjoying the ancient town & the rocky sea-cliffs. On Aug. 20, we went to ancient Salem & Marblehead with some friends, exploring the original of the House of the Seven Gables & seeing other 17th & 18th century interiors. Glad *Causerie* duly arrived. Edkins is quite ill at present, but expects to be in better shape in September.

Barlow will probably be moving along toward Kansas City Sept. 1st, & he hopes to be able to arrange a stop in Washington—in which case you will see him again, whiskers & all. His health seems to have been pretty good during the past month, & I hope it will continue so.

All good wishes—

Yr most obt Servt
HPLovecraft

874. TO WILLIS CONOVER

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Aug. 29, 1936

Dear Conover:—

. . Where do I keep Yog-Sothoth at night? Alas! I *can't* keep him anywhere, since his plastic and occasionally gaseous constitution enables him to evade all terrestrial restrictions. I once tried to rent him to a vindictive fellow-scribbler, but he resented it in a very curious way. The scribbler is buried in the hidden churchyard here. . . About the pronunciation of the Outside word roughly given as *Cthulhu* in our alphabet—authorities seem to differ. Of course it is not a human name at all—having never been designed for enunciation by the vocal apparatus of Homo sapiens. The best approximation one can make is to grunt, bark, or cough the imperfectly-formed syllables *Cluh-Luh* with the tip of the tongue firmly affixed to the roof of the mouth. That is, if one is a human being. Directions for other entities are naturally different. . . . . .

Yrs. most sincerely—
E'ch-Pi-El

875. TO WILLIS CONOVER

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Sept. 1, 1936

Dear Conover:—

. . . . . .

. . . The fact is, that virtually all magazine science-fiction is synthetic tripe not worth a grown-up's time. It is simply a mess of bright ideas dragged down by infantile handling—hackneyed and lifeless plot-devices and figures—just boys' wild west stuff given an interplanetary setting with handsome young space-pilots instead of cowboys and

sheriffs, and "Martians" and "moon-men" instead of Indians and outlaws. And of course the usual superfluous rag-doll labelled "beautiful heroine". The only serious science-fiction is that outside the cheap magazines, and at the moment I can think of only three persons who produce it—H. G. Wells, S. Fowler Wright, and W. Olaf Stapledon.

. . Has Yog-Sothoth a pedigree? No. He always existed. Since he has no parents, I've never met 'em. He isn't housebroken, so I generally try to chain him outside. When he sends forth a pseudopodic tentacle (which can pass through the most solid walls) and begins to grope around inside the house, I usually call his attention to something going on in another galaxy--just to get his mind off local things. Yog doesn't *always* have long, ropy arms, since he assumes a variety of shapes—solid, liquid, and gaseous—at will. Possibly, though, he's fondest of the form which does have 'em. I've never encouraged him to scratch my back, since those whom Yog-Sothoth touches are never seen again . . . at least, in any recognisable shape. It is not even safe to speak the name of Yog-Sothoth aloud. If we *seem* to have done so, and yet remain alive, it is merely because our merciful ignorance has caused us to mispronounce it. Yog-Sothoth's wife is the hellish cloud-like entity Shub-Niggurath, in whose honour nameless cults hold the rite of the Goat with a Thousand Young. By her he has two monstrous offspring—the evil twins Nug and Yeb. He has also begotten hellish hybrids upon the females of various organic species throughout the universes of space-time (cf. *The Dunwich Horror*). . .

. . . Regarding *stories*—the reason my placements are so limited is that my work simply doesn't fit many existing periodicals. No—I'm under no contract, but no magazine save *WT* exists which prints material of the sort I write. I have no skill at all in insincere artificial writing —the sort which produces conventional pulp tripe and succeeds in the cheap magazines. When it comes to mechanical work of that grade, I have to turn to *revision* instead. And so far as *high-grade* writing is concerned—I simply don't measure up to it. Six or seven times book-publishers have asked to see my stuff with a view to collected printing, but in each case they've turned it down in the end. By the standards of real literature, I simply don't exist—and that is equally true of all the routine hacks who fill the pulp magazines. We are the most negligible of small fry, and anyone who mistakes us for real authors is simply wasting his esteem. Pulp fiction is not the product of art, but of a sort of

calculative commercial cleverness about on a par with that of a skilled mechanic or small business man. I'd rather be a *good* plumber or bookkeeper or post-office clerk than a popular scribbler of science-fiction hokum. If you want to see *real artists* in fantasy, look outside the magazine field—at Dunsany, Blackwood, Poe, Machen, de la Mare, Bierce, the late M.R. James, etc. . . .

About *WT* covers—they are really too trivial to get angry about. If they weren't totally irrelevant and unrepresentative nudes, they'd probably be something equally awkward and trivial, even though less irrelevant. The "art" of the pulps is even worse than its fiction, if such be possible. Rankin, Utpatel, and Finlay are the only illustrators of *WT* who are worth anything. I have no objection to the nude in art—in fact, the human figure is as worthy a type of subject-matter as any other object of beauty in the visible world. But I don't see what the hell Mrs. Brundage's undressed ladies have to do with weird fiction! However—I seldom notice what the cover-design of any cheap magazine is. Only once in an age does anything worth a second glance appear. If Wright were to use a really effective weird design the bulk of his half-illiterate readers wouldn't know what it was all about, and would write scornful and ungrammatical letters to the Eyrie. The average *WT* fan never even heard of the great fantastic and macabre illustrators—John Martin, Sime, Harry Clarke, Arthur Rackham, etc. He may have heard the name Doré—but probably thinks it means a kind of a rowboat!

Yrs. most sincerely—
HPL

876. TO KENNETH STERLING

The Antient Hill
—Septr. 16, 1936

Invincible Booleywag:—

. . . . I read the old *Communist Manifesto* many years ago; & even though then wholly out of sympathy with it, was impressed by some of the isolated points it brought out. Today I would sympathise on more counts—but even so, would not give it a 100% endorsement. There is no question of the vast intelligence & far-sightedness of Marx & Engels, & of the basic importance of the large economic principles which they

discovered & formulated. The only mistake is to think that every ramification they developed, & every inference they drew, is infallibly accurate & worthy of slavishly literal following under every conceivable set of circumstances. The major discovery as to general drift is sound—but the derived system of "dialectical materialism" with its fantastic economic interpretations of everything, its linkages of totally dissimilar fields (art, science, &c) with economics, & its assumptions (disregarding dozens of potent historic & psychological factors) of the utter inevitability of certain courses, is no more to be accepted uncritically than are the kindred philosophic generalisations of the mediaeval schoolmen. Some people seem never able to realise that no great discovery comes forth without attendant clouds of error & half-truth. The biological deductions of Darwin were *essentially* sound—though they included many minor slips & ignored important factors later discovered. The psychological principles of Freud are fundamentally important—but they are overlaid with provoking amounts of bias & absurdity. So with Marx. The essence of his discovery is of deep & permanent value; but in building upon it both he & others were occasionally misled by a variety of inevitable factors—ethical feeling, lack of foreknowledge of mechanical developments, lack of psychological & historical perspective, irrelevant traditions of preëxisting radicalism, &c. &c. The notion of international commerce as a pacificator is patently fallacious—while the dictum that revolution would come first in a highly industrialised country has been directly reversed by the facts. The notion of the community of women is a mere dream of irresponsible extremists—repudiated by Russia, & today probably held by nobody save the Spanish anarchists. Actually, no one theory ought to be followed in planning the future of a state. Each nation & culture-stream has different desires & needs & habitual methods; & we should consult theories only in seeking guidance as to the most practicable means of attaining the individual goals chosen by each ..... provided, of course, such goals are not at variance with the obviously universal principle that every citizen of a state has a right to a job affording decent self-support.

As to the question of whether the whole western world is facing the ultimate alternative of communism or "fascism" (as that term is understood at the moment)—I think it is yet early to decide, despite certain indications in that direction. Local habits of thought & action play a great part, & the Northern nations with their long-standing traditions of

gradualism might well stand apart from the world of totalitarian dictatorships even if France were swept in. A good deal depends on the extent to which normal evolution is opposed by the reactionary classes. If the old plutocrats can keep their senses about them, & realise that they must relinquish their special privileges one by one, there is distinct hope for orderly progress. If they don't, then one must expect that irrational & violent tactics, likely to end in communism, will be used against them. The nations of Scandinavia form a very hopeful sign—for there the plutocrats are gradually backing down under the combined pressure of increased government supervision & the competing system of consumers' coöperatives. England is also well on the way. The United States has the handicap of a lawless pioneer tradition which exalts individual gain to a grotesque extent—but even here the North-European temperament has softened the savagery of reaction. We do not find—except among a few blustering old-timers, the old women of the D.A.R., & certain backward fundamentalists of Ku Klux or Black Legion calibre—much of that organised & unscrupulous reaction among us which has produced the Royalist & Croix de Feu movements in France, & the present revolt in Spain. . . Reaction—despite certain temporary spurts—is slowly giving ground among North-Europeans; & I believe that only some unforeseen retardation, or some disastrous involvement in a new world war, will check the gradual movement toward some reasonably rational & more or less socialistic form of political-economic organisation. . . . . .

Yrs. by The Elder Chaos—
Ech-Pi-El

877. TO WILLIS CONOVER

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Sept. 23, 1936

Dear Khono-Vhah:—

. . .

About length of letters—I believe my longest has been around 70 or 80 pages 8½ x 11. These were parts of historical, philosophical, liter-

ary, political, or scientific discussions, hence partook a good deal of the nature of the essay or article. I haven't time for such elephantine missives nowadays. As for the curtailment of my correspondence—as I'm telling Stickney (from whom I received a very pleasant note), this will not mean any abrupt policy of arrogant and neglectful silence. It will mean rather a cutting down of the *length and promptness* of such letters as do not absolutely demand space and speed. I immensely enjoy the new points of view, varied ideas, and diverse reactions afforded by a wide correspondence, and would be infinitely reluctant to have any drastic or large-scale elimination. Long has repudiated all correspondence except important business letters—but *I* certainly wouldn't aim for any such extreme! The one thing I *shall* have to do is to learn how to turn down requests for free revision and extended criticism. I always like to help a fellow-struggler along when I can—but correcting stories and poems is too exhausting and time-consuming a process to undertake lightly. Those who make these requests undoubtedly don't realise what a burden it is—but I shall have to dodge such responsibilities none the less.

This reminds me of your enquiry about my sadly microscopic income —an enquiry which is all right in this case, although some questionees might indeed find it a bit personal. The answer is that my professional attempts apart from fictional junk consist of just that sort of revisory work which my curious correspondents are so anxious to have me perform for them! At the moment I'm trying to whip into shape a textbook on English usage—for the head of a school in Washington. Since revision jobs are always irregular—with long gaps between—and so exhausting that one can't do them justice without a vast amount of time and energy, it follows that they aren't a very profitable source of income. If I didn't piece out by slowly using up the last few dregs of my existing property (and after disasters in 1904, 1911, and the present, those dregs are *damned* few!), I wouldn't be eating very much. But what the hell *is* one to do? I'm naturally uncommercial—I despise trade and haggling and competition and smallness in general—and good positions are few and hard to secure. If I were young again, I would take some clerical training fitting me for lucrative work—but 46 is 46! Certainly, I could not become a cheap fictional prostitute like the pulp boys—the basic idea of concocting synthetic rabble-ticklers is so nauseous to me that I *couldn't possibly* do it even if I were willing to! It's my mistake

that I never thought about money when I was young. There was no immediate want then, and I always thought it would be easy to slip into some modestly paying niche when the need might arise. I did not realise the vast gulf between sincere fiction and commercial fiction. Today I would jump at any *regular position* paying $10.00 per week or more—that being the minimum sum enabling me to eat and maintain quarters large enough to house my library, pictures, and basic family heirlooms. Whether I shall ever get such—or whether I can ever manage to make $10.00 per week *regularly* through revision and stories—I'm sure I don't know. If I can't, there's always Robert E. Howard's solution awaiting when the end of my resources is reached. Meanwhile I have developed *economy* to a fine art within the last eleven years—this being the period in which I have most fully realised my increasing peril. I do most of my own laundry, cut my own hair with a patent device that hitches on to a Gillette razor, never spend over $2.00 or $2.50 per week on food, and wear my clothes forever. Of my 4 suits, 3 date from 1925 and the newest from 1928. My overcoats are of *1915* and 1932—and my raincoat is an old topcoat of 1909. Amusingly enough, I don't especially mind these economies—for I began them late enough in life to make them seem like a rather humorous and interesting *game*. My great anxiety isn't to have *more*, but to hang on to what little I *have*. If I *did* have more cash I'd probably continue my present economies and spend it on travel. An old man doesn't need to be a gourmet or a dandy. But all the same, I wish I *could* get hold of some regular job (of any damn kind from running an elevator to editing a magazine, or from drug-clerking or night-watchmanning to teaching English or history) paying ten bucks per week or over!

. . . . . .

I'm interested in the way you prefer human flesh. De gustibus non disputandum est—but I like mine well-done. I'm particularly fond of the canned brand sold by the Black Man of the Arkham witch-cult coven and prepared in the secret cannery at Innsmouth. It is prepared only from plump, healthy bourgeois specimens (usually those sacrificed at the Sabbats and Estbats in the forest behind Arkham), and is seasoned very highly with forbidden spices grown by non-human gardeners in the walled lamaseries of Leng. I don't care overmuch for vampire-blood, but share your taste for embalming-fluid. As for authors—of

course, some are fairly plumpish, but they have an unpleasant flavour for all that. Probably because of the saturation of their tissues with alcohol.

. . . . . .

As for science-fiction, and the dividing-line betwixt literature and tripe—I think the latter can be drawn with rough accuracy, even though all lines are hazy and surrounded by a broad twilight or ambiguous zone. A work is primarily literature when it presents events in a really convincing perspective—with adequate emotional preparation for each development, honest delineation of character (without inappropriate, conventionalised, or misproportioned emotional reactions, etc.), plausible developments and motivations, absence of artificially handled melodrama and synthetic "adventure" clichés, and the sort of artistic craftsmanship which uses language gracefully and fastidiously and weaves an atmosphere of logical unfolding and momentary reality about the recorded scenes and happenings. When a work departs markedly from this standard—following cheap "action" patterns suited to juvenile taste, having absurd and inappropriate emotions figuring in the pattern, harbouring rubber-stamp characters and strained motivations, and written in an ignorant, slapdash newspaper style—it certainly is *not* even approximately literature. I leave it to your common sense, and to your interpretation of the age-statistics of the "fan" element, which sort of material preponderates in the gaudy pulps on the news-stands. If there has been improvement, it is too slight to be perceptible to the adult readers of the latest science-fiction rags. Two or three persons who waded through some of the *Astoundings* containing my recent things said the magazines were hopeless. I didn't even try to read them—although I did begin a story a few months ago (I forget its name) without having the patience and martyrdom to finish it. Not everything, of course, is equally bad—and the best of the Weinbaum stories were really good. Sterling introduced me to these—in fact, he has lent me a large envelope full of them. But of course the distance between all this and Wells is unbridgeable. I'm not saying that Wells hasn't modern successors—indeed, I especially mentioned S. Fowler Wright and W. Olaf Stapledon. There may be others—probably are. The only point I'm trying to make is that such reputable material seldom if ever gets into the pulp magazines. And this is not *my* guess. I don't read the damned

things, except for my very desultory skimming of *WT* alone. I merely repeat the consensus of the few mature friends of mine who *do* try to wade through some of them.

Do I ever use "quotations" (I think you mean *conversation or dialogue*) in my stories? Very rarely to any extent, although snatches of it occur in several. My whole theory of fantasy fiction opposes the use of dialogue on a large scale. In fantasy, the *characters* are subordinate—the *massed atmosphere and phenomena* being the important things. Third-person narration—or straight narration, anyhow—is the best way to convey atmosphere. Look over the bulk of Poe's and Dunsany's tales. Human prattle generally tends to weaken the impression. When I *do* use a bit of dialogue I am always careful to make it *realistic* rather than absurdly conventional in the usual pulp fashion.

. . . . . .

Best wishes—Yrs. by the Black Monolith
—Ech-Pi-El

878. TO VIRGIL FINLAY

September 25, 1936

Dear Monstro Ligriv:—

. . . . . I am probably the *least* sensuous of all living beings; being almost exclusively visual and quasi-abstract in imagination, and tending to view and enjoy all things as a passive, detached, and sometimes remote spectator. Those arts which appeal most to the *ideational* imagination—the sense of drama, pageantry, historic flux, collective organisation, or escape from the natural limitations of time, space, and natural law—are undoubtedly those which appeal chiefly to me. Even my strong love of architectural and decorative beauty is probably largely dependent upon the historical bearings of the forms and motifs in which I delight. I am not wholly insensible to abstract form, but seem to relish the *associative* element in art more instantly and acutely than the lyrical or mathematical element. Thus I care little on the one hand for the poetry of individual personal emotion (that is, care little from the standpoint of personal enjoyment. I *appreciate* the intrinsic value of such material, and regard it with the academic enjoyment derivable from the perception of good harmony) or on the other hand for any traditionless mod-

ern art form. I don't really revel in anything unless it *reminds* me of something else either real or visionary—unless it opens up visual avenues of linked pseudo-recollections leading to sensations of ego-expansion and liberation . . . usually bringing in the element of *time,* somehow based on the past, and harbouring hints of an elusive, intangible kind of adventurous expectancy. To "modernistic" or functional architecture and furniture I am violently and bitterly hostile—indeed, I could show you an article of mine on that theme if you were interested. . . . . .

. . . Yrs. by the Seal of Thosson—
Abdul Alhazred

879. TO KENNETH STERLING

The Antient Hill
—Septr. 26, 1936

Trans-Terrestrial Booleywag:—

. . . . . .

I am profoundly sceptical of all the dogmata of the Marxists (as also of those of the plutocrats), for they seem to me founded on certain 19th century artificialities of philosophy. There is a tremendous overemphasis on "class"—regarding as fixed & typical something which in Europe is more or less fluid, & only one element among many—& a tremendous underemphasis on loyalty to the national or cultural group. The plain natural fact that *any* Englishman would stand up for England against *any* outside foe of any "class" whatsoever—a fact behind which stand a profound & complex range of biological & psychological causes—is overlooked in the anxiety to stress another kind of division of mankind. It is true that Englishmen suffering oppression hate the more fortunate Englishmen responsible for their state; but this hatred is *less* than is their hatred of any serious disruption of the traditional English fabric (speech, mode of daily life, freedom from control outside England, &c. &c.) around them. They would never join in any concerted action with alien proletariats—whose similar economic plight in no way lessens their basic dissimilarity & incomprehensibility in all the major departments of life. And this goes for the proletariat of all nations having a settled history & well-defined culture-stream. Their own group—their family,

as it were—comes first. House cleaning is an internal process to be accomplished in one's own way. "Internationalism" is a delusion & a myth except so far as an intelligent policy of non-aggression, compromise, & conciliation is concerned.

"Class-consciousness" I hold to be a vicious principle—vicious alike in the nobleman & in the stevedore. "Classes" are something to be got rid of or minimised—not to be officially recognised. The only human units which merit recognition are the individual & the state—which latter ought to coincide as much as possible with a general culture-group. It is the business of the individual to see that he obtains a decent adjustment—proportionate to his loyalty & to his willingness & ability to contribute service to the state. If he cannot secure this adjustment without combining with other individuals at a similar disadvantage, well & good. Temporary alliances are often necessary in desperate struggles. But it should be for his rights as an independent, unclassified citizen—not as a member of some artificial "class"—that he fights. And alliances with other oppressed individuals *outside* one's own nation are often dangerous. If in some general clash of "have-nots" with "haves" the whole cultural unity of a group were to perish, the physical survivors would not have enough left in existence to make continued life worth enduring. Life is satisfying & tolerable only when lived amidst the traditions & environmental landmarks out of which one normally developed. In correcting economic evils we must not destroy all that makes life worth living.

. . . . . .

Yrs. by the Blue Light on Leng—
Ech-Pi-El

880. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

The Antient Hill
Sept. the Last MDCCCCXXXVI

Omipresent Ar-Ech-Bei:—

Glad you've read and enjoyed *The Last Puritan*—which is certainly a major performance. It is not a novel in any realistic sense, but a bit of philosophical illustration with diagrammatic figures and didactic dia-

logue. There never were any people like the characters—but each figure is a symbol of a certain human type. The character I most respected, without question, was Oliver Alden himself. Admitting his grotesque one-sidedness—his indifference to the formal arts and his exaggeration of the sense of duty—we must acknowledge that in his basic attitude toward the universe he represents a principle so valuable and important, and so tragically missing from the cheap breed of moderns, that its existence justifies almost any overdevelopment or misapplication of it .... the principle of *art in life,* or aesthetic selectiveness as applied to personality and behaviour. A man with this principle is fortified against the cheaper aspects of his environment, and really extracts infinitely more from life than does a commonplace stallion like "Lord Jim" or an infantile coxcomb like Mario or a neurotic decadent like Peter Alden. Oliver is the one real man amidst a fantastic menagerie. If he was indeed the last embodiment of the culture which produced his (and my) generation of New-Englanders, one cannot but feel that Anglo-Saxon civilisation has lost something of infinite value. Not all the products of that culture were as exaggerated and brooding and bewildered as Oliver. Out of it have come the leaders and educators and statesmen and historians of ten generations—and that the spark has not quite flickered out is proved by the encouraging number of solid men of Oliver's age and even younger—men like Pres. Conant of Harvard (in his middle 40's), the La Farge brothers (in their 30's), and so on. A degenerate commercial psychology with whorishly vulgar and sodden values has done much to kill the essential human nobility roughly describable as "Puritanism", but if ever a sounder social and economic system is achieved under socialism, we may see something of a return. Santayana, steeped as he is in the Popish-Mediterranean tradition, is not quite the man to judge the thought-and-feeling stream of a purely Northern people. He can no more understand our aspiration for certain symmetrical adjustments to ourselves, our fellows, and the cosmos, than Leedle Meestah Stoiling—the heir of an alien and international tradition—can understand our indestructible patriotic devotion to our race and hereditary soil. Only an Anglo-Saxon could be the definitive historian of the "last Puritan" .... if such there ever is. But God knows our decadence has been bad enough! When I hear business enterprise and rugged individualism preached as a "traditional New England doctrine" I feel like putting on a set of whiskers and calling

myself Ivan Grigorievitch Protopopoff or something like that—but then on second thought I realise just *where* the tragedy lies. It isn't that such a low peasant and peddler ideal *really* characterises my native region and tradition; but that it represents an inferior strain hitherto running only on a submerged plane, but now rising to the top and pretending to represent New England because the best of New Englandism—the New Englandism of "Oliver Alden" and Emerson and Thoreau and Hawthorne—is in abeyance. . . . . And when it comes to making a thorough fool of oneself over women—hell! Compare the millions of high-grade men who *don't* with the relatively insignificant handful who *do!* You can't call the Dawson type in any sense representative—although of course it has its place in clinical science and the narrow literature thereof. The *mild* silliness over women which many men exhibit is hardly to be grouped with extremes or abnormalities such as those cited. This petty smirking and bridling is merely cheap unrestraint—perfectly normal, but aesthetically ignominious. We'd all *like* to kiss pretty girls to our dying day—but we know damn well that it would be only a repellent and sordid mockery except with the very few women who really have affection for us when we are young. Therefore the man of taste and dignity cuts off that side of his personality in toto as he ages—until the excision comes to be really natural, and he is able to converse with young women just as coolly and impersonally as if they were lamp posts, hydrants, men, old women, or no-parking signs. However, he recognises that he has performed a psychological feat which might be difficult for cruder men, hence feels more sorrow than contempt for those of his contemporaries who ogle and compliment and smirk before the ladies. The real repulsion and contempt come in only when somebody lets a woman pull him down to *profound depths* of humiliation and degradation—or when somebody forms altogether abnormal sentimental attachments in fields where no attachment could normally exist. But the wise and tasteful man regards no human creature with enough sloppy sentiment to enable that creature to make a clown of him. The one and only way that a really well-balanced man can be sentimentally victimised is when some calculating woman deems it worth her while to put on a *mask of genuine affection*—with all the convincing details of histrionic verisimilitude. There is *no* getting around that, unless one is an expert psychologist or mind-reader . . . . and sometimes the stakes are so high (as when an adventuress wants to marry a social

position or fortune tied to a colourless dub, or to extort blackmail from a rich old man) that a woman will put all her skill and energies into such a stunt. Her victim will be made to think that she *actually loves him*—hence in "responding" (as *he* thinks) he is doing nothing in the least ignominious. Of course, a very old or very ugly man ought to *know* that no woman could care for him, hence to suspect the advances of any affable beauty who says she does—but that is an error of *judgment* and not of *taste*. The same poor devil would never offer advances to a woman on his own initiative. He may be a sap, but he's no slop-over. Such men do not forfeit our respect—and when the showdown comes we sympathise with them instead of laughing at them. They are our own sort—but with the odds against them. Not one of us but *could* be put on the spot in the same way if we had enough money or power to make us logical prey for the most adroit and capable type of adventuress. Poverty and obscurity have their advantages—for they practically guarantee us dead-broke old nonentities against the tragic humiliations and ignominies to which our more materially fortunate contemporaries are constantly exposed. Novels could be—and probably have been—written about the tragedy of rich old men who are made to believe that they have another chance at life in all its fulness—that once more they may become linked with female youth and beauty on dignified terms, so that the future will again glow with adventurous expectancy, and the common events of life take on an added significance. The higher they soar, the harder they fall—and the aftermath is ghastliness and horror. Poor old duffers . . . . their fate ought to cheer the socialist who argues that the cosmos is against private wealth! The more sensitive they are, the more complete is their shipwreck. And the tragic *normality and universality* of the situation behind such a calamity ought to make it far more potent fictional material than the rare and obscure excesses and disease-phenomena now so popular with the younger generation of novelists. Leprosy and hunchbackedness and psychoses may be poignant enough material within their narrow limits—but as major literary themes how can they compete with the humanity-wide and cosmically relentless drama of age and illusion and disappointment?

Yrs. by the Green Flame,
HPL

881. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Octr. 6, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Sorry Barlow couldn't stop in Washington on his return trip, but I fancy the group in New York—Long, Sterling, Koenig, &c.—kept him there so long that he had to hurry through the later stages of his journey. He left here Sept. 1st—& his next permanent address will be *c/o H. M. Langworthy, 810 W. 57th St. Terrace, Kansas City, Mo.* (an aunt's). His health is certainly much better than it has been for several years, & I hope it will continue to be so. He is one of the most brilliant youths I have ever met; & as soon as maturity enables him to centralise his abundant scattered energies in one definite field (& I tend to think more & more that *literature* is the one best adapted to him, despite his many other aptitudes), he will begin to produce notable work. .....

Since Barlow's departure I have been making up lost time with work & fighting the cold weather with my oil heater, (though the steam is now on). Had a pleasant visit from my friend Morton (curator of the Paterson Museum) Sept. 11-12-13, during which we visited the colonial village of Warren down the bay. Revisory duties have been heavy—especially one job for your fellow-Washingtonian Mrs. Renshaw, (a text-book for use in the School of Expression) on which I became greatly delayed.

October weather has put a stop to my outdoor reading & writing sessions, but I still take rural rambles on pleasant days when I can spare the time. Recently I've been concentrating on Neutaconkanut Hill—the great ridge west of the city, which I can see in the distance from my window—& have explored some weirdly fascinating woodlands & valleys beyond the crest which I never before visited. It is curious how one discovers new regions close at hand—even late in life. I had often been up Neutaconkanut Hill in the past—for the sake of the magnificent eastward view of outspread town, countryside, & bay—but had never realised how extensive the woods beyond the crest are. I had thought

they were merely a fringe abutting on privately owned farms. As it is, I have discovered almost a new world at my doorstep—a region of great oaks, hidden meadows starred with autumnal flowers, & crumbling remnants of colonial stone walls—which I shall probably use sooner or later in some fictional attempt. This region is much nearer the city than my favourite Quinsnicket woods, & I shall probably visit it often in future—though of course the present year's rambles will not be likely to outlast October. I hope the coming winter will not be severe, despite numerous predictions that it will be. But in any case the abundant steam heat in this house will solve the indoor problem.

Hoping that your health continues to improve, I remain

Yrs most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

882. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

The Ancient Hill
—Oct. 6, 1936

Jonckheer:—

Yours of the 2nd duly blew in, and I learn with interest of the marketing attempts you have in mind. Bless me, yes—go ahead if you have the patience—but don't expect any success. *W.T.*, Putnam's, Vanguard, Knopf, and Loring & Mussey all abandoned the idea of a collection after approaching me about the matter, and I have no notion that any other publisher would do otherwise. Just at present young Julius Schwartz (255 E. 188th St., N. Y. C.) has a lot of my MSS. as agent with a view to placing them with some British publisher (in fact, he's had 'em so long that I must enquire about them soon), but I have no expectation that he will succeed. Not long ago that brilliant new *WT* illustrator—Virgil Finlay, 302 Rand St., Rochester, N. Y.,—got in touch with me and offered to illustrate a group of my tales in case the illustrations would increase the chances of their marketability as a book. I told him there was not much prospect that any publisher would care to consider such a volume—pictures or no pictures—and warned him to use his judgment. I suggested that he discuss the proposition with Schwartz if he cared to do so—for certainly, I am done with all direct

contact with publishers. However, I'm sure I'd much rather have you act as agent than Schwartz—and rest assured that I shan't begrudge any commission which may be suggested! The only trouble is that the stuff probably won't land anywhere, thus leaving you flat despite my most liberal intentions! I fancy the present activities of Schwartz in Great Britain won't interfere with any parallel agenting on this side of the Atlantic. Do you think it would be a good idea to write young Finlay about the illustration angle? Actually, I don't believe he'd need to draw any pictures until after the acceptance of any collection which might be accepted. All he'd need to do would be to show certain specimens of his best work in *W T* or elsewhere. Anyhow, he couldn't illustrate a collection until after its contents were fully selected. But use your own judgment about all this. I leave the whole damn business entirely in your hands. A full-length novel to order (acceptance not being guaranteed) would be quite a gamble—although I'd enjoy attempting such a thing if I could get the time. Right now I'm trying to reform my programme a bit—thinning out less important correspondence, etc.—though I haven't made very striking headway so far. . .

. . . . . .

Blessings—Grandpa

883. TO VIRGIL FINLAY

October 10, 1936

Dear Monstro Ligriv:—

. . . . . My advice to anybody with any real aesthetic ability is to *divorce writing from economics*. Find any other possible sources of food and lodging, and refuse to write with any other aim than *sheer excellence* in mind. Let editors accept material *if they will take it as it is,* but tell them to go to hell when they demand that excellence be subordinated and tawdry artificial goals be substituted. The feud between art and trade—as between all human excellence or dignity and the commercial ideal—is lethal and irreconcilable. I can understand the age-old Aryan contempt for business psychology—whereby the Greeks forbade commerce to citizens and left it to slaves and Asiatics. Commercialism corrupts whatever it touches. It has been a necessary

evil during certain stages of social evolution, but I hope that some form of collectivism can some day help to extirpate its most widespread and virulent manifestations. It remains to add that the cleavage and hostility between commerce and human excellence are probably more sharply emphatic in the field of *writing* than in that of any of the other arts. Commerce is more or less adverse to *all* the arts, because it calls for goals more or less divergent from that of sheer excellence; but nowhere else is the divergence between commercial demands and genuine merit so abysmal as in the field of creative literature. . . . . In pictorial art, however, there is an important difference. Here real excellence is not so closely bound up with the manipulation of *subject-matter* as it is in literature; and of course subject-matter and its handling are all that the herd cares about one way or the other. Consequently, if a pictorial artist sets down the *objects* which the herd and its commercial spokesman grunt and squeal for, this herd and its spokesman will not try to dictate very minutely the precise *way* in which these objects are represented . . . even though the real question of artistic merit may reside (as it *cannot* in literature) in the artist's choice and development of this *way*. In other words, *real excellence in pictorial art is not hated by commerce as real excellence in literature is,* because it involves points to which commerce, and those to whom commerce caters, are blind and indifferent. A pictorial artist can conceivably make a living from his work without sacrificing his integrity. . . . .

. . . Yrs. by the Black Kaaba,
Abdul Alhazred

884. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

(The opening and concluding pages
of this letter have been lost.)

(mid-October, 1936)

****

. . . . Despite the niceness of big business-men to others in the same business, *the system behind the existence of such (great) businesses as a whole is slowly & relentlessly dispossessing so many individuals in*

walks of life invisible to "nice business people"—small farmers, miners, factory workers, clothing makers, mechanics, utility operators, &c.—*that a continuance of it will not be tolerated by a majority of the population.* The concentration & centralisation of business administration, the marketing methods which abolish the small dealer, & the invention of labour-saving machinery for quality production, have all united to produce a growing class of the permanently unemployed (once every *able* man could sooner or later get *some* kind of a job. Today, no matter how able a man is, it is only a gamble whether or not he will be one of the limited number for whom jobs can exist.), whilst the surplus of labour makes it possible for employers & corporations to reduce even those whom they *do* employ (for not all employers & corporations are as nice as big bankers!) to a state of degrading peonage. The idea of America as a "land of opportunity" has been mocked & dragged in the mud—& by the very people who ululate against those partisans of decency who try to correct the vilest abuses in "our glorious herditary pioneer American way of life & enterprise". Well—apart from all questions of ethics, this simply can't go on. It *hasn't* gone on in any other country where a comparable dilemma has developed. The bulk of the people simply won't stand for it. Private control of large resources exists only by accident—as a result of certain past conditions & of public inertia—& is upheld solely by the physical force of the majority. Were this physical force to be withdrawn, the natural resources would again—as in feudal times—be in a state of constant transfer, through force of arms, among groups of the physically strong & shrewdly organised. Capone & his racketeers gave us an idea of the general trend of an unpoliced modern world. Well—the majority have hitherto lent their physical support to existing capitalism because they believed it gave them a better deal than feudalism did. Probably they were right up to about 70 years ago—for the worst pressure of capitalism is its *recent* pressure, whilst the techniques of industry & economics did not make practical socialism possible till the last two generations. *Today,* however, the masses do not get as much from the capitalistic order as they would get from feudalism. (Capone established free soup kitchens in Chicago when that insufferable entity Hoover was puling against the rudimentary decency which produced federal public relief!) ; & the bonus march & other events of '32 show how definitely they are preparing to withdraw their physical support from the existing order. The extent to which

the masses of the dispossessed idealise racketeers & the kidnappers of rich men is an unmistakable symptom. Sooner or later, the beneficiaries of capitalism are going to lose the physical support of those who have hitherto kept their system in existence—the physical support of the masses they have neglected, ignored, & evicted from the hope of a livelihood. What will they *then* prefer—anarchy, feudalism, or socialism? Of course the plutocrats will try to delude themselves & the people up to the very last, & are obviously preparing for a sort of veiled fascism with a dole (instead of the logical spreading of honest work under government ownership of resources & federal allocation of jobs) to keep their victims quiet. . . .

The extent to which "nice people" condone the suicidal policy of the Hooverites is an eloquent commentary on the sway of emotion over reason. They have been conditioned to certain moods (as in religion), & are unable to see or think beyond them. Indeed, they suffer from just the same congenital stupidity & mass hysteria which they recognise & deplore in persons of lesser education & pretensions. If the present crisis has taught me anything, it is to ridicule the tragically emotio-traditional & basically anti-intellectual background of genteel "education". God! The utter ignorance & sappiness of the snivelling, myth-swallowing, church-going stuffed shirts who go about cackling dead slogans & spreading the heraldic tail-feathers that proclaim them self-conscious members of a close corporation of "best people"! Not that they're necessarily any *more* stupid & irrational than the rabble they hate, but that they add to an equal stupidity & irrationality the intolerable assumption of some mystical superiority unbased on personal merit. I'm all for personal merit, & used to revere aristocracy because it developed personal merit. Just as you revere your kindly plutocrats, so did I revere my kindly & honourable agrarian squires. But seven depression years in a hotbed of blind reactionaries has taught me things! . . . What some of these birds call *argument & logick!!* Now I'm beginning to wake up & see that what I used to respect was *not really aristocracy, but a set of personal qualities which aristocracy then developed better than any other system . . . a set of qualities, however, whose merit lay only in a psychology of non-calculative, non-competitive disinterestedness, truthfulness, courage, & generosity fostered by good education, minimum economic stress, & assumed position,* & JUST AS ACHIEVABLE THROUGH SOCIALISM AS THROUGH ARISTOCRACY.

It was the *fruits,* not the *mechanism,* which were worthy of respect—& today the decadent mechanism functions in vacuo, pavoninely proud of its mere skeletal essence, & no longer producing the fruits which once justify'd its existence. Hell! I'm done with it & its pretences. Best people! Best people my eye! I've reached the stage now where my aunt wants to hush me up in company, & keep me out of the sight of certain old friends. Last month, when she resignedly lamented the advent to the flat below us of a perfectly quiet & well-bred family "whom none of our friends know", I fear that my lack of sympathy was almost obtrusive. I almost went so far as to ask why I could find so little scientific vision, historic perspective, & disinterested logic in some of the precious old hens & unctuous stick-in-the-muds "whom we *do* know"! Goodbye, gentility, naive idol of my callower years! Hallelujah, I'm a bum!

The present crisis in America is part of a fight that extends deep into the core of human standards & ideology. The real clash is betwixt two philosophies of life—one of which urges that the people coöperate & employ the fruits of invention & discovery in making the process of living as easy as possible for everyone in order to liberate energies for the real development of human personality, & the other of which urges that the struggle of the jungle be prolonged—life being made very hard for those not happening to inherit resources, so that the less shrewd will be forced into an intolerable position & have a high death-rate while the shrewd & calculative multiply, fight, & cultivate an ideal of dominant shrewdness. Upholders of this second philosophy argue that only by exalting shrewdness & aggressiveness, & trampling down the non-calculative, can a nation develop the hardness necessary to excel or survive in the world-struggle. They have no confidence in the power of education, medical science, hygiene, character-training, & the discipline of legitimate work (i.e., non-profit struggle for the common welfare, or definite & rationally allocated service in exchange for an equitable stipend) to keep the race up to the necessary standard of stamina, material progressiveness, & survival-value. In other words, they ignore the modern world of science & hark back to the world of primitive man & the lower animals; where all the factors of evolution are accidental, & where consequently the prosperity of the acquisitively strong & the subordination & death of the weak are indeed elements making for progress. They evade entirely the question of different kinds of supe-

riority. When they speak of favouring the "strong & efficient" they mean only the *industrially* acquisitively strong & efficient. The man of science, artist, or philosopher who is not a good money-maker is classed with the shiftless & consigned to suffering & extermination. All values but material values, apparently, are non-existent for these hardy upholders of "our historic pioneer Americanism". Well—I have already made it plain that I have thoroughly repudiated this primitive philosophy in favour of the more scientific & contemporary one. There is really nothing else for a thoughtful & disinterested person to do. I revere tradition—am in fact preëminently an antiquarian—but can hardly see why the coarsest & crudest element in pioneer life should be singled out & worshipped as "historic Americanism". I am likewise no friend of aimless idleness—but do not see why a savage & feverish scramble for bare necessities, *made artificially hard after machinery has given us the means of easier production,* is necessarily superior to a reasonable amount of sensible work plus an intelligently outlined programme of cultural development. Nor is my reluctance to starve & kill off the weak any indication that I worship weakness *per se.* I would advocate the improvement of backward groups through education, hygiene, & eugenics—nor do I think it especially naive or ultra-idealistic in me to prefer these conscious & scientific methods to the blind, brutal, & accidental methods of primitive nature, in which real advances are merely the casual *by-products* of aimless, wasteful forces. The slyly & disingenuously raised question of "freedom" is of course a mere reactionary smoke-screen. Nobody wants to restrict the freedom of the individual in America in anything but his large-scale economic organisation—& everyone who considers this single economic element synonymous with the whole of life stands revealed as occupying a rather crude philosophic plane. What is more—this very economic freedom does not exist any more under the old order than under a possible new one. As things are, the large economic interests completely enslave the small. Reform seeks merely to transfer restriction from one group to another—the reason being that the restriction of the large will have fewer bad effects on the whole social fabric than does the present & past restriction of the small. *Some* kind of change *must* be established; since old-time Hooverism was merely pauperising more & more individuals & piling up the gunpowder for a social revolution. Even the bulk of half-awake Republicans realise that something must be done—as in the

times of Agis, Cleomenes, the Gracchi, Caesar, & Diocletianus—but the trouble is that they have no sympathy with a better state of things. All they want is to perpetuate as much of the old economic order as they safely can—their concessions to the needs of the times grudging & inadequate. . . .

I hope the coming transition can be accomplished gradually & peacefully, in the manner of the northern nations, rather than in the violent manner of Eastern, Central, & Southern Europe. The most sensible philosophy is that of Norman Thomas—but the only practical avenue actually leading to peaceful transition is the New Deal. It has its faults & limitations—but it is the only course which offers a real chance. Indeed, one of its weaknesses—its constant endorsement of the general capitalistic principle—is likewise one of its practical strong points; since the sheep-like slogan-servitude of the mob is such that voters shy off from the *label* of socialism even when they are most in need of its benefits. By clinging to the outworn shibboleths of a capitalistic vocabulary, the New Deal is able to get its mild medicine down a desperately sick but capriciously recalcitrant patient's throat. I sincerely trust it will be returned to power next month, lest all the forces now slowly set in motion be retarded, & the way paved for another crisis like that of '32. It looks to me as if all will be well—even though the reactionaries are fighting like cornered rats & lying like grammar-school bullies. As mention'd a few paragraphs back, I am amused by the savage bigotry & historick blindness of the Republican mossback element in which I am immersed. All of our old family friends are hysterical Landonites, who regard me as a sort of wild maniac or reprehensible anomaly. They read intelligent articles on the situation in *Harper's* & elsewhere (although the poor old *Atlantic* dodders on as a senile reactionary), & hear sound liberal lectures at the college, but are totally impervious to the logic and historic perspective set forth. They seem to think all authors & professors are hopeless visionaries apart from the real world, & of little use as compared with the "practical business executives" whose ignorance & myopia piled up the crisis of 1932! However—the liberal percentage of the younger generation, especially those who have taken economics, sociology, & history in college since 1930, is much higher, so that the vote of the smug, blinder-wearing second ward will not by any means possess an unbroken sunflower motif. The only young people who do not incline toward liberalism are those conventional parental echoes,

or those wholly self-centred pleasure-seekers & main-chancers, who do not think at all. The percentage of non-capitalistic sentiment rises sharply as one surveys a college personnel from its freshman class of papa-parroters to its senior class of independent thinkers. The trouble is that most of the young chaps tend to drift too far, & to become mixed up in the pseudo-scientific dogmata & violent revolutionism of orthodox Marxism. However, they are not beyond reason, & may ultimately decide to cast their lot with the rational liberal socialists & New Dealers to form a Popular Front against black Republicanism & its grotesque Townsendite & Coughlinite allies. Things are going to move more swiftly when the collegians of 1930 & later reach years of influence & take over the key posts of government from the unsettled, rheumy-eyed old bald pates of my generation. It's only the freak specimen of my generation—reared as we all were on dead platitudes in the soporific twilight of pre-war days—who can think straight & unemotionally on the issues of the present & future. All honour to Norman Thomas, FDR, Gov. Green of Rhode Island, & other 19th century products who have broken through the meshes of tradition-clogged education & savage class bias & have headed toward the light regardless of the past, of environmental prejudice, or of material consequences to themselves! There is in this emancipation something of the spirit of the *18th century* —the age of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, Paine, Hume, & others who cast aside superstition for reason & dared to think of a real application of human intelligence & decent justice to the problems of society & government. Much of this fine old spirit was killed by the resurgent greed & sentimentality of the 19th century, but a few always kept the tradition alive—St. Simon, Fourier, Comte, Robert Owen, Greeley, Dana, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Lassalle, Marx, Engels, Sidney Webb, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, William Morris, Jean Jaures, H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell—till now sentimentality & greed are at least temporarily routed once more by the prophets of an Age of Reason. The greatest peril to civilised progress—aside from an annihilative war—is some kind of basically reactionary system with enough grudging concessions to the dispossessed to make it *really work after a fashion,* & thus with the capacity to postpone indefinitely the demand of the masses for their real rights—educational, social, & economic—as human beings in a world where the great resources should be cornered by none. Laissez-faire Hoover-Mills-Mellon-Menckenism is

simply a joke which can be counted out. Unsupervised capitalism is through. But various Nazi & fascist compromises can be cooked up to save the plutocrats most of their spoils while lulling the growing army of the unpropertied with either a petty programme of *panem et circenses,* or else a system of artificially created & distributed jobs at starvation wages on the C.C.C. or W.P.A. idea. A regime of that sort, spiced with the right brand of hysterical flag-waving, sloganeering, and verbal constitution-saving, might conceivably be as stable & popular as Hitlerism—& that is what the younger & more astute babbitts of the Republican party are quietly & insidiously working toward. Preferring the more civilised alternative of socialism, I can't say that I wish them luck!

But the chief indictment of a capitalistic ideal is perhaps something deeper even than humanitarian principle—something which concerns the profound, subtle & pervasive hostility of capitalism, & of the whole essence of mercantilism, to all that is finest & most creative in the human spirit. As mentioned in the preceding pages, business & capital are the fundamental enemies of human worth in that they exalt & reward the *shrewdly acquisitive* rather than the *intrinsically superior & creative.* Pro-capitalists are prone to slobber over the "free competition" in economics which "rewards the worthy & punishes the shiftless". Very well. Let's see how the worthy are rewarded. Let us list a few of the most incontestably superior minds & personalities in the modern capitalistic world & see whether capitalism has given them its highest rewards. Albert Einstein. Romain Rolland. Bertrand Russell. H. G. Wells. George Santayana. Thomas Mann. John Dewey. W. B. Yeats. George Bernard Shaw. M. & Mme. Curie-Joliot. Heisenberg. Planck. Eddington. Jeans. Millikan. Compton. Ralph Adams Cram. Sigmund Freud. Ignacio Zuloaga. Theodore Dreiser. Julian & Aldous Huxley. Prof. G. Elliot Smith. Are these the world's richest people today? And in the past did capitalism award its highest benefits to such admittedly superior persons as Poe, Spinoza, Baudelaire, Shakespeare, Keats, & so on? Or is it just possible that the *real* beneficiaries of capitalism are *not* the truly superior, but merely *those who choose to devote their superiority to the single process of personal acquisition rather than to social service or to creative intellectual or aesthetic effort* . . . . . those, & the lucky parasites who share or inherit the fruits of their narrowly canalised superiority? "Capitalism fosters technological progress, &c. &c. &c." All right, Mr.

Hoover, but just answer three questions for an old man: (a) is technological progress very important in the long run? (b) who *makes* the technological progress— the capitalists, or their underpaid inventors & engineers & research scientists? & (c) why has non-capitalistic Soviet Russia exceeded most of the capitalistic nations in technological progress during the past decade? What's that I hear in reply? "Oh, shut up, you goddam bolshevik, & don't ask such seditious questions!" Very well— we'll let history work out the problem in its own way. But as for anything *just* or *beneficent* in capitalism .... Pfooey! Equine plumage!

I recently took one phase of this subject—the influence of commercialism on art—up with young Finlay, the brilliant new *WT* artist, who thought Grandpa was too severe on the editorial rats who have gnawed most of the merit out of the coming crop of writers. Finlay thought that the obstacles put in the way of good writing form a stimulating "challenge" ..... God! As if the ruthless discouraging of true merit & systematic encouragement of cheap & tawdry charlatanism had anything *beneficial* in it! As I told Finlay, the "challenge" offered by commercialism is *not* the true challenge of harder conditions in the right line of development, but is simply a demand for aesthetically harmful *departures from the right line of development.* What is valued & insisted upon by commercial editors is precisely what has no place whatever in authentic literary expression. Whoever consents to aim for the tawdry effects demanded by commerce, is deliberately checking & perhaps permanently injuring his ability in an effort to achieve certain cheap results alien & antagonistic to literature. The literary ruin of brilliant figures like Long, Quinn, Price, Merritt, & Wandrei speaks for itself. *No really fine story would ever be accepted by a modern pulp editor if submitted without the name of a prominent author.* I have no hesitancy in saying that *The Willows,* anonymously submitted, would draw a rejection slip from every penny-dreadful editor in England & America combined. When a half-decent story *does* get printed in a pulp magazine, it is generally because of some irrelevant element wholly unrelated to its real merit. The really *best* stories of the same author would be promptly rejected—as the experience of Klarkash-Ton eloquently proves. The one effect of commerce on the writer is to make him stop trying to write good stuff & begin trying to tailor trash to order in conformity with some cheap & anti-artistic formula. This is no proper *challenge.* The *real* challenges are those offered by the various problems of aesthetic ex-

pression—the problems of achieving this or that different effect in genuine artistry. Concrete embodiments of these *real* challenges are things like Nobel & Pulitzer Prizes, & the standards set by "quality" magazines & the more substantial & dignified publishing houses . . . standards based on intellectual reputation, not on sales. Those, of course, are a far cry from rampant commercialism. *That,* indeed, is an unmitigated evil which has ruined more potential authors than any other single influence. It is useless to point out that a few tremendously vigorous authors like Two-Gun Bob do somehow find a way to circumvent commercialism in part, & to get a few good stories published in spite of Mammon-standards. Even in this case a cruel *waste* of energy & ability —which might have gone into aesthetic creation—is involved, & the net output of the author is just so much less excellent than it would have been in the absence of commercial pressures. . . .

. . . . . I've recently come into touch with Finlay, & find him a most unusual & brilliant character. He's only 22, & a resident of his native city of Rochester, N.Y. He is a poet of no mean attainments as well as an artist—though of course pictorial art is his primary medium. In future years I feel certain that he will become an artist of distinction, so that the *WT* group will feel very proud of having known him in his youth. . . . All of Finlay's *WT* work is good—especially the designs for your *Lost Paradise* & Bloch's *Faceless God.* Bloch tells me that Wright considers the latter the finest illustration ever drawn for *WT,* & that the original hangs framed in the office. The recent illustration for Quinn was indeed clever—the scintillating sparks adding a particular magic. The psychology of twinkling points surely does form an interesting subject in itself. It is probably rooted in the pleasurable & stimulating nature of all *light & warmth,* & everything associated with light & warmth—this in turn coming of course from the life-saving part played by the radiance of the sun, the campfire, & the hearth. Apollo & Vesta are very ancient deities! The especial glamour of *spangles* probably comes from a synthesis of different pleasant associations—the stars, the rising sparks of a comfortable fire, precious stones, &c. . . .

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About the plural of *hiatus*—in Latin it would be spelled *just the same* as the singular, except that the *u* would be long, since the word is

of the *fourth* declension. In English one might use either that plural or the boldly English form *hiatuses*.

. . . . . Meanwhile the "fan" magazines are getting too numerous to keep track of! There must be 10 or 11 of them now—although most are heard of rather than actually seen. You've doubtless received the bulky anniversary *Fantasy* from Leedle Shoolie, plus a couple of *Phantagraphs* from Wollheim or Shepherd. *Fanciful Tales* is slowly taking form, & Conover's *Science-Fantasy Correspondent* bids fair to be a rather ample venture despite its small page-size. The latter plans to continue the serialisation of my *Sup. Horr. in Lit.*, left high & dry by the suspension of the good old *FF. Some* day Hill-Billy Crawford *may* git around to issuin' his long-postpon'd *Marvel Tales* & my *Innsmouth!* I just read some more proofs of the latter . . . .

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885. TO HENRY KUTTNER

The Antient Hill
October 15, 1936

Dear Khut-N'hah:—

. . . . . .

. . . . . My father died before I could more than vaguely remember him, but I was greatly influenced by an uncle—or, rather, my elder aunt's husband—who was a classicist & antiquarian of really solid attainments. I have his books & many of his things still—indeed, the desk & chair I am now using were his. Some day I wish I could get his Virgil published—a blank verse translation of everything but the Eclogues, which (together with other mss. of his) I have always carefully treasured.

. . . . . .

Yours,
Abdul A.

886. TO KENNETH STERLING

The Antient Hill
—Oct. 18, 1936

Tovaritch Kheh-Es:—

. . . . . About sleep—7 rather than 8 hours per noctem is my average. Different individuals, I believe, require different amounts—as may even the same individual at different ages. I don't often stage 60-hour wakeful sessions as I did (through necessity) last month, & in recent years I have resorted less & less to my old time-saving device of cutting out a single night's rest occasionally. . .

. . . I agree that most of the motive force behind any contemplated change in the economic order will necessarily come from the persons who have benefited least by the existing order; but I do not see why that fact makes it necessary to wage the struggle otherwise than as *a fight to guarantee a place for everybody* in the social fabric. The just demand of the citizen is that society assign him a place in its complex mechanism whereby he will have equal chances for education at the start, & a guarantee of just rewards for such services as he is able to render (or a proper pension if his services cannot be used) later on. Now this does not apply merely to the stevedore & elevator-boy. It applies equally to the artist & professor & administrator. The same social principle which assumes that positions should be artificially allocated to men of the factory-hand level of accomplishment, assumes also that positions should be artificially allocated to men of the trained executive level; each individual to be given a return determined by the kind & quality of the service he renders. The man of executive calibre benefits as much as the man of the factory-hand calibre in point of security, so we cannot truly call the principle a "class" issue. If *anybody* might call it a "class issue" it is the man of executive calibre, who feels that he loses more than he gains—since under the old order he was fairly sure of a job anyhow, & generally received a larger return (in unearned profits) than the just one which the new order would allot him. . . But the *real aim* of the socialist is essentially a classless one. He is not thinking of benefiting this special group or harming that special group. He is simply thinking of ensuring just placement to *everybody*—& if his con-

ception of just placement doesn't measure up to the wishes of any certain group, then the "class issue" is the "injured" group's—*not the socialist's*. This, I believe, is a far sounder conception than the "class conscious" one. The war is not of any one "class" against any other "class". It is of *the people*—each human being considered as an equal unit irrespective of the amount of so-called "property" attached to him —against anybody & everybody who would obstruct a programme guaranteeing each member of the people security & opportunities commensurate with his skill. This may, of course, mean—in terms of contemporary society—a struggle in which the low-paid wage-worker & the unemployed predominate on one side whilst the highly-paid businessman & inheritor of wealth predominate on the other side; but I think it is more socially wholesome—more favourable to a rational mood & perspective, & better adapted to the psychology of the future order aimed at—to think of the matter in general human terms than to think of it in terms of the *present* industrial status of the majority of participants on either side.

. . It is better to fight *for a just deal for all the people* in the name of *all the people* (& who cares if some of the people refuse to be represented?) than in the name of any special "working class". In a decent society everyone is a "worker"—but if we use the term too narrowly today, we shall find that it creates mental overtones & images not at all favourable to the best type of development. There will be a tendency to exalt & idealise the contemporary low-grade worker *just as he is,* instead of to insist that his attributes be radically changed through the extension to him of a security & body of cultural privileges he has never possessed before. There will be a tendency to hate & injure the refinements & amenities of high-grade life, & to subordinate the cultural traditions which mean so much to sensitive persons, simply because these things have not hitherto been enjoyed by those classifiable as "workers". Excellence in human personality will be opposed, slighted, or jeered at as something hatefully "aristocratic" or "bourgeois"; whilst many of the crude & repellent folkways & attitudes of the present "working class" (folkways & attitudes which would not exist if justice prevailed) will be exalted as great national values. Now all this is very bad, & makes for increased bitterness. There ought not to be any rallying around the standards & ideals of the contemporary workman, together with a massed hatred of the standards & ideals of the contemporary

aristocrat. Standards & ideals should not be associated with one "class" any more than with any other "class". Keeping well-groomed & talking grammatically & enjoying Horace & possessing sensitive honour—in brief, being a gentleman—ought not to be associated with the inheritor of a fortune any more than with an intelligent mechanic or miner. *We must learn to divorce the idea of human status & attributes from the relatively trivial concepts of remunerative occupation & financial position.* There will always be *natural* aristocrats & men of taste, & there will always be crude clods; but in a rational society it may be that the aristocrats will include people whose *purely economic* activities are relatively insignificant—miners, mill-hands, 'bus-drivers, &c—whilst the crude clods will include highly-paid industrial administrators. The big idea is *to substitute the idea of personal excellence for that of economic position*—& in order to do that, we must not encourage any hatred or repudiation of those high qualities which are at present (through long injustice) associated with the "ruling class". Heaven knows, there is too much "class consciousness" in our *present* order! Listen to any average discussion of a stranger, & see how infallibly his economic status is brought up & dwelt upon! Read any news item about an accident, an arrest, a marriage, or a death, & see how infallibly a mention of *economic occupation* is tagged on to each person named .. John Smith, grocer, age 50 ... William Jones, insurance agent .... George Brown, labourer ... &c. &c. &c. .... as if the principal thing about John Smith were the fact that he is a grocer ... as if he had no rounded individuality or complex personality of his own; no likes & dislikes; no taste in art or literature; no philosophic position or social belief ..... They never say "John Smith, admirer of Greek sculpture" or "John Smith, phenomenalist", or "John Smith, student of astronomy" .... it is, instead, always "John Smith, grocer"! This, mind you, is the vice of the *old* order—thousands of years old. I don't accuse the Marxians of inventing it. I merely think the rational socialist ought to *repudiate* it instead of *clinging to it & intensifying it!*

..... If the Marxians would lay less stress on the literal hammer & sickle & lay more stress on the *general circumstance of prevailing inequality & injustice,* they would win over more of the ill-paid professors & bankrupt small grocers & corporation-fleeced inventors & booted-around bookkeepers of whose continued capitalistic sympathies they so justly complain. *The big mistake of the Marxians is that they blind*

themselves to all non-economic factors. They expect a man to act primarily according to his *economic* status, whereas in reality his primary reaction is determined wholly by his *culture* status. We act first & instinctively with *the sort of people whose tastes & background are like our own.* Only with difficulty & in mature years are we generally able to think & act independently of our hereditary culture-milieu—& all too few of us can ever achieve that independence. Most of the dispossessed non-workmen are products of the general culture-milieu which also produced the "ruling class", hence they can never be expected to act as enemies of that "class" *as a class*—especially if those who invite them to do so are conspicuously & avowedly the representatives of another & frankly inferior culture-milieu. If socialism wishes to create a really effective "popular front" against the system of special privilege, it must cease to represent any particular proletarian type. It must stand forth simply as the dispenser of real justice & best hope of the *economically* disadvantaged, & must abandon all traces of hostility toward the *culture* of the lucky propertied elements on whom, in practice, it will be waging war. This for two reasons: because that culture is one also shared by many of those it wishes to win over, & because that culture must eventually, in all essentials, form the general culture of all the people. Probably socialism *will* more or less broaden in the right direction. Even now the conscious "have-nots" are acquiring an increasingly impressive stream of recruits from the ranks of the traditionally cultured; & although many of these recruits profess to be converted to the one-sided ideology of proletarianism, the net influence of the influx is all in favour of reconciling the socialistic movement with the hereditary culture of the race. More & more a socialist may be well-born person who thinks & feels as a gentleman, & whose warfare is that of a just & responsible gentleman upon a *system* (not a group of men) which viciously denies part of the community the basic rights which taste & logic demand for all. Look at such popular leaders as FDR, Bertrand Russell, Karl Marx himself, Oliver Baldwin, Norman Thomas, Leon Blum, Rexford G. Tugwell, & scores of others—all products of the general culture of the "ruling class", & none in all probability desirous of enthroning any new culture opposed to its noneconomic phases. (Briffault & some of the extreme left theorists are another story). Persons of this general type are more numerous in the ranks of the socialists each year, & the result will probably be a good one. If there ever

has to be something corresponding to a "class war", it will probably be waged on purely economic lines, & not fall into the incidental tragic pattern of a war of plebeian coarseness & ignorance against patrician taste, intellect, & refinement.

. . . . . .

Yrs. for the Cause—
Ech-Pi-El

887. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Tuesday
(late October, 1936)

Jonckheer:—

. . . . . As for criticisms of my work—I'm sure I don't know of any worth quoting. Dunsany never saw my stories—the incident you recall being merely his sight of some commendatory verses to him which I wrote in 1919 and which somebody else sent him. Houdini never read any of my stuff so far as I know—except what I ghost-wrote for him. I've never been in touch with any prominent figures, and can't recall any praise ever given me by such. . . . . .

. . . . .

Yr. obt. grandsire,
H. Phylipse van Kasje

888. TO VIRGIL FINLAY

Ancient Citadel of Leng
Oct. 24, 1936

Dear Monstro Ligriv:—

I'd as soon think of wearing a nose-ring as of growing a moustache—fancy Sam Johnson or Edward Gibbon or Joe Addison or Dean Swift in a moustache! And I've never attempted long hair because I always think of myself in a periwig rather than following the post-1775 fashion of wearing my own hair. The common thing in periwig days was to clip

or even *shave* the head—so I worry along with close haircuts and imagine my wig hanging on a wig-block or the bedpost. Plain, un-dandified old gentlemen often used to pull off their wigs and take it easy at home ..... When I was 6 or 7 I used to be tormented constantly with a peculiar type of recurrent nightmare in which a monstrous race of entities (called by me "Night-Gaunts"—I don't know where I got hold of the name) used to snatch me up by the stomach (bad digestion?) and carry me off through infinite leagues of black air over the towers of dead and horrible cities. They would finally get me into a grey void where I could see the needlelike pinnacles of enormous mountains miles below. Then they would let drop—and as I gained momentum in my Icarus-like plunge I would start awake in such a panic that I hated to think of sleeping again. The "night-gaunts" were black, lean, rubbery things with bared, barbed tails, bat-wings, and *no faces at all*. Undoubtedly I derived the image from the jumbled memory of Doré's drawings (largely the illustrations to *Paradise Lost*) which fascinated me in waking hours. They had no voices, and their only form of real torture was their habit of tickling my stomach (digestion again) before snatching me up and swooping away with me. I sometimes had the vague notion that they lived in the black burrows honeycombing the pinnacle of some incredibly high mountain somewhere. They seemed to come in flocks of 25 or 50, and would sometimes fling me one to the other. Night after night I dreamed the same horror with only minor variants—but I never struck those hideous mountain peaks before waking. If I had ... well, the point is that these things decreased rapidly as I grew older. Each year I believed less and less of the supernatural, and when I was 8 I began to be interested in science and cast off my last shred of religious and other superstitious belief. I do not recall many "night-gaunt" dreams after I was 8—or *any* after I was 10 or 11. But Yuggoth, what an impression they made on me! 34 years later I chose them as the theme of one of my *Fungi*. .....

Yrs. by the Seal of the Third Gate—
Ech-Pi-El

889. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Oct. 29, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . Thanks as usual for the many interesting cuttings—& for the new King Edward stamp. This is the first specimen of the stamp that I have seen, & I really like it exceedingly. It has an admirably artistic balance & simplicity. One misses the familiar type of design usually associated with postage stamps—but since stamps are after all a comparatively modern innovation, less than a century old, the violation of tradition can scarcely be called an extreme one. I can't sympathise with those who attack the new stamp so violently. . . . . Yes—political thunders are raging, but I hope nothing will occur to block the reëlection of the present administration & thus check the long-needed social evolution now so slowly getting under way. Plutocrats & blind reactionaries are desperately struggling, & using every art of slander, propaganda, & insidious suggestion; but I still feel hopeful of a good New Deal majority. . . . . .

Pres. Roosevelt was here Oct. 21, & I had several fine glimpses of him. He spoke from the terrace of the state house to an audience of about 60,000.

Well—I am *still* working on that Renshaw text-book. The manuscript, considerably abridged, came back once more for revision, & now I am reading the printer's proofs & catching a number of errors therein. The job is being handled by the Standard Press of 930 H. St., N. W.—perhaps you know of it. It will have to be done & delivered by Nov. 5th, since the course involving the book opens on the 6th. Haste has made this job more difficult than it would otherwise have been. . . . . .

As for stories—I have one in *Weird Tales* this month (the issue dated December), but it isn't especially good. I doubt whether you'd care much for it. The illustration is by the new *W. T.* artist Virgil Fin-

lay—a highly remarkable youth who is also a poet of no mean calibre. Good drawing intrinsically, but not an accurate depiction of the scene it is supposed to illustrate. The book edition of my *Shadow over Innsmouth* seems to be taking shape at last—at least, I read proofs of the final section last week, & received sample pages of another section of the finished text the other day. But my hopes are not too high, since Crawford's capacity for delay is infinite & inexplicable!

..... I was certainly sorry not to be able to get south this year, but my financial situation is appalling. I'm lucky to be able to eat & have a roof over my head . . . & I haven't had a new suit of clothes since 1928. If ever I get hold of more cash, the South will see a lot of me! This northern climate is simply murderous.

All good wishes & thanks for enclosures—

Yrs. most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

890. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

The Ancient Hill
All-Hallow's Eve
Oct. 31, 1936

Dear Malik:—

. . . . I surely hope that I may some time behold the Mojave in all its cryptic and varied grandeur. That I would be profoundly moved, it is impossible to doubt. Whether I could do it justice on paper is another matter. It is not likely that the region would hold for me that element of the *sinister* which the world of antarctic death holds, since in my mind only that which is *cold* is supremely associated with evil, horror, and death. I have vainly tried to lay weird tales in the south. No use! To me everything southern is friendly and benign—because *warm*. The north (or antarctic)—with its hideous torturing cold and long nights of stalking death—is in my consciousness the epitome of all that is hostile to mankind and to life. . . However—the sinister does not form the only effective element in fantasy, and I feel certain that the Mojave

would start me off on some sort of imaginative spree—whether or not anything apt ever came out of it! . .

. . . . . .

Regards to the felidae—
and numerous Salaams.
Abdul Alhazred

891. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

The Ancient Hill
—All Souls' Day
(November 2, 1936)

Jonckheer:—

. . . . . Regarding the stories—I could have told you in advance that your publisher wouldn't want them. . . Only *The Colour out of Space* and *The Music of Erich Zann* are worth saving. As I have long realised, the cheapening influence of the pulps got insidiously at my style before I was aware of it. Even when consciously repudiating the commercial tradition, I was being more or less insidiously affected by it. And now that I comprehend the fact, and am prepared to be on guard against the tendency, I am less fertile and imaginative than I was. The years have slowed me down. Would that I had had my present practice and perspective in the fictional field when I was in my prime!

. . . . . .

Now about this nebulous and doubtful book proposition—ten years ago I'd have snapped it up without thinking, but today the old man goes more slowly. While, as I said last month, I have always been vaguely toying with the idea of a full-length book, I have relatively little idea that any publisher would want anything which I could produce at this period. I haven't had time to think of original fiction for a year, and couldn't decide offhand just which of the various ideas in my notebooks I'd want to choose for a first novel-length attempt. Moreover —I could never create 15,000 words with any conclusiveness until I had finished the entire story—for I usually change rapidly as I proceed; often altering the first half of a story unrecognisably in order to reconcile it with elements unexpectedly introduced in the writing of the later

sections. What is more, I cannot write to order, and the imposition of a bunch of suggestions and limitations would kill the progress of anything I might get started. When I thought of writing a book-length thing, I had the idea of just going ahead and doing it—without the hampering effect of any suggestions from outside. Then if anyone wishes to use it verbatim, well and good. If not, well and good also—for some "fan" magazine would undoubtedly be glad to serialise it, thus getting it before the few who would be most likely to enjoy it. But before beginning anything—even in this manner—I would have to do a lot of choosing among various potential themes; and it is quite possible that I would find myself unequal to the proper development of any of the ideas evolved and jotted down in my younger, more egotistically hopeful, and more ambitious days. I would want to test my ability in private before making any promises—and avoid the ignominious procedure of starting something which I couldn't adequately finish. The fact is, I believe I ought to get in practice with a few short stories before I try anything more substantial. I am all out of the fictional mood now —having written nothing original in a year—and really need to work myself back into it if I expect to evolve anything of any merit. I have indeed been trying to get some time for fictional experiments during recent weeks, but have been defeated through the sudden turning-up of unexpected duties and obligations. Very slowly I am trying to get my correspondence under control without offending anybody—through a policy of slower and briefer replies. Results may be perceptible before long—and with a lapse in revisory tasks the time for possible story-writing ought to be forthcoming in the reasonably near future. How soon I would feel justified in tackling a novel remains to be seen.

It appears, then, that I would make a rather exasperating and unsatisfactory person to deal with just now—but I am none the less grateful to you for having devoted so much time and energy to the discussion of these matters. As to just what to do or say—it would perhaps be best to avoid the making of any promises, my ability to perform is so doubtful. But if the publishers remain permanently in a receptive state, and keep in mind the attitude which they have formed through their reading of the short tales and through your kindly propaganda, it is not at all impossible that I might later on send you a rough plot-synopsis to shew very tentatively to them. If in such a case they indicated that they might consider a novel of that general nature, I might later—if I found it

practicable to develop the idea—let you shew them the finished product .... or part of it. I could not, however, be *bound* to any specific course at any stage of the proceedings. I never undertake any obligations unless I am *absolutely certain* of my ability to fulfil them—and in this case *certainty* on my part would mean the existence of a completed novel. Of course I have no reason to assume that the publishers would remain receptive in the absence of any definite promises—but in that case the only thing to do is to close the incident. Which reminds me that I hope you haven't spent too much time and energy in presenting this matter to the courteous but canny Morrovians. I'd hate to think of your having gone to an inordinate amount of trouble in a matter yielding you not the faintest trace of a reward—either material or psychological!

.....

Yr. oblig'd obt. Servt.,
HPL

892. TO MRS. FRITZ LEIBER

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Nov. 2, 1936

My dear Mrs. Leiber:—

Your enquiry of Oct. 14, after some extremely devious wanderings, has reached me at last; and I must hasten to say how gratified I am to hear of the kind opinion of my fictional efforts held by you and your husband. My pleasure is the greater because of the admiration and appreciation with which I have always regarded the work of your father-in-law. In the earlier years of the century I saw him many times in Mr. Robert Mantell's companies—in parts like Horatio, Iago, Mercutio, Bassanio, Edmund, and Faulconbridge—and delighted in his happy blending of classic traditionalism with the more refined and modulated technique of the present. His Faulconbridge was to me especially unforgettable. .....

Sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

893. TO FRITZ LEIBER

Nov. 9, 1936

My dear Mr. Leiber:—

. . . . . .

I wish there were a really first-rate writer able and willing to do what I keep on stumblingly attempting—and I am always looking hopefully for the appearance of such. What I miss in Machen, James, Dunsany, de la Mare, Shiel, and even Blackwood and Poe, is a sense of the *cosmic*. Dunsany—though he seldom adopts the darker and more serious approach—is the most cosmic of them all, but he gets only a little way. Another lack which I constantly feel is that of *realism* or *convincing seriousness*. That is, the average weird author is essentially superficial and frivolous in his purpose. He wishes merely to entertain, instead of to reflect potently and artistically those deep-seated human instincts and moods which create and centre around the persistent illusion of isolated natural law.

. . . . . .

The writer who comes closest toward creating these (as I view them) reasonable specifications is Algernon Blackwood *in his best moments*. He actually analyses and reproduces faithfully the details of the persistent human illusion of—and out-reaching toward—a misty world of vari-coloured wonders, transcended natural laws, limitless possibilities, delighted discoveries, and ceaseless adventurous expectancy. But he labours under three severe handicaps—an undistinguished journalistic style, a recurrent tendency to lapse into mushy sentimentality and infantile namby-pambyism of the most painful sort, and a credulousness regarding "occultism" which causes him to employ now and then a professional mediumistic jargon of woefully weakening effect. Of all Blackwood's voluminous output, only a golden minimum represents him at his best—but that is such a marvellous best that we can well forgive him all his slush and prattle. It is my firm opinion that his longish short story *The Willows* is the greatest weird tale ever written. (with Machen's *The White People* as a good second.) Little is said—everything is suggested! . . Next to Blackwood, Poe stands first in basic seriousness and convincingness—though his themes tend to centre in limited manifestations of the terrestrially gruesome, and in sinister

twists of morbid human psychology. In *total effect* he probably *transcends* Blackwood, and indeed all rivals; that is, what he *does* tell is told with a potent art and daemonic force which no one else can even approach. One of my favourites is M. P. Shiel, whose *House of Sounds* is a marvellous tour de force comparable to its obvious Poesque prototype *The Fall of the House of Usher.* The first half of Shiel's novel *The Purple Cloud* is also a veritably stupendous piece of work.

As for style and realism—I'm glad you think well of my stuff in that respect. I've always held two cardinal principles regarding weird fiction: that the structure and rhythm of the language should reflect and promote the tension, menace, gloom, dreamlike quality, cumulative mood-flow and climactic suspense of the theme; and that an air of absolute realism should be preserved (as if one were preparing an actual hoax instead of a story) *except* in the one limited field where the writer has chosen to depart (in a way consistent with actual human psychology and illusion as reflected in experience and folklore) from the order of objective reality. I haven't always succeeded in embodying these principles to the extent I'd like, but at least I've tried to do so. Commercial "pulp" fiction repudiates them altogether—glibly piling on extravagant marvels without the least relation to mankind's natural myth-making tendencies, and phrasing everything in a brisk, happy, casual, cheerful style which would be enough to kill even a good idea or plot! It is too bad that no magazine market for seriously intended weird fiction exists. One must either make the book good (which I can't) or be satisfied to have things in the pulp rags—whose editors accept a really serious story more in spite of its real merits than because of them. I see red every time I think of the number of finely-endowed fantaisistes who have been lured away from sincere writing by the rewards of the commercial magazine market. Most of them soon become so steeped in the cheap methods, puerile psychology, shoddy values, and stock characters and events of popular thrillerdom that they could never "come back" as serious literary artists even if they wished. The salient example of this kind of thing is of course *A. Merritt*—of *Moon Pool* fame. Azathoth, what a genius gone wrong! Today dishing out the usual sort of formula-tripe—yet now and then revealing flashes of descriptive or evocative power which tell the sort of titan he might have been had he elected to follow the path of Machen or de la Mare instead of that of the *Argosy* hacks!

. . . . . .

. . My own temperament, I should say, is one of *scientific indifferentism* (the solar system is a meaningless drop in an unknown and purposeless cosmos, but what the hell of it?) rather than melancholy—though I suppose my constant interest in fantasy expresses a subconscious dissatisfaction with objective reality which is not far from certain phases of the genuine article. I've always been fascinated, by the way, by that engraving of Dürer's. . . .

Sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

894. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Nov. 10, 1936

Jonckheer:—

Just a word to let you know how sorry I am that my previous epistle seemed ambiguous. I thought I was quite explicit—but hope I can attain greater definiteness this time. Let me add at the outset that I feel enormously and genuinely pained if I've unwittingly caused you to make elaborate approaches and semi-commitments on my behalf, from which a possible retreat would prove embarrassing. I would not for the world have authorised any definite and immediate discussion of material as yet unwritten; and if any mention of a vague future intention to experiment with a novel (I've forgotten just how I did word my reference to the wish or design which I have cloudily and indefinitely harboured for years) seemed to form such an authorisation, I can do no more than kiss the dust in a thousand obeisances of contrition. What I meant was simply this: that if the Morrow firm was especially well-disposed toward novels (and I did not envisage a time-limit on that state of corporate mind), I would surely take advantage of that disposition, and of your (supposedly permanent) entrée with the firm, to the extent of submitting to them—through you as agent—the very first thing of the kind I ever *might* produce. I possibly added that a knowledge of the conceivable opening (and I fully appreciated the unusual nature of the consideration you are able to secure from the company) would perhaps encourage me to experiment with a novel sooner than I otherwise might

—but I did not for an instant conceive of the matter as more than a nebulous, theoretical idea for the rather remote future. I may have misread your letter (I can't find it at the moment), but in any case that was the idea I formed; and my reply was based entirely upon it. Nothing could have been farther from my thoughts or wishes than to encourage any definite immediate discussion (of the sort from which it is sometimes so awkward to retreat) of such an enterprise. So pray accept my profoundest apologies if I've caused you to go through any elaborate procedure or expend any persuasive or diplomatic energy in vain! Be at least assured that such a thing was the result of sheer stupidity and misinterpretation on my part, rather than of any inconsiderate negligence or callous and arbitrary capriciousness. I genuflect. I grovel. And my regret is of the most acute and genuine, as distinguished from the formal and perfunctory sort. Damn it all! But you can at least justify yourself with the firm by telling them—with my cordial permission—that your client is a muddled old fool who doesn't know enough to say what he means the first time! One thing more—don't fancy for a second that I don't appreciate the extreme kindness and thoughtfulness which have animated your intensive efforts to put this matter over! Hell! It would be difficult for me to convey adequately any sense of gratitude! That adds to my contriteness about any troublesome conferences or commitments into which my careless and casual (careless and casual because I thought the matter merely a vague pipe-dream of the theoretical future) phraseology may have led you!

Now as to the "unfathomable" nature of my immediately previous letter—let's see where the trouble lies. The meaning I sought to convey was simply this: that I can't guarantee to produce anything of book length in the immediate future; that the handicap of specifications regarding the "plot" (if any) might make it impossible for me to write a book even if I otherwise could; that I *might* not be able to produce a book *at all*—even in the remotest future and under conditions of the most perfect independence; but that I would certainly be glad (a) to let the Morrow firm see the first tentative novel synopsis I ever did evolve (be that in 1937, 1938, or any damn time), or (b) if a novel ever grew up from my pen without a synopsis, to let them see its text in whole or in part. These things were *definite*. True, the matter of the possible submission was left indefinite, but only because it had to be. I tried to be definite about this indefiniteness. At the moment I don't know whether

I could write a novel or not. Such things can't be forced. If I agreed to start in trying right now the result could be only dismal flatness and failure. *I* could be placed in the ridiculous position of delivering artificial junk which I could not myself endorse, and *you* would be placed in the equally ridiculous position of having strongly recommended a complete "dud". When I'll ever be ready for such an attempt I don't know—certainly not till I've done a short story or two. And I'm equally ignorant of whether I could go ahead with a story if not allowed an absolutely free hand as to development. The chances are adverse, for external meddling always cuts the ground from under me and removes the motive force which makes the story possible.

So what, under the circumstances, *could* I have said? There was nothing to do but leave the matter *as open and indefinite as the Morrow firm are willing to leave it.* I shall probably be trying some novel of the given kind eventually, whether or not any market exists for it. If the Morrows' attitude of special consideration for matter sent through you (an attitude I greatly appreciate) holds out until the performance of this experiment, well and good. If it does not—that is my misfortune, but an inevitable misfortune! I did not realise, of course, the special pains the firm had taken, or the extent to which they regarded me as committed.

So far, so good. Now as to the best thing to tell them, in view of all considerations. . . . . The course you suggest, so long as it involves only a synopsis as a real obligation, seems to me sensible enough. Indeed, you'll see by my "unfathomable" letter that I suggested a flat termination of discussion *only as one alternative,* in case *the company* did not wish to leave any unsatisfying loose ends dangling. It was for *their* sake, not for *mine,* that I made the tentative suggestion. And of course I still leave that suggestion open as an alternative for you to apply if at any time, for any reason, it seems to become advisable in your opinion. I don't want to ball up the programme of a busy corporation with the uncertainties that hinge on a nerve-racked old man—hence I give you leave to erase everything whenever you choose. If there is any continuation of the state of open unsettledness, it must be through the company's wish, not mine.

Let me repeat for clearness' sake: *the course you advise—to give a reasonably strong promise of a synopsis sooner or later, and much less definite suggestions regarding a complete or fractional novel-manuscript*

in the remote future—will be acceptable to me if you prefer it. But I also give you leave to terminate all discussion *if* you ever find it advisable for your own sake or the firm's. And in talking with representatives of the firm, feel free to put all blame for difficulties upon me—where indeed it belongs. Do I make myself plain?

As for details and loose ends—I really don't know when I could ever get at the job of tackling a full-length book; since a calm, unhurried programme and an absolute freedom from criticism or directions form a pre-requisite to any major effort requiring concentration—that is, so far as I am concerned. What is more, the thing would have to have a *natural start*—a spontaneous raison d'être. I've never yet sat down deliberately with the idea of "writing some kind of a story". Nothing but hack tripe would ever come of that. What I write is written *because it has to be*—because the idea germinated of itself and demanded expression. At present the things I want to get at are not of novel calibre—and the only way to get around to wanting to write a novel is to get these short-story ideas off my chest first. Indeed, I think my experience shows that the best things I've ever written have been *pendants* to other material—that is, late members of a whole group of things written close together, or at least second members of a pair. In other words, the thing which puts me in the best mood for writing *is writing*. But even so, nothing can be guaranteed. I am feeling wretchedly of late, and the possibility of my having become wholly "written out"—of having lost the zest and imaginative definiteness of younger days—cannot be dismissed. It is entirely conceivable that I shall never complete another work of fiction, long or short—though not for lack of experimental attempts. I have no stomach for charlatanry, and *could* not—even if I *would*—concoct the artificial junk which "successful" commercial hacks pour forth to such financial advantage. Nor would I, now that I know better, stoop to some of the unconscious cheap tricks which my earlier stuff contained, and on which most of the rabble-popularity of that work was undoubtedly based. However, as I said before, I have for the last few weeks been trying to clear my programme for another of my seasons of fictional experimentation (like the season of 1934-5, when I wrote half a dozen things and destroyed all save *The Shadow out of Time* .... which was itself the 3d complete version of the same story), and if I do succeed in getting going it is quite possible that I might arrive at the novel-synopsis stage—or the

novel-writing stage. Who can say? It all depends on what occurs between now and then. At any rate, you'll hear from me the moment I *do* have anything in the desired line to shew. Incidentally, it would be less confusing if I had some notion of the kind of thing the Morrow firm prefer—for of all the different novel-ideas jotted down in my notebook I might unwittingly choose the very one they want least. Do you know what their tastes are? Do they prefer tenuous things in the best Blackwood vein, or profoundly dark and sinister things in the Machen manner—or what the hell? Surely they must have some idea—if they're so particular about reserving the right to dictate endings—of what they want. Incidentally, if a story of mine was headed toward a certain ending it could never be changed except spontaneously. I would have to finish it in the original way—toward which all the earlier parts would be adjusted—and relinquish the idea of Morrow as a market. You speak of "good plot" as a desideratum—but *plot* has always been a negligible element with me. Plot, in the most conventional sense of the word, has very little place in weird fiction (*atmosphere* being the one crucial element), and I am so little interested or experienced in plot-technique that no series of events of my devising would be likely to satisfy a publisher intent on this artificial device. Thus my synopsis might be ruled out at the start. But time alone will shed more light on these points. I doubt very much if the publishers would accept any novel of mine, no matter how hard I might endeavour to adapt it to their specifications. Probably the entire thing would amount merely to a titanic effort and expenditure of time on my part, followed by a polite rejection. However, that would not make me regret having written the novel if it were really of any merit, since my interest in literature is not connected with publication—momentarily alluring and encouraging though the notion of publication may be. The psychological symbolism inherent in rejections usually cuts me off from *further* writing for a time after each rebuff, but never makes me regret having written anything which I believe to have a grain of merit—which, that is, succeeds to some extent in crystallising the mood I set out to crystallise. The *commercial or financial* side of fiction is of course simply ridiculous to me. I am no garage mechanic or merchant tailor to use the materials of literature in an occupation not only alien but antagonistic to literature—and I have not the happy luck to produce things spontaneously which are likewise marketable. As a source of dependable revenue, original writing is

simply *out* with me. I *couldn't* become a successful hack even if I *would*. My growing economic plight is an absolutely *separate* question, on which fiction-writing has no possible bearing. As time passes, I must indeed find some source of the $10.00 to $15.00 per week which I require for subsistence—but this source can never be original fiction. I don't care what it is so long as it's honest—but it *can't* be literary whoredom. The economic status of a man of my age without special training in the clerical or other industrial fields is not pleasant to contemplate (would that I had had the gift of prophecy, and trained myself to some routine industrial or clerical skill independent of literature, in the days when I was young and malleable!)—but the remedy lies in some sort of job-hunting outside writing. I may run an elevator, but I'll never write a hack-story!

. . . . . .

Regarding your own opinion of *Erich Zann*—it's hardly a scribbler's place to defend his own efforts, but I wonder how fully you realise just why I wrote the story and what I was trying to do? I seem to remember a promising young man back in '26 or so who couldn't find anything especially potent in Poe! In an argument about fictional taste—or rather, the special field of fantastic fictional taste—I'd rather turn to a phase not requiring the awkward attitude of self-defence. Let me then say that, so far as I can see, Blackwood's *The Willows* is the greatest weird story ever written, with Machen's *The White People* as a close second, and with things like Shiel's *House of Sounds,* Machen's *Black Seal* and *White Powder,* Chambers' *Yellow Sign,* Poe's *House of Usher,* and James's *Count Magnus* as good runners-up. Or if the discussion *must* hinge on my own attempts, let me adopt a negative course and denounce the lousy ones instead of defending the half-passable specimens. Know, then, that *The Hound, The Horror at Red Hook, He, The Moon-Bog, The White Ship, From Beyond, The Tree,* and *The Quest of Iranon* might—if typed on good stock—make excellent shelf-paper but little else. The *Cthulhu* thing is rather middling—not as bad as the worst, but full of cheap and cumbrous touches. Indeed, nothing but the *Colour out of Space* really satisfies me as a whole. My regard for *Erich Zann* is negative rather than positive . . . . I place it second merely because it isn't as bad as most of the rest. I like it for what it *hasn't* more than for what it *has*. But I suppose all this sounds very cloudy, unbusinesslike, and obscure.

The secret of a weird tale's power is subtle and elusive—and has nothing to do with the glib formulae of the pulp canaille. Permit me to conclude this phase of the discussion with two or three quotations from articles of mine on the subject.**

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

"The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim."

"Atmosphere, not action, is the thing to cultivate in the wonder story. We cannot put stress on the bare events, since the unnatural extravagance of those events makes them sound hollow and absurd when thrown into too high relief. Such events, even when theoretically possible or conceivable in the future (as in some science-fiction), have no counter-part in existing life and human experience, hence can never form the groundwork of an adult tale. All that a marvel story can ever be, in a serious way, is *a vivid picture of a certain type of human mood.* The moment it tries to be anything else it becomes cheap, puerile, and unconvincing. Therefore a fantastic author should see that his prime emphasis goes into subtle suggestion—the imperceptible hints and touches of selective and associative detail which express shadings of moods and build up a vague illusion of the strange reality of the unreal—instead of bold catalogues of incredible happenings which can have no substance nor meaning apart from a sustaining cloud of colour and mood-symbolism. A serious adult story must be true to something in life. Since marvel tales cannot be true

** The first two paragraphs of the following are from *Supernatural Horror in Literature,* the remainder from *Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction.*

to the *events* of life, they must shift their emphasis toward something to which they *can* be true; namely, certain wistful or restless *moods* of the human spirit, wherein it seeks to weave gossamer ladders of escape from the galling tyranny of time, space, and natural law."

All of which may or may not have some relevance to the topics we have been discussing.

. . . . . .

Yr. obt. grandsire,
HPL

895. TO FRITZ LEIBER

Nov. 15, 1936

My dear Mr. Leiber:—

. . . . . My great grudge against the cinema lies in the havock it has wrought with the stage in all but the largest metropolitan centres. Twenty years ago no company like your father's could possibly have neglected the old Providence Opera House—but today, alas! Indeed, the Opera House was torn down in 1931, and its manager (with a tragic timeliness worthy of the Muse whose temple he had tended) died in the following year. Would that some future dispensation might bring a Leiber Lear or Macbeth to one of our still-surviving (if less historic) theatres! My tantalisation at hearing about your father's productions would have been greater had I known that better versions than Mantell's were used. I recall that many used to criticise Mr. Mantell's choice of texts—especially his use of the Cibber *Richard III.* (Personally, as a devotee of the 18th century, I forgave that.) . . . . . .

But I wander far from the weird! Let me return by saying how thoroughly I agree with you regarding Spengler's distinction betwixt the "Faustian" or modern western sense of infinity (which begins with a clearer idea of, and interest in, one's orientation in time and space) and the classical localism and lack of a time-sense. Spengler, I may add, produced a profound impression upon me when I first encountered him a decade ago—and this despite my inability to endorse completely

his view of a culture as a quasi-biological organism. His pointing out of the modern time-and-space consciousness as opposed to the Hellenic indifference to long cycles and sequences (when did the Greeks ever think of their world as a momentary dot in an endless line or curve? What mind was it which created conflicts of data in its leading myths, and established as fixed chronological relationships betwixt such cycles of events as the Seven against Thebes, Trojan War, etc., etc.?) gave me almost a *shock,* because it revealed so great a streak of the non-classical in myself, who have always felt so closely akin to the Graeco-Roman as opposed to the mediaeval. Of course I had always recognised my taste for Gothic mystery and shadow as something Northern and definitely *outside* my classic intellectual orientation; but I had not previously felt that this taste was so antithetically *opposed* to the foundations of classicism, and that my fascinated preoccupation with the element of *time* was *so much more than accidentally* differentiated from Hellenic timelessness. Yet I could not help being convinced and impressed—even at the cost of admitting that a dominant part of my personality was non-classical and even anti-classical. Incidentally, this admission involves a sharp cleavage rather than a contradiction, since the purely philosophic side of me—plus a large amount of the aesthetic side—certainly *is* classical. I am a complete materialist in belief—of the line of the Ionians, Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius, and such moderns (Hobbes, Condillac, Comte, Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Santayana) as derive from this source. . . Moreover, in architecture (the art to which, apart from literature, I am most sensitive), decoration, sculpture and pictorial representation, my tastes run overwhelmingly to the Graeco-Roman (with, however, a parallel fondness for really *fine* Gothic design) and its Renaissance derivations. ("Functional" modernism nauseates me and makes me see red!) All this is joined to a curious *sense of identification* with classic *Rome* . . . . a psychological twist which a superstitious person would attribute to metempsychosis or something of the sort. This feeling—which runs parallel to my still stranger sense of identification with the 18th century, is independent of any intellectual appraisal of Rome on my part. I know damn well that Roman culture was infinitely inferior to its Hellenic source, and can even understand Spengler's passionate indictment of the Respublica . . . . yet not for a second can I emotionally grasp any human event anterior to 500 A. D. except through Roman

eyes. Greece is "our" province of Achaia. The Orient is the scene of "our" Mithridatic wars. Egypt is the province which fell to "us" after Actium, and so on. When I run up against a person with a strong anti-Roman bias—like the late Robert E. Howard, who championed the northern barbarians—I feel an almost personal affront. I have not a drop of non-British blood, yet as I cast my fancy backward through time there comes a point when my blood-allegiance breaks, and my sense of identification and quasi-patriotism shifts from the Thames to the Tiber. In a conflict like that of the Saltus Teutobergiensis in A. D. 9 my instinct is not to exult with any blood-kinsman Arminius but to weep like Augustus for the lost legions of Quinctilius Varus. Naturally all this gives me a tremendous and particular interest in *Roman Britain,* where my two personalities, ancient and modern, meet. To think of a forum in London, of a Roman amphitheatre in Caerleon, and of the Respublica's roads and villas and camps and temples all over my ancestral soil, is intensely and peculiarly gratifying to me. The summit of my delight was reached when I read in the works of the late Arthur Weigall and other recent authorities that evidence now seems to point to the survival of vast amounts of Britanno-Roman and Roman legionary blood (largely Nordic, though, since the army was recruited most numerously in Gallia and Germania) in modern English Leics. Thus it became a virtually literal certainty that blood forbears of mine have spoken Latin, worn togas, and borne names like C. Ulpius Silvanus, L. Valerius Celsus, P. Vicius Marcianus, A. Aufidius Olussa, L. Martius Senecianus (I quote from actual Britanno-Roman stelae) and so on. .... You repeat almost verbatim something I have many times pointed out when you speak of the function of religion in assuaging Nordic mankind's impatience of temporal and spatial bounds during ages of belief—and of the need of some substitute when supernatural belief declines. The fact is, I have again and again driven home this point in repelling the charge of inconsistency levelled at me for being a complete agnostic and materialist on the intellectual side, and a confirmed fantaisiste and myth-weaver on the aesthetic side. I have told my critics that in all probability the reason I *want* to write about circumventions of time, space, and natural law is that I *don't* believe in such! If I *believed* in the supernatural, I would not need to create the aesthetic illusion of belief. Indeed, the supernatural would not seem strange and fascinating to me. I am preoccupied with the invention of a desired

thing which I can get *only* through invention. And as for the desire itself—the need to imagine a mastery of the cosmos and a satisfied curiosity anent the black outer voids—I am willing to acknowledge its alienage to the classic stream, and its characteristic position in modern western civilisation as a legacy of the northern blood side—the same Teutonic side which bequeathed us our major political principles and our tacit adoption of the *honour* (= pride in the open dealing of a strong, free man) concept in opposition to the ostensibly accepted (and really Hebraic) divine-will-and-justice concept as a primary motive in ethics.

. . . . . .

Dunsany has a peculiar appeal for me. Casual and tenuous though any one of his fantastic flights may seem, the massed effect of his whole cycle of theogony, myth, legend, fable, hero-epic and dream-chronicle on my consciousness is that of a most potent and particular sort of cosmic liberation. When I first encountered him (through *A Dreamer's Tales*) in 1919 he seemed like a sort of gate to enchanted worlds of childhood dream, and his temporary influence on my own literary attempts (vide *Celephais, The Doom That Came to Sarnath, The Quest of Iranon, The White Ship,* etc.) was enormous. Indeed, my own mode of expression almost lost itself for a time amidst a wave of imitated Dunsanianism. There seemed to me to be in Dunsany certain poetic adumbrations of the cosmic lacking elsewhere. I may have read some of them in myself, but am sure that a goodly number must have been there to start with. Dunsany knows a certain type of dream and longing and vague out-reaching natural to the Nordic mind and shaped in childhood by the early folklore and literary impressions afforded by our culture—the Germanic fairy-tale, the Celtic legend, the Biblical myth, the Arabian-Nightish Orientale, the Graeco-Roman epic, and so on. This vision or longing or out-reaching he is able to crystallise in terms of certain elements drawn from all these simple and familiar sources, and the result has an odd universal magic which few can deny. The philosophy behind his work is essentially that of the finer minds of our age—a cosmic disillusion plus a desperate effort to retain those fragments of wonder and myth of significance, direction, and purpose which intellectual progress and absorption in material things alike tend to strip away. Of course Dunsany is uneven, and his later work (despite the different sort of charm in *The Curse of the Wise Woman*) cannot be

compared with his early productions. As he gained in age and sophistication, he lost in freshness and simplicity. He was ashamed to be uncritically naive, and began to step aside from his tales and visibly smile at them even as they unfolded. Instead of remaining what the true fantaisiste must be—a child in a child's world of dream—he became anxious to show that he was really an adult good-naturedly pretending to be a child in a child's world. This hardening-up began to show, I think, in *The Book of Wonder*—say around 1910. It was very perceptible in *The Last Book of Wonder*—though it did not creep into the plays so soon. A decade later it relaxed slightly in the novels *Chronicles of Rodriguez* and *The King of Elfland's Daughter,* but it shews at its worst in the *Jorkens* tripe. Alas that no writer can ever keep up to the level of his best! When I think of Dunsany, it is in terms of *The Gods of the Mountain, Bethmoora, Poltarnees, Beholder of Ocean, The City of Never, The Fall of Babbulkund, In the Land of Time,* and *Idle Days on the Yann.*

. . . .

You are right in remarking how few can enter into the mood of the cosmically weird. I notice the element of preoccupation with local human concernments which pervades most of the attacks on my attempts. Material with a cosmic angle—in which *phenomena,* not the local inhabitants of a single negligible sphere, are the protagonists—never reaches the average man in the street. He wants somthing "folksy", as his more homespun representatives frequently express it. I can't seem to cater to that demand. Trends, impacts and adventures of whole culture—streams, millennial cycles of development or decay, clashes of man as a whole with the principle of time or with the terror of the outer dark—these things have always interested me more than individual biography and character-analysis. And who can write effectively or meaningfully if he has to fake an interest? So far as weird fiction is concerned, I always insist that the emphasis be kept on *the wonder of the central abnormality itself.* As I wrote once in an article, any violation of what we know as natural law is *in itself* a far more tremendous thing than any other event or feeling which could possibly affect a human being. But Holy Yuggoth, how the old man runs on! . . . . . .

Sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

896. TO AUGUST DERLETH

The Antient Hill—
Nov. 18, 1936

Dear A. W.:—

. . I'm glad, by the way, that you had a resplendent October in Wisconsin—for ours was a great disappointment as far as foliage was concerned. We had no frost till Oct. 26, but heavy rains removed much leafage earlier in the month, whilst some trees remained green anomalously late--then losing their leaves almost at once. . . .

****

The other day I received, in the course of its circulation, your extremely fine sketch *Goodbye, Margery,* which I read with keen interest and attention. I recalled its prototype in *Evening in Spring,*** and believe that the present version represents a distinct advance. The style has all of that haunting, dreamlike, reminiscent quality which one associates with your best work, and the frequently recurrent image of the lonely streetlights and trees helps greatly to intensify the impression. There are, of course, some who might find a touch of preciosity in prose as close to poetry as this—but I would not concur in such a criticism. To my mind this dreamlike reminiscence forms a legitimate genre in itself—and one which you handle with peculiar aptitude. The tale is delicate—involving fragile and elusive emotional elements—but powerful and sincere; and it leaves a residue of very convincing feeling. . . .

Yr. most obt. grandsire—
Ech-Pi-El

** The reference here is to an early manuscript draft of the novel titled *Evening in Spring,* of the final published version of which the story, *Goodbye, Margery,* became the last chapter.

897. TO FRITZ LEIBER

November 18, 1936

My dear Mr. Leiber:—

. . . . . By the way, though strange as it may seem, I did *not* invent the Mi-go or Abominable Snow Men. This is genuine Nepalese folklore surrounding the Himalayas, and I picked it up in most unscholarly fashion from the newspaper and magazine articles exploiting one or another of the attempts on Mt. Everest. Probably you are familiar with at least two stories in which this concept is very advantageously employed—E. F. Benson's *The Horror-Horn* in *Visible and Invisible,* and H. R. Wakefield's *The Cairn* in *Others Who Returned.* Kadath in the Cold Waste is, however, my invention. . .

. . . . . .

In my view of the universe I probably side more—objectively and intellectually—with the material man of science than with the mystic; but my repudiation of unverified trimmings causes me to reject unjustified extrapolations and dogmata on one side as well as on the other. Certainly, I have nothing but rueful and sardonic laughter for the political economist who insists that future history *must* necessarily follow this or that course (no two agree, but each one is sure of himself!), or for the biologist who (like J. B. S. Haldane) maps out a certain line of marvellous upward development for the race. I don't believe in any "cosmic consciousness" or purpose or direction, nor in any "spiritual" order of entity coexisting with the universe of electrons. But I do see existence filled with an infinity of *unrecognised* (not supernatural) and *incalculable* factors—factors involving the relationship of everything we know to the totality of space-time—whereby all supposed certainties and long-term calculations must be called into question so far as any absolute sense is concerned. We don't know what we are in time and space, or what will happen to us before our kind of matter and energy will cease to exist. Organic life is only a momentary incident—whether a local and unique accident or a widespread cosmic principle often repeated, we can never know. We can never know how far our kind of

natural law holds good in the gulfs of space and time, or when some manifestation of it will change. Nor can we interpret it well enough to calculate the future of life and of the universe even if it does not change. So far as future history is concerned, I'm damned if I know what lies ahead. Probably certain philosophic historians and sociologists have a *limited* rightness in pointing out rough general trends—such as that from capitalism to *some* form of collectivism under the impact of widespread mechanisation—but the moment they try to prophesy in detail as the Marxists do they are merely weaving myths. Any one of a dozen possible courses may await mankind. Nobody knows what factors will pop up to prove the decisive ones. What will the next war bring—and leave? How much of existing knowledge and technology will survive—or leave recoverable keys—through the next dark age? How fatal will be the decadence or collapse toward which both western and eastern cultures seem to be moving? Will the modified behaviour-patterns created by the lapse of certain traditional beliefs produce unforeseen results? To what extent will a new dark age restore or duplicate the early attitudes and superstitions of mankind? In connexion with this sort of speculation no one ought to miss reading W. Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men,* published some six years ago. Probably you *have* read it. If not, make a bee line for library or bookstall! To give a personal guess —I look for a sharply-divided world with intervals of terrific warfare taking the general level of civilisation lower and lower each time. I doubt the probability of a general worldwide explosion—for most great decays have been gradual. Indeed, I fancy the saner nations will have many intervals of relative placidity and decency. The northern and western countries seem to have a knack of readjusting their government, economics, and society to meet changing needs without explosive disaster, and if they can be left free to evolve without encroachment, they probably have quite a future. I don't look for any social upheavals of prime magnitude in America or Great Britain (or any part of the Empire) or Scandinavia, and believe that their dangers lie in external wars. How well can they resist the encroachments of more violent neighbours? How wisely will they combine their interests and defences, and arrange their economic contacts? I don't know. Nor will I try to rival the aforementioned Mr. Stapledon in conjecturing what will come out of the next general dark age. In that matter I haven't even a guess

to offer. But that a kind of dark age will come in 300 to 1000 years I feel reasonably certain. Nor will it be without its compensations, as hinted by Dunsany in his *Prayer of the Flowers* in *Fifty-One Tales*.

. . . . . .

I appreciated extremely the criticisms of my various tales, and believe I agree completely with all of them. *Characterisation* is undeniably a woefully weak point with me, and I am usually so intent on depicting or suggesting *phenomena* that I lack the patience to develop and motivate the human figures (of no interest to me except as indices of the phenomena) as I should in order to make the total picture convincing. This weakness is also aggravated by the *dream-attitude* which habitually underlies my attempts to crystallise moods and cosmic adumbrations. The way I think of strange phenomena and outside intrusions is as a dreamer helplessly and passively watching a panorama flit past him, or floating disconnectedly through a series of incredible pictures. Everything connected with motive and action is absent—a mad universe obeys strange new laws, and the spectator has no wish but to watch, and no acts save to stare. If the panorama or pictures happen to contain people, what they do or why they do it remains shrouded in mystery—this mystery contributing to the dream-concept part of its essential force. Of course I realise that I can't get this over to any reader, hence have to invent characters and motives. But these puppets and excuses are so objective and artificial, and so little related to what I'm really trying to do, that I tend to become weary and slight them. I felt the weakness particularly in the *Whisperer,* and believe I tried (albeit clumsily) to have him explain his apparently anomalous helplessness in one of his letters. In the *Haunter* I think I also tried to suggest some reason for the victim's passiveness—implying that the experience almost paralysed his will and that the Entity was exchanging personalities with him, but I know I did it badly and listlessly. I surely must pay more attention to this point. Regarding the other point—springing marvels before I've sufficiently prepared the reader—I recognise that, too. This is without question a result of my constant writing for a pulp rag like *W. T.* The insidious influence of the cheap shocker gets at me despite my conscious efforts to exclude it. Recently I've felt this defect very keenly, and have made efforts to break away from it—though there are no results so far. I'm glad indeed to have these points emphasised, and shall double my alertness to avoid the usual kind of error. Glad you've

seen *Cthulhu*—a product of 1926 which I regard as only so-so. I'll have some things to lend as soon as I get that checked list—quite a batch of previously lent material returned yesterday. . . . . .

Sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

898. TO RHEINHART KLEINER

The Antient Hill
Nov. 20, 1936

Thrice-Gifted St. John:—

. . . . . .

Yes—the Dec. *Weird Tales* contains a story of mine called *The Haunter of the Dark,* in which this house, and the westward view from my desk window, are quite accurately described. . . Meanwhile my book-form *Shadow over Innsmouth* is ready at last, and can be supplied—cloth-bound, 156 pp., and with 4 excellent illustrations by Frank Utpatel—for the modest and reasonable sum of one dollar, post-paid, by the publisher . . . William Crawford, 122 Water Street, Everett, Pa. There are 33 bad misprints, but a table of errata on an inserted slip helps to neutralise that. Crawford also advertises a leather-bound edition—reg'lar de luxe stuff—for $2.50, but anybody who pays that much for such a lousily printed mess is a sucker! Fine bindings don't make good text!

Sir, yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.—
Theobaldus

899. TO MRS. NATALIE H. WOOLEY

Nov. 21, 1936

Dear Mrs. Wooley:—

. . . . . We had an interesting time Aug. 6-10, when old Adolphe de Castro (once a collaborator of Ambrose Bierce—now 77—for whom Long & I have done much revision) was here also (stopping

at a local hotel); & on one occasion the three of us sat on a tomb in the hidden hillside churchyard north of #66, writing rhymed acrostics on the name of *Edgar Allan Poe,* who 90 years before used to wander through that selfsame necropolis while on visits to Providence. This churchyard session, incidentally, gave rise to an amusing series of echoes. Though it would never have occurred to Barlow & me to submit our results for publication, our shrewd old colleague *did*—& secured a *W. T.* acceptance from Wright! After that Bob & I did send ours in—but they were turned down because of old Dolph's priority. Now that the ball has been started rolling, we've let the new *Science-Fantasy Correspondent* have our specimens. Meanwhile correspondents began to emulate. Young Kuttner has devised a splendidly poetic acrostic, & Moe (who saw the churchyard in July) prepared a very clever academic version—& has incorporated all the acrostics into a hectographed booklet for use in his classes. Nor is that all. Derleth is editing a Wisconsin poetry anthology for a N. Y. publisher, & having seen Moe's specimen, decided to include it in the volume. All this from Barlow's idle notion of writing acrostics while seated on an ancient tomb on a summer's afternoon!

I remain
Yrs most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

900. TO EARL PEIRCE

November 28, 1936.

Dear Mr. Peirce:—

. . . . . .

. . No, I've never had anything in the so-called "slick" magazines. These are for the most part just as insincere and formula-bound as the "pulps", except that their formula is a slightly different one, and they have no use for serious weird material. The really high-grade magazines which *do* accept sincere work seem to have a prejudice against the macabre and fantastic. . . .

I'm interested to know that you've visited the Boston North End sec-

tion mentioned in *Pickman's Model*. This region used to be a good deal more picturesque than it is now, and the sinister alley described in the story was more or less literally based on a real alley (Foster St., I think) which zigzagged peculiarly up from Commercial St. to Charter St. not so very far from Copp's Hill. I'll never forget my mystification when I tried to show this region to Donald Wandrei (whose work in the magazines you've doubtless read) in 1927, on his first visit to the East. I had been all over it only the year before, and had told Wandrei what curious sights to expect, when lo!—as we approached the district we found only a barren waste of exposed foundations with the line of the former alley traced amidst the wreckage under a blazing sun! The whole damn tangle of alleys had been torn down in the few months between Dec. '26 and June '27, and I had nothing tangible to back up the glowing accounts I had given! . . .

. . . .

Yours most sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

901. TO MRS. FRITZ LEIBER

November 29, 1936

Dear Mrs. Leiber:—

. . . . . Whilst I *do* share the basic New-England respect for an orderly life and social organisation (as did also Plato, John Locke, and many other non-Yankees), I have no belief in any religion, nor any use for any state policy imposing the least curb upon intellectual and aesthetic (or religious, if anybody wishes to retain the legends of yesteryear) freedom. I likewise oppose the Puritan concept of ethics in art and literature—believing ethics itself to be an independent art and not logically miscible with any other. Any vestigial philosophic resemblance I may have to the bygone Puritan is perhaps contained in my general belief (a mere personal opinion, whose application by force I would violently oppose) that a contemplative and imaginative life is of somewhat more evolved quality, and likely to confer richer ultimate rewards upon persons of highly organised sensibilities, than is a more

elemental life with its concentration on the primitive, the more simply emotional, and the orgiastic. In a word, I seem to favour the Apollonian over the Dionysian ideal as a general policy—though for purely aesthetic and scientific reasons, and without the least wish to incorporate it Nazi-fashion into a civic doctrine. Whether this perfectly tolerant attitude tends toward the creation of a Puritan bigot's physiognomy, I can't say. Possibly I am what George Santayana would call a Puritan in decay—although I lack the sense of abstract *duty* (as distinguished from the aesthetic satisfaction in symmetrical and adequate completion) which he and others find still dominant in the Puritans' agnostic descendants. As for the mere gleam of a sulky temperament or bad digestion—which so often produces the illusion of piety, asceticism, and moral fervour—I must record as a prosaic fact that I scarcely have even this. Though in very poor health prior to the age of 30, I have never been able to cultivate a picturesque melancholy. Indeed, it has never even occurred to me to try. Instead, though scarcely of a boisterous or ebullient disposition, I am a distinctly good-natured old cuss, with a kind of mild paternal benevolence toward the external world, and with no constitutional inability to twist the grim line of my mouth at least slightly in the direction of a fairly amiable and non-sardonic smile. I have also laughed aloud on at least four occasions within a memory extending back to 1892. I would not, in all probability, qualify as a Falstaff—yet scarcely fancy my temperament alone could have determined the sourness of my phiz. . . . . .

. . . I haven't any especial claims to the title of "student", being not even a university graduate (health broken down during years which should have been collegiate), and being more or less superficial and fragmentary about everything. Whether a sort of curiosity about things in general—impelling informal dabblings in bits of history, a few of the sciences, and so on—would win me an unofficial or non-commissioned status as semi-student or pseudo-student, I really don't know. But my ignorance always impresses me more than any ill-coördinated acquirements which I may have picked up in an aimless way. . . I am not married *now*, although I was from March 3, 1924 to March 25, 1929. I am very much in favour of an harmonious wedded state, but mistook superficial for basic congeniality. Small similarities did not, as expected, grow greater; nor did small differences, as expected, grow less.

Instead, the reverse process occurred in both cases—aided no doubt by that financial insecurity which is ever the foe of domestic adjustment. Aspirations and environmental preferences diverged increasingly, until at length—albeit without real blame or even bitterness on either side—the Superior Court of Providence County was permitted to exercise its corrective and divisive function, and the old gentleman was ceremoniously reënthroned in a dour celibate dignity. My household is now presided over by my sole surviving aunt—my only close relative. . . Certainly I am not gratuitously gregarious, or prone to seek conversation whether or not I have anything to say; and consequently, I might by some be regarded as a crusty hermit. On the other hand, as various victims of my epistles can attest, I am positively loquacious whenever any topic of interest to me is to be discussed. I was not a hermit at all during the period when I lived within reach of a group whose interests were akin to mine (that was in N. Y.—but I loathed the place as a whole so vehemently that I couldn't stand it even for the sake of pleasant individual associations), and am more or less so now merely because I don't discover many thoroughly kindred spirits hereabouts. . . .

And as to how the wolf is kept from the door—I can only reply (without the least pique at the query) that I presume sheer luck is the deciding factor so far, and that in the future I can't guarantee that the fanged and furry menacer *will* be kept away! No one more annoyingly lacks the least rudiments of remunerative enterprise or commercial aptitude than I. I simply don't know how to gather cash except incidentally and accidentally. I made the mistake in youth of not realising that literary endeavour does not always mean an income. I ought to have trained myself for some routine clerical work (like Charles Lamb's or Hawthorne's) affording a dependable stipend yet leaving my mind free enough for a certain amount of creative activity—but in the absence of immediate need I was too damned a fool to look ahead. I seemed to think that sufficient money for ordinary needs was something which everyone had as a matter of course—and if I ran short, I "could always sell a story or poem or something". Well—my calculations were inaccurate! The kind of poems and stories and somethings I write (and I have no more skill in the saleable commercial sort of stuff—you're wrong in assuming that there isn't money in the pulps for those ingenious and case-hardened enough to sink personal repugnance and

cater to the artificial, puerile needs of the cheap editors. Price and Long and Wandrei and Hamilton and others thrive on pulp writing. They are able to forget literary criteria and meet the market. It is my financial misfortune that I can't do likewise.—than has a coal-heaver) are *not* the kind one can translate into rent and nourishment with any degree of dependability—yet here I find myself in middle life with no trained commercial aptitude, and with the original resources of my youth disrupted and nearly exhausted. Such tales as I do sell—and more than that, such revisory and ghost-writing work as I perform—help to postpone the fatal day of reckoning; but when it comes, and I find no further trace of patrimonial reserve to draw upon, it will (in the prevailing sermon plebeius) be just too bad. So far (Except last year, when the two *Astounding* items caused me to break even.), I haven't been able to make scattered returns even roughly equal the $10.00 or $15.00 per week which would meet my drastically (tho' gradually) minimised needs—but some trace of the blind and fatuous optimism of my youth remains, conferring the hope that at some time before the final crash I can somehow stumble stupidly upon some sort of a job paying about 10 or 15 berries hebdomadally. Being of an abstract cast of mind with no interest in—or prejudices concerning—sources of subsistence, I don't care what in thunder it is so long as it is honest, adequately performable by me, and capable of yielding the modest amount necessary to provide a roof for myself, my books, and the accustomed articles of furniture, statuary, paintings, etc. which survive from my old house and without whose familiar presence I could not possibly exist. Fortunately my aunt seems independently provided for—and my own needs have been whittled down with such scientific precision that even an annual $500 ought to float me if I am not too fastidious as to neighbourhood when the next move comes. I have reduced nourishment to $2 and $3 per week, and continue to wear the raiment of yesteryear (suits: 1925, 1925, 1925, 1928. Overcoats: 1915, 1932. Hats: 1931, 1935). Nor do I resent the process—which to one of my years and unworldly temperament has something of the amusing aspect of a game. Hence I merely keep enquiring as to the various sorts of jobs—editing, elevator-running, proofreading, night-watchmanning, revising or ghost-writing on a salaried basis, door-tending, acting as publisher's reader or critic, sandwich-manning, etc.—which might be swung by an untrained and naively

uncalculative but conscientious old goof whose years and physique render pickaxe-wielding or stevedoring slightly impracticable. So far my investigations have revealed little of definite value, since I have not the remotest idea how—or whom—or where—or when—one asks for a job. But like most shiftless dreamers (dislike of Victorian literature forbids me to introduce the inevitable comparison to Mr. Wilkins Micawber—or even to the real-life figure of my happy-go-lucky fellow-Yankee, Amos Bronson Alcott, father of the celebrated author of *Little Women*) I keep fancying that I shall stumble upon something—that something, as it were, will "turn up" before I hit the relief rolls, or that I shall at length discover how "jobs" are discerned and secured—hence refrain from the darksome wailing of lugubrious apprehension. And at that, certain "breaks" *might* come. Conceivable changes in public taste and editorial policy might enable me to capture *every* year something like the $630 which my two novels in *Astounding* drew last year. Were that so, I would have no worries. Not that it is likely to be so, but that it might be. Or some really good revision opportunities might appear—or your letter to Mr. Rosenbach might start a Lovecraft boom at once and make me (after the deduction of your commission as agent) a plutocrat overnight—or anything might happen. Incidentally—I'm sure *I* don't mind your enquiry to Mr. Rosenbach if *he* doesn't. It won't be *I* who will be sent off on a wild-goose chase after the nugatory and ephemeral yarns of an undesired unknown, which in the end can scarcely net more than the dime or quarter each asked by such juvenile junk dealers as Mr. Forrest J. Ackerman! . . . . .

. . . . . .

Your obt. servant,
H. P. Lovecraft

902. TO HENRY KUTTNER**

The Lair on the Ancient Hill
November 30, 1936

Bolivar Twirp, Esq.
Executor, Estate of Henry Kuttner, Esq.
Beverly Hills, California, U. S. A.

My dear Mr. Twirp:—

It is with sorrow that I learn of your distinguished client's disappearance—such a promising young man! And the attendant circumstances are such as to cause profound disquiet. That tentacle suggests very ominously one which groped fumblingly about my own study eighty years ago, upon the one occasion when I attempted to read the *entire* Aklo ritual. I paused in time—but I shudder to think of what may have happened to a younger man too bold, too curious, or too enthusiastic to cease at the right moment. Poor Mr. Kuttner! What a writer he might have been! Of course, he *may* return—but what I know or suspect of the daemon "R. B." does not incline me to optimism. My greatest hope is that he may have found the door to complete oblivion . . . the alternative is not pleasant to contemplate!

Let me thank you most sincerely for sending Mr. Kuttner's parting message to the world, as well as his vivid posthumous story *Hydra*. I have read the latter with the keenest enjoyment, & hope that the learned editor of *Weird Tales* may share my favorable opinion.

***

I described myself as "Ward Phillips" in the tale collaborated with Price—& the reader is at liberty to assume or reject the identity of the two Providence occultists. Before long, by the way, Bloch and I will be

** "This particular letter requires some explanation, I think, in order to appreciate fully Lovecraft's whimsical humor. In my preceding letter, which was written on Halloween night after finishing the story—*Hydra*—to which this letter refers, I ended jokingly with a semi-frantic scrawl to the effect that 'they' were creeping up on me. I typed a postscript by one 'Bolivar Twirp' declaring that I had unaccountably disappeared, and that my letter was being sent along to HPL."—Henry Kuttner

getting quite used to violent deaths. This is his second. Long killed me off in 1930 or thereabouts in *The Space-Eaters*. Judging from the standard of the felidae of which I am so fond, I have six more deaths betwixt me and permanent oblivion.

. . . . . .

Yours by the Outer Void,
Ech-Pi-El

903. TO E. HOFFMANN PRICE

The Ancient Hill
Dec. 3, 1936

Dear Malik:—

As for *cold* as an element of horror—to be sure, *I personally* would be past all conscious emotion, phobic or otherwise, at the temperatures of the antarctic continent. It is the *idea*, based on less extreme doses, which is hideous and sinister to me. And I assume, of course, that not everyone would be as thoroughly dead to the world as I amidst the frozen secrets of the white waste. Anyhow it seems a fact that frigidity and evil are inextricably intermixed in my emotional makeup. But that's not saying that I wouldn't find the Vale of Teotihuacán or the Mojave desert a source of inexhaustible fantastic impressions! I may yet call on you for colour and detail in connexion with some yarn based on these regions—and I thank you in advance for the idea. The southwest is probably richer in sinister possibilities than the south*east* which I know and love so well. I recall many awed references to its moonlit sands and half-amorphous ruins, its spectral colour-effects and its subtle suggestions of unholy antiquity—and only the other day someone was urging me to get in touch with an archaeologist who has monkeyed around a weird pueblo popularly called "The City of the Worm". Then there have been newspaper accounts of an incredible place in New Mexico—in the Navajo country—called "The Desert of the Black Blood". This is a ghoulish and desolate area of broken lava which is rifted by great chasms and which has probably never been penetrated beyond a few miles by any white man—or any living Indian for that matter. Aëroplanes, flying over it, have spied what look like ruins at its very heart;

and local legends tell of an ancient and mysterious city whose crumbling walls now harbour carnivorous dragons. Yes—the southwest is surely a place for the connoisseur in strange horror to visit—though one would need a guide to help one find the genuine high spots with a minimum of wasteful wandering.

. . . . .

Regards and benedictions—
Abdul Alhazred

904. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Dec. 4, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

****

I saw the January *Weird Tales* lately, & was greatly pleased with Finlay's illustration for my *Thing on the Doorstep*. Finlay has genuine imagination—something all too rare among recent illustrators. . . . . .

Speaking of weird art—possibly you know that our bewhiskered young friend Barlow is taking a course at the Kansas City Art Institute. And out in California Clark Ashton Smith will have an exhibition of his grotesque sculpture at the Crocker Art Gallery in Sacramento next month—the chief piece being an 11-inch statuette called (after an entity in one of my stories) "Cthulhu's Child". . . . . .

Fanciful Tales arrived the other day, & I have so far counted 59 bad misprints in my story *The Nameless City*. That is surely something of a record!

. . . . . .

All good wishes
Yrs most sincerely—
HPLovecraft

905. TO WILLIS CONOVER

The Hilltop Mausoleum
—Dec. 4, 1936

Dear Khono-Vhah:—

. . . . . .

. . I have learned from long experience that collaboration is *infinitely harder* than original writing. Unless I have perfect freedom in ideas and style alike, I am hopelessly handicapped—and I see no use in making things harder for myself when I'm already strained to the breaking-point. In the past I have allowed myself to be persuaded into a few collaborative ventures—to please the other guy—but the results have never been satisfactory. Now I am compelled by sheer necessity to call a halt. I have more ideas of my own than I have time to develop, and what little time and energy I *can* spare must go into these. Collaboration in serious writing does not pay anybody who has an adequate stock of original ideas. The only ones for whom it is at all profitable are the commercial formula-experts who can effortlessly adapt any idea to a saleable hack framework. With them it is a different kind of game—but I have none of their mechanical skill. . . .

. . . . . .

As for mail—5 to 10 epistles is perhaps the daily average hereabouts. The trouble is that many of them require research, work, or extended argumentative replies. I must take drastic steps toward reducing this flood, and cutting down responsibilities generally.

. . . . . .

Best holiday wishes
—*E'ch-Pi-El*

906. TO MISS M. F. BONNER

KAPPA ALPHA TAU
Providence Chapter
1, Ely's Court
Dec. 9, 1936

. . . . . .

Miss M. F. Bonner
156, Gaol-Lane, Prospect-Hill
Nr. the Beacon-Pole

Dear Madam:—

The K. A. T. authorities, pausing for a moment from their grateful contemplation of newly acquired almanacks, wish to acknowledge with appreciation the message from President Emerson Thoreau Cornell of the Framingham Chapter, in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, as kindly transmitted through you. We are keenly interested in his clever and original lounging-place, and in his sportive gambols with his diminutive testudinate friend. The latter, we are certain, must feel honoured at his choice as boon companion of the snowy and scholarly President Cornell; whilst the strenuousness of the sport cannot but form a salutary influence in combating the natural sluggishness of the reptilian disposition. Messages from President Cornell will always be welcome—and he may rest assured that the picture enclosed in his letter (a view of us when confronted by a long revision job or a volume of Victorian fiction) does *not* represent our attitude in hearing from him.

Nor does it typify our sentiments toward the Hon. James O'Flaherty McCarthy, at whose delicatessen (aven in the ould days phwin it was a branch av Riley's) we have purchased many a pound of cheese and many a slice of veal loaf. Mr. McCarthy's rough exterior would not weigh against him with us—for is not our new chapter president, Thos. Broadbeam-Blackman, Esq., a bit brusque and negligent of the ameni-

ties? I am sure that Mr. McCarthy would be a welcome addition to any K. A. T. enterprise! Lorng loives to 'im intoirely!

. . . . . .

Yr. most oblig'd and obt. Servt.,
K. A. T., Providence Chapter

per:
T. Broadbeam-Blackman, Pres't.
Dan'l Defoe, Vice-President
H. P. Lovecraft, Lib'n. and 3d Asst. Under-Secy.

907. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

Windless Lamasery of Leng
Dec. 11, 1936

Almighty Ar-Ech-Bei:—

As to Wells . . . I simply want his help on the universal rudiments about which I should have known decades ago—what it's all about—what money really is—how money flows—all that sort of primer stuff which even the average layman (if he be a business man) knows by heart and takes for granted. It is as if a grown man had never learned to walk, and suddenly decided to begin taking lessons. Once I get the general hang of the thing I can begin to compare texts and exercise judgment as to the details. . . . .

. .

Yrs. by the Seal of Krang—
HPL

908. TO RICHARD ELY MORSE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Dec. 11, 1936.

Dear R-Em:—

. . . . . .

Human linkages with remote ages are highly fascinating to contemplate, and it is astonishing how few links are sometimes required (if certain very old persons happened, when very young, to talk with very old persons) to bridge the gap between the present and various remote stages of the past. The comparative rarity of centenarians makes my own case—that is, that of talking with an eighteenth century survivor although born ninety years after the close of that century—distinctly uncommon; but I have seen much more spectacular linkages reported. Only a few years ago I read an article about living persons who have talked with persons who have talked with persons who have talked with those holding memories of the eminent figures of the Elizabethan age—which is of course by no means anomalous when we reflect that elderly people today may well have talked with persons born around 1780, who in turn may well have talked with survivors of the 1690 generation, who in their turn can easily have known elders born around 1600 and remembering Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Sir Walter Raleigh, or even Queen Elizabeth herself. It all depends on whether those who reach a great age have happened in their early childhood, to meet persons of equally great age. . . . I was always fascinated by the fact that one of my old correspondents—the homespun poet Jonathan E. Hoag of Greenwich, N. Y., who died at the age of ninety-six in 1927—had listened in his early childhood to a great-aunt who remembered the terrible massacre by Montcalm's unmanageable Indian allies at Fort William Henry, N. Y., in 1757, during the Old French War—the theme of Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*. That was surely getting back to the past! I never met Mr. Hoag in person, although James F. Morton did. *Time* is surely a fascinating and terrible thing. Some day—toward the end of the present century—people will listen eagerly to the few centenarians left from my generation—a generation able to remember

the deceptive surface tranquillity of that pre-war world which was really the final phase of a European civilisation dating from the Renaissance and founded on the bourgeois rule of an agricultural-handicraft society. No one born since 1905 or so can ever have known the full smugness and naive optimism prevailing in that idyllic fools' paradise—that world whose securities were all anchored in conditions forever vanished. The rude suddenness of the awakening has created a line of sharp cleavage seldom met with in history—so that persons still in their middle years are waxing oracular and sentimental after the fashion of Melmoths or Wandering Jews who have lived from one age into another. Thus Henry Seidel Canby in his reminiscent *Harper's* articles (now made into a book), and Carl Van Doren in his *Three Worlds.*

Yrs. most sincerely—
HPL

909. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
Dec. 12, 1936.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . I was extremely sorry to note the fate of the Musser anthology containing your St. Francis verses, & hope most strongly that the missing edition will eventually turn up. It seems as if a large shipment like that ought to be ultimately traceable. If any of the contributors helped to finance the volume, Musser ought certainly to return their remittances unless he can produce the edition. But in any case the incident is unfortunate—like that of Poe's first small book *Tamerlane,* the bulk of the edition of which was lost or destroyed without ever having been distributed. Another albeit humbler case is that of my *Shunned House*—whose unbound sheets have been drifting from pillar to post since 1928, & which is now stranded in storage in De Land. However—a *few* copies of *Tamerlane*—& the *Shunned House*—did get into the hands of readers.

Speaking of books—yesterday I sent you a copy of my *Shadow over Innsmouth,* with the errors corrected as neatly as I could manage. Not a

very impressive affair—though Utpatel's illustrations are good (even if he does represent a long-bearded nonagenarian as smooth-faced in one of them). The story may or may not prove amusing, but in any event it is the first book (if one can call it that) of mine to attain circulation. I believe you already have a *Shunned House,* thanks to Little Whisker-ando. . . . . .

I heard King Edward's farewell message over my aunt's radio yesterday afternoon, & thought it one of the most moving & impressive messages ever shared by the general public. One may measure the tremendous changes in custom & popular orientation brought about by the machine age when one reflects how wild & fantastic would have seemed the notion, 25 years ago, of the whole world's hearing a personal recital of a royal tragedy in the actual voice of the chief figure—the man occupying a central place in current history. Truly, the times change—even though certain circles stubbornly refuse to admit the fact, or at least to admit some of its more important social implications. . . . . .

But regret for what has happened should not be allowed to cloud the respect due to the new Sovereign. Of George VI one may well say, as did his abdicating brother, *God Save the King!*

All good wishes
Yrs. most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

910. TO FRITZ LEIBER

December 19, 1936

My dear Mr. Leiber:—

. . . . . .

I am delighted to hear that classic Rome forms your favourite historic period, even though you have not that curious sense of personal membership in it which has always haunted me. Incidentally, very few seem to have that acute feeling of belonging to some remote age, race, and region. The closest parallel to myself in that respect whom I have known was the late Robert E. Howard, with his veritably atavistic participation in the life of ancient tribal Gaul and Britain. . . Just as you

think of Vikings in the Hellenistic-Roman world, so do I think of Roman navigators in strange and distant parts—washed across the Western Ocean to unknown shores, camping on the future site of Providence and fighting the coppery predecessors of the Narragansetts and Wampanoags, or captured by the soldiers of the Mayas and forced to escape from ornately carven dungeons in Guatemalan jungles .... or circumnavigating Africa and sampling the exotic marvels of India, China, and lost Polynesian lands of which there remain today only the vine-grown megaliths of Ponape and the cryptic eidola of Easter Island .... or trading overland with vanished people in the Gobi, and perchance for a moment glimpsing immemorial Shamballah behind its curtain of oblivion .... or penetrating south into Africa beyond the mark set by Maternus, skirting the Niger, threading through steaming jungles, fighting savages, pygmies, and apes, killing lions and rhinoceroses, and finally coming upon that Kingdom of Elder Horror whereof there survives today only the ruined masonry of the Great Zimbabwe. ... A knowledge of the hellish Dianic cult that festered underground in Europe adds to the fascination of the pageant—and one might add tints of straggling Neanderthaloid survivors in some of the great limestone cavern systems .... survivors whom stray legionnaires encounter sane, but from whom they escape as madmen. ....

.....

I'm glad to hear of your perusal of *Last and First Men*—a volume which to my mind forms the greatest of all achievements in the field that Master Ackerman would denominate "scientifiction". Its scope is dizzying—and despite a somewhat disproportionate acceleration of the tempo toward the end, and a few scientific inferences which might legitimately be challenged, it remains a thing of unparalleled power. As you say, it has the truly basic quality of a myth, and some of the episodes are of matchless poignancy and dramatic intensity. This work has evoked dozens of imitations in the pulp magazines. .....

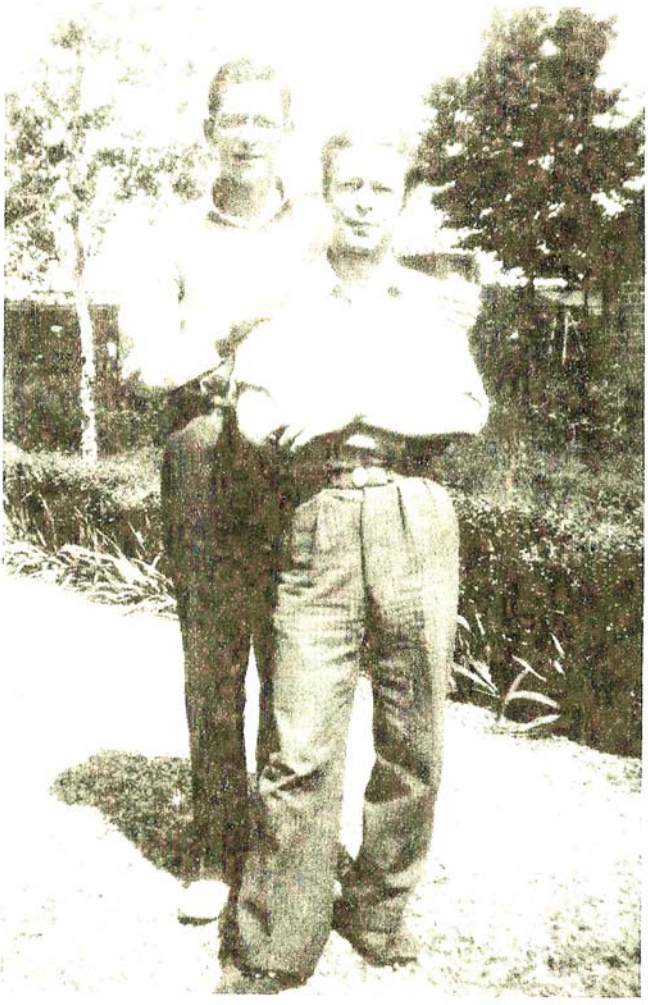
I learn with great interest of Messrs. Nemo and Murphet Leiber, and wish my own household were able to harbour their counterparts. As it is, my aunt and I have reluctantly agreed that our very light scale of housekeeping—involving irregular hours and occasional long absences (as when I paid 2 and 3 month visits in Florida in '34 and '35) on my part—render the tenure of any non-inorganic companions impracticable. Consequently, I am forced to content myself with playing occasional

host to varied felidae of the neighbourhood—especially the inhabitants of the boarding-house in a parallel street whose rear abuts on our back garden. For this purpose I always have a supply of catnip on hand, and many an afternoon as I sit writing I have some black or tiger or grey or black-and-white caller racing around the floor after spools or chewing the papers on my desk or alternately purring and dozing in a neighbouring easy-chair according to his age and temperament. The little garden beside and behind this house is so completely cut off from the world that it forms a favourite congregating-place for local Mousers, gray and otherwise—who tend to choose as their social centre the roof of a small shed directly in line with my west windows. This group of shed-sprawlers has so many of the earmarks of a definite organisation that I have come to regard it (on the analogy of the numerous Greek-letter fraternities which form our neighbours on the ancient hill) as the Providence Chapter of the earthwide Kappa Alpha Tau society—an institution whose initials may be interpreted as of the words Κομψῶν Αἰλούρων Τάξις (band of elegant or well-dress'd cats), though low punsters persist in reading a shorter and more phonetic meaning into our corporate initials K. A. T. Of this band, notwithstanding the inapplicability of the objective to me, I consider myself an honorary member by virtue of my lifelong regard for the feline species. I am sure that Nemo and Murphet are high officials of the Southern California Chapter—just as Mother Simaetha, the incredibly aged coal-black witch-cat of Clark Ashton Smith, heads the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Central California Chapter. Enclosed you will find a small tribute which the Providence K. A. T. Chapter is sending, with its compliments, to Nemo and Murphet. I believe you have not seen this tale—or at least, that you do not have it permanently—hence I trust that its new furry owners will permit you to glance through it at least once or twice. . . . By the way—I hope to read at some time of Yarquisaga and his War-Cats, who respond to the summons of a silver whistle. They remind me of some of the characters in my repudiated fantasy *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath.* The peculiar charm of the felidae is a composite thing difficult to analyse. It seems to arise on the one hand from the utter grace and harmony of the cat—a perfect eurythmy pervading outlines and motions alike—plus those marks of cool, superior independence and self-sufficiency which remove Sir Thomas from

the realm of human satellitism and make him the aristocratic exponent of another order of being— proud, alien in motives, values, and objectives, and linked with the mysteries of those black outer gulfs whence surely the first terrestrial felines lithely sprang long ago when Mu and Hyperborea were young. The ardent ailurophile is in good company, for does he not number eminent men as varied as Mohammed, Richelieu, Dr. Johnson, Poe, Baudelaire, and Vilfredo Pareto among his fellows?

As for the attitude of rational men of science toward the claims of the marvellous—the whole thing goes back into the remotest beginnings of epistemology. What do we know? How do we know we know it? Where the hell do all our ideas and impressions and perspectives come from, anyhow? Obviously, our traditional heritage of beliefs is of no use as a guide to truth, since it is predominantly an indiscriminate mass of primitive personifications, childish animistic pseudo-explanations, and ignorant inferences made from a background of subjective emotions and typical mental illusions—the whole developed and crystallised at a prehistoric date when the race knew nothing of the facts behind its environment, of cause and effect as related to terrestrial and celestial phenomena, or of the workings of its own consciousness and feelings. In an honest attempt to learn what the cosmos is, how it works, what its trends and directions are, and what relation to it is borne by organic life (including ourselves), religion and folklore are absolutely out (save as illustrations of human psychological processes). Our only possible method is to observe the phenomena of the external world at first-hand —excluding all hereditary or preconceived ideas—and to form from an accurate study of these phenomena a set of inferences based on those same dependable and verifiable principles of cognition whereby we recognise intrinsic similarities and differences in immediate things such as temperature, degree of light, colour, odour, texture, sound, taste, and so on. It is of course understood that such an inferential process necessarily involves not only a minute biological study of those human channels through which our impressions come, but likewise a close survey (so far as our position and limitations allow) of those cognitive functions whereby we unconsciously select and emphasise and classify impressions, and draw conclusions from them. In these latter studies we must be prepared to realise that our images of things are arbitrarily

limited by the accidents of our physical equipment (we, a spider, a snake, and a bird see and hear and feel and smell and taste altogether different things when experiencing the same objective environment), and that the concepts we deduce from these images are themselves altogether dependent upon a physiological state of things conditioned by racial history and swayed by numberless obscure factors. Ability to perceive and infer, a quality at first developed solely in the interest of primitive needs and gratifications, is constantly at the mercy of crude instincts and emotions which called it forth, and can only with the most supreme difficulty be dissociated from the irrational hereditary delusions, material interests, and childish desires and perspectives, with which it has for hundreds of thousands of years—or countless millions, if we go behind the human and primate and mammal stages—been inextricably intertwined. The stimulation of a nerve-centre, the hypertrophy or atrophy of an endocrine gland, the prior presence of a given concept or impression—any of these things may, wholly apart from truth or from any legitimate evidence, totally alter the conclusions which a given mind will draw from a given set of external impressions. Our subjective life is an utter, unreliable chaos from which no truth may be extracted, and which we must examine with the utmost closeness—studying its principles and characteristic tendencies—in order to allow for its effect on the objective concepts that we try to form. It is, then, no wonder that rational observers are cautious in admitting claims of the marvellous which on the one hand bear a suspicious resemblance to traditional notions of known erroneousness, and which on the other hand are sustained only feebly or not at all by any genuine or verifiable evidence in the external world. Of course, there are iconoclastic zealots who *overdo* the matter of caution—tending to minimise the evidence in behalf of things which seem at first sight unusual or opposed to the recognised scheme of Nature, and to magnify the defects and unreliability of our cognitive apparatus—but it is not the conclusions of these pedantic enthusiasts which triumph in the long run. Normal scientific progress generally makes steadily for increased truth—hence the tragedy of those new philosophies, so popular in totalitarian dictatorships, which exalt unreason and demand that scholarship be used only to serve preconceived propagandist ends. Nor will science ever be able to kill the feeling of wonder in the human spirit. The mystery of the black outer gulfs, and of the deepest cognitive processes within us, must always remain



Willis Conover and Virgil Finlay



Fritz and Jonquil Leiber

unplumbed—and against these imagination must always frantically pound. It is phlegmatic complacency or a callous absorption in material things, which—rather than scientific truth—forms wonder's greatest foe.

Yr. obt. Servnt.—
The Old Man Without a Beard.

911. TO DONALD WANDREI

The Ancient Hill
Dec. 20, 1936

Dear Melmoth:—

. . . The drama is without question a great field of expression—especially where delineations of human character & psychology are concerned—& calls for an even greater range of qualities than does narrative fiction. The principal reason I have never tried it is that what I have to say seldom deals so much with human traits as with *phenomena* & *scenes*. . . .

Yrs. by the Black Eidolon,
Ech-Pi-El

912. TO MRS. FRITZ LEIBER

December 20, 1936

Dear Mrs. Leiber:—

. . . . . I shall probably be available a decade hence—if still living at so advanced an age—for that good-weird-magazine editorship which Mr. Leiber has in mind! Such a magazine would surely be welcomed by a limited and devoted circle—though in harsh fact I gravely doubt its practicability as a commercial or even self-sustaining venture. The old *W. T.* group has many a time discussed something of the sort—pointing out that virtually all of the world's first-rate authors (for example—Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, Edith Wharton, F. Marion Crawford, Theodore Dreiser, Guy de Maupassant, etc., etc., etc.) have at one time or another written weird material, and arguing that they

would probably produce a great deal more if a definite and dependable market existed. With this potential source of contents (to which would of course be added the presumably increased output of such acknowledged fantaisistes as Blackwood, Machen, Dunsany, de la Mare, etc.), argued the optimists, the right sort of publisher might float a weird magazine of the very highest grade, commanding a select and dependable public, and reaching persons who would toss aside a cheap rag like *W. T.* with contempt. A pleasing picture! But there were not lacking pessimists to point out that this select and faithful public would of necessity be woefully small. After all, a taste for fantasy in large doses is a rather unusual thing. Most readers like it only occasionally—relishing a Machen book now and then, or faintly appreciating the timid and insipid bits (like *The House of the Laburnums* in the Dec. *Harper's*) sparingly scattered through the conventional magazines, but becoming distinctly bored when confronted by a solid or frequent diet of shadow and bizarrerie. Hence the reluctance of book publishers to issue collections of weird short stories .... and hence, by inference, the impossibility of finding enough readers among the literate to keep a cosmic-spectral periodical alive. That Farnsworth Wright and his congeners recognise this dilemma is very obvious—for their output is deliberately designed to attract the limitless hordes of the crude and illiterate. They tap a class which a civilised magazine could not reach—the coarse sensation-seeker, the superstitious séance-devotee, and so on—and yet they manage to retain a small literate following through the insertion of a few passable yarns, and because of the fact that no other magazines of like subject-matter exist. The editors are glad to hold this handful of the civilised if they can do so without alienating their bread-and-butter-yielding yokelry—but when it comes to a choice betwixt the two, the yokelry wins every time. Caeteris paribus, the cheap, sensational story is preferred to the sincere artistic effort. And the sad thing is that the editors are probably commercially right. That's what business is! If they tried to present an all-civilised programme of fiction their circulation would probably dwindle below the self-supporting limit. But let us hope—for the sake of weird literature as well as of that editorship—that conditions may somehow miraculously change before 1947. Good luck to the future *Leiber Fabularum Pavidorum* .... if one may attempt a base but classic example of paronomasia.

.....

Speaking of industrio-economic matters—let me assure you that a 2- or-3-dollar-a-week dietary programme need not involve even a particle of malnutrition or unpalatability if one but knew what to get and where to get it. The tin can and delicatessen conceal marvellous possibilities! Porridge? Mehercule! On the contrary, my tastes call for the most blisteringly highly-seasoned materials conceivable, and for desserts as close to 100% $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$ as possible. Indeed, of this latter commodity I never employ less than four teaspoons in an average cup of coffee. Favourite dinners—Italian spaghetti, chili con carne, Hungarian goulash (save when I can get white meat of turkey with highly-seasoned dressing). If this be asceticism, make the most of it! As for the expense element—to begin with, I eat only twice daily from choice ... or rather, digestive advisability. I adopted this two-meal programme long before I had to economise. The rest is merely a matter of judicious and far from self-denying choice. Let us investigate a typical day's rations.

(a) *Breakfast* (whether I eat it before or after retiring depends on whether I retire at 2 a. m. or 9 a. m. or 3 p. m. or 9 p. m. or some other hour. My programme of sleeping and waking is very flexible.)

Doughnut from Weyhasset Pure Food Market	0.015
York State Medium Cheese (for sake of round numbers)	0.060
Coffee + Challenge Brand Condensed Milk + $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$	0.025
Total Breakfast	0.100

(b) *Dinner* (occurring vaguely betwixt 6 and 9 or 10 p. m.)

1 can Rath's Chili con Carne*	0.100
2 slices Bond Bread	0.025
Coffee (with accessories as noted above)	0.025
Slice of cake or quadrant (or octant) of pie	0.050
Total Dinner	0.200
Grand Total for Entire Day	0.30
	7
Average Total per Week	2.10

(* or Armour's Corned Beef Hash or baked beans from delic., or Armour's Frankfort Sausage or Boiardi Meat Balls and Spaghetti or chop suey from delicatessen or Campbell's Vegetable Soup, etc., etc., etc.)

Occasionally, of course, extravagant additions occur—such as fruit with breakfast, or cheese with pie at dinner, or a chocolate bar or ice cream at an odd hour, or a meat-course costing more than a dime, or other sybaritic luxuries. But even the most Lucullan indulgence seldom tops an hebdomadal 3 bucks. And the old man still lives—in a fairly hale and hearty state, at that! Oddly enough, I was a semi-invalid in the old days when I *didn't* economise. Porridge? Not for Grandpa! . . . . . .

. . . . . I can endorse with the most profanely fervent emphasis your appraisal of American Business Push! The fact is, an ideal of toil for its own sake, and an exaltation of the grasping, aggressively acquisitive type, have always seemed to me so self-evidently barbarous and ignominious that I have never quite been able to realise their existence as important factors. Commercial ideals are a trifle better camouflaged in New England than in other parts of America; and as one more disposed to draw ideas from books than to absorb the spirit of my physical environment, I managed to grow up with a European rather than pioneer-American scale of values regarding the individual and society. Not that I have ever scorned honest industry—for should not every person contribute all he can to society, in exchange for the organised benefits it extends him?—but that I have scorned the notion of industry *as an end in itself*. I cannot comprehend the exaltation of a mere *process* as distinguished from its *objects*. *Working to live* I can understand—but not *living to work!* And the poisonous, cheapening vulgarity of the commercial mind—the readiness to haggle, the tendency to relate all ideas and impressions to material advantage, and the rat-like intensiveness associated with "business enterprise"—has always nauseated me so violently that the notion of a social order founded on it has seemed to partake of fantastic nightmare rather than sober reality. Yet I suppose such a reign of commercial ideals does exist—indeed, I see many evidences of it when I view the objective phenomena of today. But I fancy its triumph will be short-lived. Mechanisation of industry and diffusion of knowledge are laying the foundations for widespread change, and squirearchy and capitalism must alike go down in time before some planned society more rational and equitable than either. . . .

. . . . . .

Yr. Obdt. etc.—
HPL

913. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

The Ancient Hill
—Jany. 7, 1937.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

I was glad to hear that the copy of *Innsmouth* reached you safely, & that it seemed acceptable despite its multitudinous crudities. I tried to correct all the errors, but an eagle-eyed young friend has lately found eight more—hence I am herewith enclosing a list which you can either keep in the book, or use in correcting the text (as I did) with penknife & sharp pencil. I dare say there are even more—but if these are rectified the version will be at least moderately correct. It is unfortunate that the story had to be published in so slovenly a way. . . . . .

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Hope your health continues to improve. I was a bit under the weather last week with a slight touch of the prevailing grippe, but this is now on the wane. The winter has so far been surprisingly mild, & I only hope it will keep on being so. Heard an interesting lecture Sunday on Peruvian antiquities, & was astonished to learn of the amount of pre-Inca architecture which has been unearthed in the coastal region. Lantern slides & specimens of recently-excavated pottery supplemented the address.

All good wishes—

Yrs most sincerely,
HPLovecraft

914. TO WILLIS CONOVER

Hellish Plateau of Leng
—Jany. 10, 1937

Dear Khono-Vhah:—

. . . . . .

Glad you like *The Thing on the Doorstep*—although, as a critic, I must protest (logically rather than modestly) against your flatteringly

high valuation of it. In actual truth, I think it has a sort of middle rating. It is better than my *Haunter of the Dark,* but not as good as my *Colour out of Space.* Nor is even in the running with such standard weird masterpieces as Machen's *The White People,* Blackwood's *Willows,* Poe's *House of Usher,* M. P. Shiel's *House of Sounds,* and dozens of others I could name. Don't get your standards mixed. Some of my stuff—and that of other *WT* hacks—may be as good as the *poorer* work of Blackwood and the other big-timers, since all weird writers seem to be singularly uneven. But nobody in the *WT* group has ever approached the *best* work of the standard fantaisistes. To compare any of my stuff with Machen's *Hill of Dreams* or Blackwood's *Incredible Adventures* or Dunsany's *Bethmoora* or M. R. James's *Count Magnus* or Poe's *Ligeia* would be simply to subvert the soundest principles of criticism. It is safe to say that Blackwood is the greatest living weirdist despite vast unevenness and a poor prose style. Machen, with an incomparably superior style, comes next. Dunsany—with the greatest style of all, could perhaps top them all if he would stick to the relatively serious vein manifest in *A Dreamer's Tales, Time and the Gods,* and *The Sword of Welleran.* About the name "Pickman"—no, I don't know any bearer of it, but it is especially common in *Salem,* which as you know is the vague prototype of my "Arkham". In all my tales I try to be very realistic, using surnames typical of the regions involved. Thus in a Charleston tale I would have Izards, Pinckneys, Rhetts, Manigaults, Ravenels, Mazÿcks, etc.—in a St. Augustine tale Seguis, Pappys, Masterses, Sanchez's, Genovars, etc.—and so on. If you've ever seen my *Shunned House,* you will have noticed the local Providence names.

. . . . . .

You surely are quite a dreamer—and it's curious (to me) how quickly your new experiences and correspondents get translated into visions. Hope I succeeded in saving you and Herr Ludvig on that cliff —it would be a pity for two such promising celebrities to be lost in "the unreverberate blackness of the abyss"! My own dreams usually go back very far in time, and it takes a long while for any new experience or scene or acquaintance to get worked into them. At least ¾ of them are laid at my birthplace, where I haven't lived since 1904, and involve those who were living in those days. But the real scenes frequently merge into unknown and fantastic realms, and include landscapes and architectural vistas which could scarcely be on this planet. At times I

also have *historical* dreams—with a setting in various remote periods. Occasionally—but not often—a dream of mine forms a usable fictional plot. Such was the genesis of *The Statement of Randolph Carter*. Many of my *Fungi from Yuggoth* are actual dreams versified.

. . . . . .

Yrs. by the Elder Sign—
E'ch-Pi-El

915. TO NILS H. FROME

Jany. 20, 1937

Dear Frome:—

. . . . As for fortune-telling—I won't try to argue the matter, but believe your continued studies in the various sciences will eventually cause you to abandon belief. Authentic psychology is one thing, but irresponsible prophecy is another. A careful analysis of cause and effect as they operate in all the fields around us would do much to destroy the myth of wholesale event-prediction. Certain phenomena like the seasons, eclipses, &c. do indeed result from traceable antecedent causes; but everything in the realm of human action is so infinitely complex, and so dependent upon thousands of separate and non-identifiable factors, that all prophetic efforts are futile. . . .

. . . . . .

Yrs. most sincerely—
H. P. Lovecraft

916. TO FRITZ LEIBER

DATA. PROVIDENTIAE.
VIII. A.K. FEBR.
FLAVIUS. SENILIS. P. CORNELIO. SCIPIONI. S. P. D.

The reprehensibly late date of this bulletin may be charged jointly to the plethora of tasks currently pressing upon me, and to the reduced amount of energy available for their performance. For the past month

I have been more or less on the semi-invalid list—with a recurrent winter malady manifested in swollen feet and ankles, plus a curiously persistent combination of intestinal indigestion and general weakness perhaps allied to the prevailing grippe. Not that I've been laid flat—indeed, I've managed to take regular walks for my health on warm days in a pair of cut and stretched old shoes, and have attended most of the recent college lectures . . . on subjects as diverse as Peruvian antiquities, Italian Romanesque architecture, biological implications in philosophy, modern French painters, and Greek astronomical hypotheses. But I've had to rest frequently, and it has taken me a hell of a while to get anything done. . . . . .

. . . . . R E H had a splendidly self-consistent world of prehistory mapped out for his King Kull and Conan tales, and he made it vital and vivid despite his very unfortunate use (how vainly Price and I have lectured him on this point!) of a nomenclature fraught with misleading historical suggestions. Have you seen the issues of the little *Phantagraph* containing Howard's own serial account of his legendary lands—*The Hyborian Age?* . . . Klarkash-Ton, High Priest of Tsathoggua, likewise has two very well-coördinated mythical worlds—the *Hyperborea* of the fabulous past and the *Zothique* of the infinite future—in addition to his enchanted mediaeval-French world of *Averoigne*—which latter is sort of European "Arkham country" of 800 years ago. I have helped C A S give *Averoigne* a pseudo-history extending back to Gallic days, when the *Averones* trickled in from a sunken western land and brought with them the hellish tome known in later years as *Liber Ivonis* or *Livre d'Eibon.* This dark people set up the worship of Tsathoggua, Sodagui, or Sadoqua in the region where they settled, so that by the Gallo-Roman period the *Regio Averonum* or *Averonia* was feared as the abode of a black and unearthly sorcery. Especially dreaded were the towns of Simaesis (Ximes) and Avionium (Vyones), where certain cults obscurely flourished. Timid references to the Averones and Averonia occur in certain unknown Gallo-Roman authors such as Flavius Alesius (whose *Annales* tell of the Dark Ones' coming) and the poet Valerius Trevirus. Trevirus, in his hideously necromantic poem *De Noctis Rebus* (circa. A. D. 390), thus alludes to the Averones:
NIGER. INFORMISQUE. VT. NUMEN. AVERONUM. SADOQUA.
—which, in Theobald's privately printed English translation (1711), runs:

Black and unform'd, as pestilent a Clod
As dread Sadoqua, Averonia's God.

Merovingian and Carlovingian legends hold dark allusions to the Averones, and by the 11th century the Catholic hierarchy of Averoigne was thoroughly tainted with diabolism. For accounts of mediaeval conditions in this shadowy land, C A S is a better authority than I. As you know, Gaspard du Nord's translation of the *Liber Ivonis* (whether from the corrupt Latin text or from the accursed Hyperborean original we cannot be sure—his accomplishments were dark and obscure) into mediaeval French in the 12th century brought about frightful consequences—the popular diffusion of certain rites and incantations causing Averoigne to receive that shadow of concentrated necromancy from which it has never quite emerged. . . . . .

Your obt. servant,
H. P. Lovecraft

917. TO ROBERT H. BARLOW

The Antient Hill—
Jany. 27, 1937

Invincible Garoth:—

. . . . . Sooner or later crises will develop in certain industrial fields—private owners refusing to continue under the conditions—fixed hours and wages, planned output, etc., etc.—imposed by popular legislation. They will claim, probably correctly, that such conditions are incompatible with any profits whatsoever. Well—who the hell thinks for a moment that the people will stand for a retrogression from a status of decency once achieved? Will they listen to the pleas of the owners and relax their industrial regulations? They will not. They will tell the owners to go to the devil, and will thereupon operate such industries publicly as can no longer be operated at a private profit. Thus will socialism come by degrees, through controlled capitalism. Of course, one need not ape the dogmatism of the Marxists in predicting just what will happen in detail. In one case the government may seize an industry outright because of some just cause, in another case it will buy an industry at a fair price, and in a third case it may go into business itself and

establish a competing non-profit industry which will force private profit-seeking rivals out of business. It all comes to the same thing in the end. No one gives a damn how an industry is conducted so long as it produces what is needed and gives decently-rewarded employment to the proper quota of persons. In future the public will more and more tend to consider these ends as all-important, and to ignore the manner in which they are achieved. Thus they will be readier to back up the government in its absorptive trend than they would have been a generation ago, when the concept of private property was nearly as much of a fetish with the majority as it still is with the recalcitrant Hooverite residue. Probably all basic industries and utilities will have to be socialised in the end- but meanwhile the national life will go on unchanged, and no break in cultural continuity will occur. We shan't have any wild-eyed educational upheavals or seizures of private homes or inculcation of crazy scientific fallacies or campaigns against the common hereditary ways of doing every-day things such as one sees in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Skilled service will continue to bring large rewards, and unskilled service smaller rewards—though these small rewards will be fairer than at present, and a certain minimum will be absolutely guaranteed whether or not employment can be provided. As at present, there will be some persons of taste and cultivation living in good homes, and some ignorant boors living in tastelessness or voluntary squalor. The changes will be subtle rather than radical. Gaps between human types will be less because of government guarantees of educational opportunities—so that money and antecedents will not be as important as at present in opening up the path toward achievement and position. There will be plenty of corruption, but because of the clear-cut shift in objectives and national demands the effect of this will not be to rob the average person of the minimum decencies of life. In other words, we in England and America and Norway and Sweden and Denmark and Holland and perhaps France as well—we of the northwestern-European tradition of slow growth and personal freedom and representative government—are muddling along to about that same position which Russia will occupy by the time we catch up . . . . but without any of the hellish blood sacrifices and irreparable cultural losses which our Slavonic predecessor has sustained and is still sustaining to some extent. . . . .

Blessings—Grandpa.

918. TO WILLIS CONOVER

Pharos of Leng—
Jany. 31, 1937

Dear Khono-Vhah:—

Being half down with some cursed variant of grippe or what-the-devil, I have just about the strength of a wet rag, and shall hardly be able to do justice to your recent epistle. I am, however, making an effort to get the *Sup. Horr. in Lit.* text back to you in good season. At first I meant to send only the first section, but later thought I'd get it all out of the way. I didn't change as much as I expected—words here and there, a bad punctuation style where dates follow titles of stories, a boner regarding *The Golem,* and a bit of over-florid writing in the Poe chapter. To explain that Golem business I must confess that when I wrote the treatise I hadn't read the novel. I had seen the cinema version, and thought it was faithful to the original—but when I came to read the book only a year ago . . . Holy Yuggoth! The film had nothing of the novel save the mere title and the Prague ghetto setting—indeed, in the book the Golem-monster never appeared at all, but merely lurked in the background as a shadowy symbol. That was one on the old man! . . .

. . . . . .

Yrs. by the Ghorl Nigral—
Ech-Pi-El

919. TO HENRY GEORGE WEISS

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Feby. 3, 1937

Dear H. G.:—

. . . . Yes, my opinions on political and economic matters have been undergoing quite a gradual shift toward the left during the past few years, until I believe I may now be classified as definitely a socialist in ultimate principles. Not that I accept any of the extravagant theories

and flimsily synthetic "ideologies" (with mythical linkages among all sorts of separate fields, and a savagely uncivilized depreciation of intellectual and aesthetic activity for its own sake) of the extreme radicals, but that I believe more and more that only a public control and non-profit operation of the larger industries can ensure for the bulk of the population a dependable and adequate return for services rendered. As you know, I have for some years conceded that only through governmental *regulation* can industry be made to afford every citizen a decently compensated situation. I have been a "New Dealer" from the start. But now I am convinced from sundry arguments in and out of books that private industry cannot stand the regulation necessary to produce tolerable conditions. That is, that the widespread basic industries can never count on enough profit to keep them going without imposing on the nation hardships too severe to be permitted. Therefore the government, *beginning* logically with simple regulation, must be prepared gradually to take over the basic industries one by one as they cease to yield private profit under the conditions necessarily imposed. This can be done without violence, and may well be inaugurated by the mere process of encouraging non-profit competition—through governmental enterprises or consumer coöperatives. The constitutional framework can be altered step by step to accommodate the change, and experience will show how far it will be necessary to go in absorbing the smaller commercial enterprises. And needless to say, no dislocation of the national life and tradition, nor any interference with free intellectual and artistic activity for their own sakes—in the old way, and without the taint of propaganda—need be attempted.

Your comments on the present situation and possible developments are extremely interesting, and I find it possible to agree in many ways. The recent election gratified me extremely, since it seemed to show a certain degree of awareness and cohesiveness among the bulk of the population—which if maintained will be sufficient to keep reaction in check and eventually wear down the obstacles in the way of public ownership, non-profit industry, governmentally regulated salaries, guaranteed positions, and the other social measures needed to give our civilisation a fresh equilibrium in the light of modern machinery, modern knowledge, and the revised values and objectives which spring from these things. Of course, the collective mind must be moulded very gradually. Just now it is willing to demand much more than it ever

demanded before, but balks at the *word* "socialism" and the outright idea of public ownership. That is natural—and the thing to do is to consolidate present gains and prepare the public mind—slowly but pervasively—for the next logical step. The average citizen is ready to try something new when he has seen its apparently only alternative proved a definite failure. That has already occurred with Hoover's laissez-faire capitalism—which the majority now realise will never be anything but an oppressive influence. Now the mass of citizenry must have an opportunity to test the present half-way measures of government regulation. Let them see how these measures work, as they saw before 1933 how Hooverism worked. If in a few years they find that controlled capitalism cannot give them the steady decent remuneration and security which they very properly demand, they will be ready to forget their fear of the word "socialism" and to back up a gradual governmental absorption of the great industries one by one, as each finds itself unable to fulfill the demands of modern social organisation. That is the rational, normally evolutionary way of the Northwestern European peoples as distinguished from the emotionalism and violent extremes of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe. It is the way we have always traversed in the past, and which I hope will continue to hold good for an indefinite future. If anyone fancies such evolution has *not* always been at work among us, let him survey our condition in the Middle Ages, or even in the 18th century when tendencies toward economic concentration dispossessed thousands and swelled the masses of the urban indigent in England. The great evils bring their own public will for correction; and when an evil recurs a second time, popular psychology supports a deeper-reaching and more drastic remedy than before.

The next few years in America will be intensely interesting to watch. I agree with you in attaching vast importance to the influence of organised labour in its more modern forms—as typically represented by John L. Lewis. A compact and effective alliance of wage-earners, capable of unified action when advisable, will be even more potent than an awakened general electorate in forcing the concessions necessary for better distribution and control of resources. Both through strikes and through political blocs vast pressure can be exerted in a perfectly legal way—and with wider and more intelligent organisation there will be fewer chances for the unjust or injudicious application of pressure (i.e. to secure in certain cases industrial rewards which may at the time be

actually excessive, or out of just proportion with the rewards obtainable in other equally exacting but less shrewdly organised branches of industry). Organised labour, acting within the law and according to the spirit of a free nation, really has far vaster possibilities than most have hitherto supposed. In the past it has been frustrated through poor leadership and confused organisation; because the best minds of the nation have sincerely believed that its demands and methods were unjustifiably drastic, hence have tended to side with capital against it. The present generation is witnessing a change. Today the disinterested thinkers and noncommercial trained leaders have reached new conclusions because of fresh evidence and more thorough study of the past, hence are gradually changing sides. This will make all the difference in the world. No longer will the unscrupulous pressure-mechanism and legislation-bending agencies of organised capital find a clear track ahead, with only naive blunderers to interfere. At last, the invisible government of money will be checked by an opposition led by brains of equal power, training, and competence. And with this effective opposition, reactionary venom and stubbornness will be likely to do much less harm than they otherwise would. I doubt whether the growing Catholic-fascist movement will make much headway in America. Like communism, it is too dogmatic and patently international to be swallowed by a strong, free people. It may cause a soft-pedalling of the *word* "socialism", but it can do precious little against a practical, concrete demand for guaranteed work, decent remuneration, and whatever is needed to ensure these things. You can see what became of Fr. Coughlin. In all the United States I don't believe a Gen. Franco could find enough sympathisers to raise an effective fascist army. 16 million people voted Republican—but would they dare to launch an armed revolt against those determined to move ahead?

As for the position of Pres. Roosevelt—I hardly fancy he means to play the reactionary. He knows that change must come gradually, and that immediate objectives must have safe-sounding names. For the present it is advisable to antagonise capital as little as possible, since capital is to be asked to function under government regulation—the utmost curb which the people as a whole are *yet* willing to impose. Compromise is the order of the day. The government and labour must perform a little quiet teamwork, each seeming to be independent of the other. Let labour demand much, and then let a technically impartial

government help effect a settlement. The whole people could not support labour directly—but they will support a government which remains apparently neutral yet which in the end will gradually see that labour gets its share. Later on, labour will become able to command more direct support from the people—and then we may see many open moves in its direction on the part of the liberal Democrats. I fancy there will be great caution in offering a pure-and-simple labour man—even one as forceful and competent as Lewis—as a presidential candidate, since such a figure might scare off millions of timid voters and sweep them into the camp of some reactionary candidate. However, there will perhaps be more than one avowed labour president during the lifetime of today's younger generation.

As for things abroad—they certainly are in a hell of a mess, and I only hope there won't be a wholesale explosion dragging the Anglo-Saxon world in. . . . . Centuries hence, despite the almost inevitable period of foreign tutelage ahead, China may yet form a titanic world force to be reckoned with. It would be curious if the oldest of all civilisations of today were to survive its younger rivals in the end. . . . . .

All good wishes, yours most cordially,
HPL

920. TO CATHERINE L. MOORE

(February 7, 1937)

(The opening and concluding pages
of this letter have been lost.)

*****

Regarding the low or eccentric literary standards of today—I believe they are chargeable to several more or less dissociated factors, social & intellectual, which unhappily operate simultaneously & in the same direction. It may be that these separate factors all have an ultimate philosophic connexion, but for the purposes of a brief survey they may well be regarded as independent. The major factors seem to be three in number—two affecting serious non-commercial creation, & the third touching the frivolous & negligible (though quantitatively overwhelm-

ing) morass of commercial slop including both "slicks" & "pulps". These do not include the special element you mention—the speed of living which you say "must" be pursued "in accordance with the tempo of the times"—because I regard that as a decadence-phenomenon touching at least two of the basic factors. That is, two of the three great factors involve this principle. Over-speeded living is the reaction of sheep-like ninnies to certain commerce-fostered ideals too cheap to be worth spitting on. No one "must" meet the conventional "tempo of the times", & the independent spirit resolutely refuses to conform, no matter how great the material cost. Actually, I believe fewer people grovel to this vulgar speed fetish than is commonly supposed. Young persons, if not philosophically mature, succumb for a brief period; but I fancy most of them develop out of it as they mature. The cheap gadgets—aeroplanes & all that—persist, but it is not always the same people who keep on using them. And the great bulk of the people are going to fight to the finish before they will allow coarse slave-drivers like the motor magnates to chain them to a speeded-up industrial peonage. Times are going in more directions than the one leading toward increased speed! Nevertheless, of course, the fetish of speed *is* an active present influence affecting both the sincere artistic decadent & the cheap commercial hack—& its results, divided equally between the output of these two types, may or may not involve permanent harm.

The serious, non-commercial aesthetics of today suffers, as I have suggested above, from two distinct maladies—the irrational & solipsistic freakishness of the subjective decadent, & the prosaic propagandism of the social theorist. The decadent concedes the existence of such a thing as disinterested art, but allows the futilities & absurdities & paradoxes & contradictions of the dying capitalist culture to disorganise him to such an extent that he can reflect nothing but chaos, paradox, hallucination, & ironic contrast. The theorist, on the other hand, refuses to admit that any such thing as art exists as an independent entity. To him (& he is usually an orthodox Marxist who reads an economic motive into everything from the motions of binary stars to the sighing of the wind in the trees), every human activity must have a direct bearing on the technical problems of organising human society for the optimum fulfilment of the majority's physical needs; & art is justifiable only so far as it promotes the successful operation—or hastens the adoption—of a ra-

tional social order. Betwixt the two types, we get a sorry enough mess of nonsense & mediocrity. One gives us diagrams of scrambled conic sections or nightmares with locomotives floating in the sky over landscapes of skyscrapers twisted into spirals & dollar-signs, whilst the other gives us undistinctive photographic likenesses of Lenin & Stalin, educational posters urging children to brush their teeth, or grotesquely ironic murals shewing the triumph of machinery or the woes of the Mexican peon. To me, both of these attitudes seem essentially absurd. Each grows, I think, out of an excessively literal & exaggerated application of the idea that an artist should (or necessarily does) reflect something of his environment ..... although the Marxist position is part of a more elaborate maze of theory. This idea itself has always struck me as only loosely & partly true—& I certainly think that any attempt of the artist *to keep it constantly in mind* is ruinous to his work. We can produce real art only when we forget all about theory. It may be that our spontaneous results will indeed reflect something of our period & of our social sympathies in an unconscious way—but if we start out consciously with the idea of reflecting the period or airing our economic doctrines, we shall not get very far as artists. Of course, a person is now & then so naturally gifted with artistic genius that he cannot help producing real art as a by-product even when his conscious theories are of the most ridiculous & arid kind. Thus a surrealist crank or commercial hack or social propagandist may, by accident, evolve many a thing of undoubted power & authenticity. But even in such a case as this, the amount of *waste* is cruelly great. No matter how often the theory-handicapped or commerce-crippled artist manages to produce something good, we are always aware of how much better his results would be without the handicap. The real fact is that no artist ought to tie himself too completely or definitely to any particular period or aera. After all, the environment in which he develops is not merely that of one brief point in the time-stream. It is, rather, the sum of all that the ages have contributed to his civilisation. To the modern European, the sculpture of Phidias & Scopas & Praxiteles, the architecture of Ictinus, Callicrates, Metagenes, Dinocrates, Polyclitus, Hippodamus, & Apollodorus, the painting of Botticelli, Michelangelo, Leonardo, & Raphael, & the music of Handel, Bach, & Beethoven, are just as vital & immediate & personally present as are the latest creations of his own chronological period; & any attempt to erect a new art without reference

to such foundations must necessarily be hollow, barren, & fallacious. Our particular age is indeed one of decay & chaos & transition, so that it can probably contribute less fresh material to art than can most others —but why should this force all artists either to devote themselves to the job of portraying decay & chaos, or to forswear self-expression & become social & political propagandists? Are the existence & presence of the past annulled by the momentary disturbances of a readjustment-period? Is a Gothic cathedral less beautiful because we have ceased to believe what the builders of Chartres & Lincoln & Salisbury believed about the governance of the cosmos? Are the landscapes of Ruysdael & Hobbema ugly or meaningless because they were painted amidst a bourgeois-capitalist civilisation whose social & economic values we no longer accept? Suppose we *do* have our grain harvested by machinery & ground in complex mechanical plants with tangles of tall smokestacks? Does that alter the fact that over a great part of our racial history we used scythes & wind & water mills, or annul the powerful appeal of pictures laying stress on these ineradicable cultural landmarks? Up to a relatively recent time, no one thought of questioning the equal artistic value of themes pertaining to our past (no matter how outmoded) & themes pertaining to our present (which will soon enough be merely another phase of the outmoded past!)—both forming equal influences in the shaping of the long cultural stream. Though we did not *use* Egyptian pyramids or Greek galleys or Roman chariots, or *believe* in centaurs & mermaids, we found all these things of vital significance in art—as bearing on the life & beliefs of those ancestral ages which moulded & gave rise to ours. Why, then, must we suddenly proceed to claim that a painting of a windmill is alien & meaningless because we no longer depend on windmills—or aver that we must depict a placid meadow or woodland as a jumble of cubes & cog-wheels because (a) we feel that the chaos of a dying social order & (b) are more used in an urban-mechanical culture to seeing cubes & cog-wheels than to seeing trees & kine & hedges & distant spires? To my mind, the ultra-moderns have (as in the surrender of some of the less sensitive & courageous & determinedly individual spirits to the now-tottering Golden Calf of Mammon) simply flown off the handle—letting their heads become turned by the admitted rapidity & completeness of certain current mutations which really do not differ in kind from dozens of mutations of the past. Certainly, our daily lives (assuming that we have many con-

tacts & employ the various useful or useless devices evolved by machinery) differ from those of *their* grandfathers. What if the gap is *quantitatively* wider in our case? Where is the radical cleavage in *essence* betwixt the one gap & the other? Suppose our ideas of society & religion & property do differ from those of the 19th century? Did not the 19th century's ideas of these things differ nearly as much from the corresponding ideas of the 13th century? Yet did the 19th aesthetically repudiate the 13th as completely as our ultra-moderns would aesthetically repudiate the 19th & all preceding? The extremists forget that the mere phenomenon of change does not necessarily abrogate the principle of continuity. There are no basic eternal things--but there are always sources & antecedents & mnemonic deposits which cannot lightly be disregarded.

Commercialism forms the third aesthetically degrading factor of the present age, but is a parallel evil of different origin & nature. Instead of vitiating honest efforts at self-expression, as do decadence & social propagandism, it *simply removes human energy altogether from the field of honest expression,* & shackles it to a greedy & aesthetically & intellectually dishonest sort of charlatanry having no connexion with art. It is an older disease than chaotic decadence & systematic propagandism, & will persist as long as bourgeois capitalism remains a factor to be coped with. It was not so marked in the agrarian aristocratic age, because at that period the most unimaginative, philistinic, & under-educated elements did little or no reading or conscious artistic contemplation. When they did reach out aesthetically, they copied educated gentlefolk. Bourgeois capitalism gave artistic excellence & sincerity a deathblow by enthroning cheap *amusement-value* at the expense of that *intrinsic excellence* which only cultivated, non-acquisitive persons of assured position can enjoy. The determinant market for written, pictorial, musical, dramatic, decorative, architectural, & other heretofore aesthetic material ceased to be a small circle of truly educated persons, but became a substantially larger (even with a vast proportion of society starved & crushed into a sodden, inarticulate helplessness through commercial & commercial-satellitic greed & callousness) circle of mixed origin numerically dominated by crude, half-educated clods whose systematically perverted ideals (worship of low cunning, material acquisition, cheap comfort & smoothness, worldly success, ostentation, speed, intrinsic magnitude, surface glitter, &c.) prevented them from ever

achieving the tastes and perspectives of the gentlefolk whose dress & speech & external manners they so assiduously mimicked. This herd of acquisitive boors brought up from the shop & the counting-house a complete set of artificial attitudes, oversimplifications, & mawkish sentimentalities which no sincere art or literature could gratify—& they so outnumbered the remaining educated gentlefolk that most of the purveying agencies became at once reoriented to them. Literature & art lost most of their market; & writing, painting, drama, &c. became engulfed more & more in the domain of *amusement enterprises*. Hence the *Saturday Evening Post,* the Hearst press, the "art" of Maxfield Parrish, the fiction of Robert W. Chambers (*after* his *King in Yellow* period!) & Kathleen Norris, the happy ending tacked on to the cinema version of *Winterset* (to say nothing of the aimless mess of flickers which I drowsed through while waiting for *Winterset* to come on!), the heterogeneous pseudo-Colonial & pseudo-Tudor villas of our smart real-estate developments, the persistent sale of the late O. Henry's collected charlatanries, &c. &c. &c. And when bourgeois capitalism found it profitable to reach down to the still-submerged elements & cater to their crippled, repressed, & grotesquely unformed tastes with tabloid news rags, pulp "confession", "spicy", "love", "western", "horror", "scientifiction," "9-man" magazines, & the like, the opening-up of this huge market merely aggravated the trend away from real excellence toward showmanship & charlatanry. The suave bosses of a business "civilisation" have no wish to improve the masses—rather the reverse. Certainly, the spineless clod who sells himself into a pulp editorship under the present degenerate set-up cannot attempt to educate his circle of yokels & half-wits, or seek to cram meritorious literature down the reluctant gullets of people who simply continue buying trash from others. If he has chosen a cheap showman's job, he must stick to the pandering standards of his underworld or get out & make an honest living at some really constructive job of another sort if he can find such in a bourgeois world. Capitalism says, work the poor devils as cheaply as possible (throwing 'em out to starve when they're superfluous), & cash in on their present dwarfed tastes & faculties by selling 'em all the tabloids & Macfadden rags their decreasing store of pennies can pay for. Thus the noble cultures of well-mannered bank presidents, of Messrs. Hoover, Mellon, Mills, Al Smith, &c., & of other idealistic & disinterested upholders of our Sacred Constitution of the Founding Fathers. No wonder the

Marxists exaggerate a *trend or influence* into an *immutable law,* & proclaim the eternal linkage of art & economics!

Actually, the aesthetic outlook is not quite 100% hopeless. Let us grant that most profit-motivated writing & other forms of creation must be counted out. Also, that much of our sincere aesthetic or pseudo-aesthetic endeavour becomes sidetracked through the decadent & propagandist tendencies previously noted. Nay, more—that the restricted area of non-eccentric, non-propagandist material still aimed at gentlefolk (*Harper's,* Atlantic,* Alfred Noyes, Edith Wharton, Frank Brangwyn, Boston Symphony Orchestra, &c.) is increasingly lifeless, sterile, mannered, preoccupied with form, & obviously linked with obsolescent attitudes & interests & perspectives. Does this indeed mean the death of all normal & vigorous self-expression for its own sake? I hardly think so. The human instinct for creation—manifest from Cro-Magnon times onward—is too hardy & powerful to be downed by even as formidable a combination as that of all the forces here mentioned .... & this duly allowing for the ever-increasing diversion of human energy from imaginative synthesis to scientific analysis as brought about by new light on the universe. Counting all handicaps, I think there will always be a residue of honest & powerful aesthetic expression—some of it from unhampered & undeluded artists, & some from naturally gifted creators who cannot help evolving beauty despite various conscious fallacies & handicaps. There are great living novelists—Rolland, Mann, Dreiser, Undset, Lagerlof, &c.—& with Masefield, MacLeish, & others poetry is not dead. O'Neill & Maxwell Anderson give really substantial drama, & in painting Matisse & Zuloaga are still on deck—whatever one may think of Dali or Picasso or Diego Rivera. In architecture, despite all the "functional" horrors, Cram still holds the fort for Gothic, whilst the classic shade of Cass Gilbert may yet outlive Frank Lloyd Wright. This continuing body of soundness cannot be wholly without effect on the younger generation; & despite the lure of eccentricity, the dogmata of Marx, & the death-struggle of a blind & doomed commercialism, there will surely be a strong minority conscious of their heritage & determined to express themselves. And the more private commerce, industry, & finance become curbed & absorbed—as they must if civilisa-

* I refer only to the *fiction* in *Harper's.* In its *articles, H's* shews admirable vitality as contrasted with the well-bred vapidities of the smug & anile *Atlantic.*

tion is to survive without an explosion—the less mighty will bulk the cheap ideals of speed, quantity, ostentation, surface amusement, &c., which form one of the worst influences. Under a better controlled economic system, with Federal encouragement of mass-education (even if the first few sets of government adult-instruction commissioners lack perfect drawing-room manners), an appreciable rise in public taste may well be expected. It is probably as non-profit projects of some sort—governmentally subsidised or otherwise—that really meritorious magazines in fields as narrowly specialised as the weird will exist .... if they ever do exist. Capitalism had no place for this kind of thing—& in pre-capitalistic ages such special products depended upon the caprice of royal or other powerful patrons. The war between honest human expression & the profit motive is eternal & truceless.

As you may see, I disagree totally & violently with your belief in making concessions in writing. One concession leads to another— & he who takes the easiest way never comes back. They all say they *mean* to come back some day—but they never do. Belknap is gone. If Sultan Malik ever pulls out of charlatanry it will be purely the individual & non-representative triumph of a singularly keen objective intellect. Abe Merritt—who could have been a Machen or Blackwood or Dunsany or de la Mare or M. R. James (*they* never gave in & truckled to the Golden Calf! .... why *should* one if he can get food & decent clothing & warmth & shelter in any less ignominious way?) if he had but chosen —is so badly sunk that he's lost the critical faculty to realise it. And so on—& so on. The road does *not* lie through any *magazines* .... that is, the road for a fantastic writer. The "slicks" are just as tawdry & insincere as the "pulps"—with merely a different kind of tawdriness & insincerity—& the reputable magazines (*Harper's, Scribner's, Story* &c.) virtually never handle fantasy. The road to print for the serious fantaisiste is through *book-publication* alone—save for those *incidental* magazine placements which lie along the way. And if one can't make the book grade in the end, he is better off with his work largely unpublished—able to look himself in the face & know that he has never cringed nor truckled nor sold his intellectual & aesthetic integrity. He may go down, but he'll go down like a free & unbroken gentleman with sword untarnished & colours defiantly flying. Britons never shall be slaves! Actually, all technical training for the popular magazines is in *precisely the wrong direction* so far as aesthetic expression is concerned.

The better magazine hack one is, the less chance one has of ever doing anything worth doing. Every magazine trick & mannerism must be rigidly unlearned & banished even from one's subconsciousness before one can write seriously for educated mental adults. That's why Merritt lost—he learned the trained-dog tricks too well, & now he can't think & feel fictionally except in terms of the meaningless & artificial clichés of 2¢-a-word romance. Machen & Dunsany & James *would not learn* the tricks—& they have a record of genuine creative achievement beside which a whole library-full of cheap *Ships of Ishtar* & *Creep, Shadows* remains essentially negligible. It is much better never to have anything published than to cringe to cheap tradesmen—yet in practice the determined anti-concessionist often lands a story. True, he doesn't land as many as the truckler lands—but that was *never* his object. He wrote what he wrote because he wanted to write it—& the feat of mood-crystallisation itself was its own reward. If he had merely written what some grasping editorial clown wanted, where would his satisfaction have been? When it comes to a question of industrial production to suit a market demand, it's rather more dignified to let the commodity be something staple & useful—wheat, oranges, coal, furniture, & so on – than to let one's production-programme mock & parody the basic human impulse of aesthetic creation. However, as I have said, an enormous percentage of honestly & uncompromisingly written material can often be professionally & remuneratively placed. Many cases on actual record prove it. Klarkash-Ton's period of concessions was very brief, yet he has landed story after story—the real stuff, & no tailored-to-measure shoddy mixture. Then, too, we note with tragic wistfulness the many readily-published sincere *early* stories of writers who later sold themselves & slid down the toboggan to commercial success & rabble popularity. God! What Burks could have done if he'd stuck to the mood & manner of his early Haitian stuff & his *Bells of Oceana!* But human psychology is a complex & devious thing—& the influence of a dying but still greed-breeding capitalistic order is what it is. I'll cut my evangelical career short in its infancy, & let the dysoptic world go to hell in its own divinely-condemn'd way. But for commerce & all its ideals & conditions & ramified consequences—one lingeringly thumbed nose & one reverberant Bronx cheer! . . . . . .

Thanks immensely for the return of those pages with social & political arguments—though I don't know whether I'll ever have occasion

to use them after all. Events move swiftly, & the smashing victory of last November has so routed the enemy that I do not believe the barbaric Republican point of view will ever be seriously regarded hereafter in the United States. Civilised goals will have become so thoroughly taken for granted by 1940 that the bulk of the people will never again be bamboozled into voting for injustice, famine, & misery. It is not merely that they would revolt if Hooverism were put over on them. It is that they will nevermore allow Hooverism to be put over on them. The only way the handful of defeated greed-worshippers could ever regain power would be through a shrewdly organised fascist movement based on primitive emotional appeals of the religio-hysteric type (waving the flag, rousing nominal Christians against "Jewish intellectualism", exciting native-Americans against "Catholic-Irish-Jewish [or whatever foreign element predominates in any particular section] democracy", exciting Catholics against "materialistic communism", exciting provincial pride against "decadent European innovations" &c. &c.), or through an armed revolt with foreign backing like that of Gen. Franco in Spain. Granting the scant probability of a Franco-like revolt of the Hoovers & Mellons & polite bankers, & conceding that—despite Coughlinism, the Black Legion, the Silver Shirts, & the K.K.K.—the soil of America is hardly very fertile for any variant of Nazism, it seems likely that the day of free & easy plutocracy in the United States is over. It has taken the people generations to discover how they have been fooled; but once disillusioned, they are much less likely to be fooled again. Republicanism of the old type is out for good—though of course its confused & embittered remnants will long constitute a more or less harmless muttering minority like the Royalists in France & the Jacobites in 18th century England. The *real* issues of tomorrow lie betwixt the adherents of a controlled capitalism (Roosevelt; La Follette) which may or may not [it probably will, though many present liberals deny it] evolve into rational socialism, & the adherents of a sudden violent move toward some form of orthodox Marxian communism. A tremendous amount of the best thought of the younger generation is on the side of a communist move since sociologists of a certain type believe that the abstractionist element of the dying order will always form a fatal barrier to permanent progress unless violently deprived of mischief-making opportunities. I, however, do not agree with this position; for I believe that a slow, peaceful revolution in thought & perspective is already

under way amongst the majority, so that the obstructive reactionaries will never gain more than the horse-laugh which they gained last November. They will be a nuisance & drag, but hardly a danger—& meanwhile it is the part of wisdom to choose a peaceful & gradual evolution instead of a culturally destructive upheaval. Better let the capitalists hang on (under proper governmental control & taxation) a generation or two more than to plunge the nation into bloodshed & risk the destruction of the many sound factors in our hereditary culture. Industry should be socialised by degrees, & only as soon as the mass of the people are ready to back up the various absorptive moves. The government must dictate hours & wages, & see that employment is universally spread. If private industry can meet such rigidly enforced demands, well & good. If not—& it probably can't—absorption will be in order. And after it has been proved that nothing but absorption will perpetuate endurable conditions, the masses will so overwhelmingly endorse absorption (as they would not today) that no amount of private greed can obstruct its peaceful adoption. It will come, no doubt, in various ways. Now & then a private industry will be purchased by the government at a reasonable price—now & then a socially & legally culpable industry will be seized after a due trial—now & then the government will find it advisable to enter a certain field as competitor & eliminate private industries through non-profit sales at lower prices. One at a time—& without any disruption of the normal stream of American life. No seizures of homes or any private non-industrial holdings of reasonable amount [investors in private industries can be properly compensated in government bonds when absorption occurs], no interference with free scholarship & research & intellectual & aesthetic tradition, no official inculcation of grotesque & fallacious scientific theories, no invasions of personal dignity or impositions of arbitrary punishment, no attempts to dissociate extent of recompense from extent of service, no campaign against the refinements of civilisation [instead, a dissolution of the fallacious linkage of the concepts of cultivation & economic advantage, aided by mass education of unprecedented scope, thoroughness, & discrimination], & above all, no wasteful slaughter & widespread misery of the sort lately prevailing in Russia & still prevailing in Spain. There will be plenty of corruption & routine friction—but the net results can't help being better than either the crazy orgy of moribund capitalism (where the chief corruption is actually *legalised*

under the name of private profit) or the sanguinary shambles of a regulation Marxist revolution. It is toward such a goal that I prefer to work —& I believe the odds against achieving it are not insuperably great.

. . . . . .

The attitude which you outline—of a blind clinging to whatever immediate conditions give one the most luxuries & the most congenial social contacts in business hours, irrespective of the consequences to the bulk of the population—is indeed a very typical one, but I don't think it is of much ultimate significance because the immediate needs of *most people* (not merely most *nice* people or most *smart* people) are *not on the side of reaction, but are on the side of rational change.* For every well-fed Caspar Milquetoast whose personal advantage is served by the prosperity of the utility company which gives him a fat salary, there are a thousand or two John Smiths whose personal advantage (indeed, whose endurable existence) depends on the governmental regulation of that company's hours & wages & rates . . . . & perhaps on the government's absorption & non-profit operation of that company. Now that the John Smiths are beginning to know where their advantage lies, they will act just as Caspar does—blindly upholding what will personally serve them best—& when their millions of votes are counted against those of the Caspars, the result is not hard to predict. The trend is further promoted by the fact that not *all* fat-salaried beneficiaries of capitalism are Caspars. A few can reason, & can see that capitalism is *automatically* doomed by the natural course of economics unless upheld by fascist bayonets (although of course some of these reasoners merely shrug their shoulders cynically & cry *après nous, le deluge*); a few realise that their expert services will be just as well recompensed under government operation (even if the officials wear jarring neckties & have uncultivated accents) as under private profit-grabbing operation; whilst a few possess real social vision & share the disgust of the scholar & aesthete & gentleman at a tottering, unstable equilibrium founded on lies & delusions & hypocrisy & involving the equal negation of common human decency & long-range common sense. The number of these last is not to be sneezed at—for despite the complacent position of the typical bourgeois the ranks of social thinkers are constantly recruited from all the comfortably-situated classes . . . . gentry, plutocracy, professional, salaried commercial, official, & so on. The whole policy of *Harper's*—a magazine of frankly aristocratic appeal—is slanted at an

intellectual type of about the New-Deal degree of political leftness, whilst the real thinkers of all collegiate classes since 1930 are overwhelmingly liberal. Virtually *all* the reputable authors & critics in the United States are political radicals—Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Eastman, O'Neill, Lewis, Maxwell Anderson, MacLeish, Edmund Wilson, Fadiman—but the list is endless. It would be shorter & easier to compile a list of first-rate writers who are *not* leftists! In the ranks of gentry & plutocracy & officialdom one young thinker after another comes out for social change great or moderate—Corliss Lamont, Oliver Baldwin, the son of Pres. Justo of Argentina, &c. &c. &c.—here again one has only to pause for recollection in order to fill a page with illustrious surnames. The cream of human brains—the sort of brains not wrapped up in personal luxury & immediate advantage is slowly drifting away from the blind class-loyalty toward a better-balanced position in which the symmetrical structure & permanent stability of the whole social organism is a paramount consideration. What happened just before the French & Russian revolutions is happening now—the thinkers & artists & scholars are changing sides, abandoning their support of a dead order, & preparing to be the leaders & guides & administrators of the people in a general struggle for desperately-needed readjustment. When the plutocrats make their last stand—assuming that they have enough vitality remaining to make a last stand—they will find that their old-time advantage is gone. No more will a horde of helpless, uneducated, disorganised mental children be at their mercy. Instead, they will be faced by an increasingly awakened army of determined citizens, encouraged, supported, & officered by the best brains & executive ability of the nation—by a staff of socially-conscious leaders sprung from & trained amidst the governing gentry & plutocracy & professionaldom.

I cannot accept your point about a natural reluctance "to destroy the system which sustains us", because no rational reformer *wants* to destroy any system which sustains any honest worker. As I see it, your mistake lies in assuming that it *is* the dying plutocratic set-up which sustains you—a very basic & crucial mistake, when one comes to think of it. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. So far as your own individual case is concerned—if I judge correctly, you are an expert in certain forms of finance & accountancy & administration, whereby your services are important in any enterprise involving the receipt, disburse-

ment, exchange, or comparison of commodities, or the maintenance of complex industrial or administrative operations. Now do you suppose that such services are any the less necessary, or that they would be less reasonably rewarded, in a government-controlled or government-owned enterprise than in a private profit-grabbing scheme? What difference would it make to you whether your just return for high-grade mental work came from the American government or from a courteous private financier? The only losers in a move toward rationalisation would be the dividend-drawers who now get something for nothing, & the few top executives whose present salaries are disproportionately padded beyond all relationship to the extent of their actual services. Would such a rationalisation form an "overthrowing of the system which provides your livelihood"? I can't see that it would. I can't see that socialism would hurt anybody who is willing to work & who expects a just return for the work he performs—including guarantees of proper security in old age & in times of necessary unemployment or disability. Then, of course, it must be remembered that the moderate road avoids even the principal minor ills of readjustment. Communism would mean some rather disconcerting bumps—but there is nothing of destruction or violent dislocation in the orderly progressivism whose various stages are represented by the New Deal, the La Follettes, & Norman Thomas.

But the real joke of course is, that all this isn't a matter of choice anyhow! Capitalism is dying from internal as well as external causes, & its own leaders & beneficiaries are less & less able to kid themselves. I'm no economist, but from recent reading I've been able to form a rough picture of the dilemma—the need to restrict consumers' goods & to pile up a needless plethora of producing equipment in order to maintain the irrational surplus called profit—which has caused orthodox economists like Hayek & Robbins to admit that only starvation wages & artificial scarcity could stabilize the profit system in future & avert increasing cyclical depressions of utterly destructive scope. Laissez-faire capitalism is *dead*—make no mistake about that. The only avenue of survival for plutocracy is a military & emotional fascism whereby millions of persons will be withdrawn from the industrial arena & placed on a dole or in concentration-camps with high-sounding patriotic names. That or socialism—take your choice. In the long run it won't be the New Deal but the mere facts of existence which will be recognised as

the real & inevitable slayer of Hooverism. Nobody is going to "destroy the system"—for it has been destroying itself ever since it evolved out of the old agrarian-handicraft economy a century & a half ago.

All this from an antiquated mummy who was on the other side until 1931! Well—I can the better understand the inert blindness & defiant ignorance of the reactionaries from having been one of them. I know how smugly ignorant *I* was—wrapped up in the arts, the natural (not social) sciences, the *externals* of history & antiquarianism, the *abstract* academic phases of philosophy, & so on—all the one-sided standard lore to which, according to the traditions of the dying order, a liberal education was limited. God! the things that were *left out*—the inside facts of history, the rational interpretation of periodic social crises, the foundations of economics & sociology, the actual state of the world today . . . & above all, the *habit* of applying disinterested reason to problems hitherto approached only with traditional genuflections, flag-waving, & callous shoulder-shrugs! All this comes up with humiliating force through an incident of a few days ago—when young Conover, having established contact with Henneberger, the ex-owner of *WT,* obtained from the latter a long epistle which I wrote Edwin Baird on Feby. 3, 1924, in response to a request for biographical & personal data. Little Willis asked permission to publish the text in his combined *SFC-Fantasy,* & I began looking the thing over to see what it was like—for I had not the least recollection of ever having penned it. Well . . . . I managed to get through, after about 10 closely typed pages of egotistical reminiscences & showings-off & expressions of opinion about mankind & the universe. I did not faint—but I looked around for a 1924 photograph of myself to burn, spit on, or stick pins in! Holy Hades—was *I* that much of a dub at 33 . . . only 13 years ago? There was no getting out of it—I really *had* thrown all that haughty, complacent, snobbish, self-centred, intolerant bull, & at a mature age when anybody but a perfect damned fool would have known better! That earlier illness had kept me in seclusion, limited my knowledge of the world, & given me something of the fatuous effusiveness of a belated adolescent when I finally *was* able to get about more around 1920, is hardly much of an excuse. Well—there was nothing to be done . . . . . except to rush a note back to Conover & tell him I'd dismember him & run the fragments through a sausage-grinder if he ever thought of

printing such a thing! The only consolation lay in the reflection that I *had* matured a bit since '24. It's hard to have done all one's growing up since 33—but that's a damn sight better than not growing up at all. Here's hoping that Henneberger (quite a get-rich-quick Wallingford in his way) won't try to blacken me with the letter!

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921. TO NILS H. FROME

Feby. 8, 1937

Dear Frome:—

. . . The notion of anything "immortal" about man or any biological organism—that is, the notion of any qualities not dependent upon the cells of the material body—is in the light of today's knowledge wholly untenable. . . . . Who really *wants* to be cosmically important? . . . Instead of fretting about being insignificant, it's up to us to enjoy the faculties we have—exercising our intellectual curiosity in study, and our aesthetic sense in imaginative and artistic creation. . . . We are only a momentary accident—but even so, we typify far subtler and more delicate energy-transformation processes than any other objects within our field of view. . . . . .

As to fortune-telling—all one can do is to urge you to use your common sense. You must be aware that every happening on this earth (or in all the universe, for that matter) is the result of *an infinitely vast number of wholly unrelated causes*. If any one of these causes were different, the thing would not happen. If a man stubs his toe in a certain place on a certain day, it is because of an infinity of antecedent elements (hereditary factors &c) which have caused him to be in the given place where he is, which have caused the obstacle to exist where it does, and which have caused the man to react to the obstacle as he does. . . . . And all happenings depend upon just as wide a conjunction of totally unrelated circumstances. Any event involving human beings depends on the *total heredity* of each one—and the average person has four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents, thirty-two great-great-great-grandparents, and so on. 200 years ago the

ancestors of any one person were so scattered that only a minority are likely to have known of the others' existence—and even then, some who knew each other never knew their descendants would join in marriage. . . . There is absolutely no clue to the future, because its events are compounded of so many *different* chains of past events, each of which may be taking place all unknown to the spectators of any other. In our present, which is the future's past, we can know of only one or two factors which will enter into any events of the future. There is no way of finding out the others, because *we don't know what to look for.* . . . . Fortune-telling has no place in the belief of educated adults. As for fakes like "numerology"—these things are simply the products of infantile ignorance. . . . Telepathy is another very doubtful thing. The only apparent evidence in its favour is that of the recent Rhine experiments, and even these are not universally accepted. . . . . .

. . .

Yrs. most sincerely—
HPL

922. TO ARTHUR F. SECHRIST

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Feb. 14, 1937

Dear Ar-Eph-Es:—

Still more congratulations on the new feline member of the household—who may, I trust, grow up to be as revered a matriarch as Mrs. Spotty Perkins (mother of my late friends Samuel and John Perkins, and the Earl of Minto) at the boarding-house across the garden. Glad the newcomer gets along well with the younger generation—and imagine that the latter will take much delight in her presence. As for the matter of *demonstrativeness* I've never given it much attention, since the most I ask of a feline colleague is just to be around and look graceful. However, I fancy most cats become more or less visibly attached to those who pay them attention and treat them with scrupulous consideration. I am so fond of cats that I can't help making a great deal

of them, and they usually seem to recognise me as a sort of natural friend. I always play with them extensively—usually with a long, slender branch, or a spool or piece of paper on the end of a string. A hassock is a great aid to feline sport—using it as a screen or barrier behind which to draw . . . slowly and tantalisingly . . . the spool on which one's furry playmate's eyes are interestedly centred. Cats also enjoy *tunnels* formed of rugs or newspapers. One favourite pastime of theirs is to leap at anything which moves or bulges mysteriously beneath a covering—as a hand creeping under a rug and forming a curious moving mountain. Considerate attention always pleases a cat. I never evict one from a chair, or disturb his slumbers or repose. People have compared me to Mohammed, who once cut off the loose part of one of his sleeves rather than disturb the cat who had curled up to sleep on it. Tones of voice are likewise influential. I always talk to cats individually, and in accents of such obvious friendliness that they seem to recognise me as a fraternity-brother. And I always acknowledge gestures of consideration on their part—talking pleasantly, stroking them, or scratching them gently under the chin when they jump in my lap, rub around my ankles, or otherwise express esteem. I am also generous with catnip, keeping a supply always on hand for the regaling of my favourite callers. I generally scatter it on an outspread newspaper in a certain spot on the floor—and my friends have come to know the old gentleman so well that they always make for that spot without delay upon entering Grandpa's study. In the end, an average kittie will always be notably friendly toward any person whom he can remember as always speaking and acting considerately, and never speaking or acting harshly. When I moved to #66 there was a fine old neighbour cat (now, alas, moved away) whose fear of strangers was notorious. However—beginning with friendly discourse at a distance I had the old fellow in three months so that he would roll over on my approach and play like a kitten! Good old Peter Randall! I certainly miss him now that I no longer see him and his brother sprawled on the shed roof beneath my window!

All good wishes—
Yrs. most sincerely—
Ech-Pi-El.

923. TO FRANK UTPATEL

Providence
Feb. 15, 1937

Dear Mr. Utpatel:—

..... So you read Bloch's article on my formidable ways? Thanks very much for the coming shipment from your local necropolis. No—I don't demand any blood in exhumed specimens. Indeed, I always prefer to take my blood from living subjects. My really preferred diet is century-old vampire-flesh, obtained from the shadowed & moss-grown churchyards where certain evil sorcerers were interred 200 years or more ago, there to lie fat and fresh through the generations, silent & unstirring save when their misty emanations steal forth after sunset to afflict the countryside & exact a hideous toll from lone wayfarers. When I can find & dig up one of these old rascals, I have a genuinely deluxe feast—for they possess a mellow flavour not even approached by ordinary human carrion. If you know of any such specimens around your way (& ancient regional legends might hint of many) I'd surely appreciate a well-packed cargo. To ensure arrival in good condition, they ought to be packed in the earth of their original burial-place. Oh, yes—I have a local supply of such delicacies, but I always like to try exotic specimens—as subtly flavoured by different kinds of churchyard mould. My chief Providence source is the hidden churchyard of St. John's on the ancient hill just north of here—a spectral, sloping ossuary completely concealed from every public thoroughfare & with interments dating back to 1723. The adjacent stone church dated from 1810. Poe knew of this place, & is said to have wandered among its whispering willows during his visits here 90 years ago. Last August I shewed this place to two guests, & we all sat down on an altar-tomb & wrote rhymed acrostics on the name of *Edgar Allan Poe* .....

Yrs. most sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

924. TO AUGUST DERLETH

The Ancient Hill—
February 17, 1937

Dear A. W.:—

. . . . . Another thing of interest to the constellation student is the little magazine called *The Monthly Evening Sky Map* ($1.50 per annum) published by the 86-year-old Leon Barritt, 244 Adams St., Brooklyn, N. Y. This shews the morning and evening sky for each month in middle northern latitudes, the evening sky for the southern hemisphere (invaluable for anybody writing about Australia or South Africa or South America) and various other things of interest. . . . Thirty years ago I bought a large planisphere from Barritt—the so-called "Barritt-Serviss Star and Planet Finder", with a graduated ecliptic and thumb-tacks for planets. An accompanying booklet gave the right ascension of each planet at short intervals for about a decade ahead, so that one could simply stick the tack on the ecliptic at the right place and be all set. Time passed, the booklet became obsolete, and I didn't know what had become of Barritt and his firm. For a while I used the Nautical Almanack in setting the planets, but after I ceased to buy the almanack I simply let the thing slide. Now—after a full generation—I discover that the old coot is still going strong at 86, and conducting his business at full blast—even on an increased scale, for he issues this little magazine and acts as agent for telescopes, books, and all sorts of astronomical devices. So at last I'm getting another planet booklet (up to 1947) and blowing the dust off the old planisphere. I'm surely glad I didn't throw the device away (or rather, give it away), as I might well have done, since I have other planispheres which shew merely the stars. Funny how early interests crop up again toward the end of one's life. . . .

Obeisances and benedictions—Yr. obt. Grandsire,
HP

925. TO EARL PEIRCE

66 College St.,
Providence, R. I.,
February 17, 1937.

Dear Mr. Peirce:—

. . . . . .

Glad you like *At the Mountains of Madness*, although the text of the *Astounding* version is nearly ruined—especially toward the end—by the inept mangling of Street & Smith's obtuse editors. I wish I could get the correct version printed as a book, but there is very little chance of such. I've had uniform bad luck with book propositions. Again and again publishers have approached me concerning a collection of tales, but negotiations have always fallen through in the end. The one approximation to a book which did get printed—*The Shadow over Innsmouth*—is such a typographical mess that I hate to think about it.

. . . . .

Yours most sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

P. S. Pardon delay in letter. After 2 months of half-illness—intestinal grippe and allied ailments—I'm down at last. Doc is dosing me with 3 different nostrums—and up only a little while at a time. I shall have to curtail all my activities for the rest of the winter.

926. TO ARTHUR WIDNER

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
Feby. 20, 1937

Dear "Art":—

. . . . . .

About your objection to the *Haunter*—the main idea of course is that the night-monster has secured a hold upon Blake's brain, partly pene-

trating it & almost effecting an exchange of personalities. Blake could not think for himself or protect himself—indeed, on one occasion the monster has hypnotically dragged him all the way across town to the dark church against his will. If the tension is relaxed at certain moments, it still leaves the victim in no shape to do anything. His only safeguard is the city lighting which keeps the Thing at a distance & takes the responsibility out of his hands. As for portable lighting facilities—if Blake had been in any condition to exercise judgment, one may suppose he would have taken vast precautions after that first failure of the lighting system. He would have provided powerful oil or acetylene lamps in his house, ready to light up in case any more failure of power occurred—for it is doubtful whether the one or two candles & single flashlight at hand could have stopped the Thing. Perhaps he meant to take such precautions—but neglected them just too long because of his weakened will. Even if he *had* taken them the Thing could have come quite close—above the house, & out of the glow of the lighted windows (assuming no searchlight was provided)—& at that short distance could have completed the mental exchange & forced Blake to turn off whatever lights he had provided. However—having neglected the advance precautions, Blake couldn't be expected to do much when the lights went out. With mind half numb & haunted by the Thing, he would scarcely be apt to think of rounding up many candles from mantelpieces all over the house & getting them all grouped & lighted in time. And if the power stayed off long they would be burned out—& if he went out to buy candles or lamps from neighbours, what might not get him in the unlighted streets? If he begged shelter within a candle-lit house (most people were asleep) would he be admitted or ejected as a drunk or madman? Could he keep a blaze of paper going in the fireplace or in some tin basin? With a clear head something might have been done—but the Thing had already seized his brain. The whole point of the climax is that Blake was no longer capable of helping himself. Mentally, the Thing had got him—& his only hope of preservation lay in the maintenance of lights *by other people* not under the hellish Entity's control. Note that people free from such control—like the Italians of Federal Hill—*did* provide emergency lights. It is hardly correct to attribute Blake's inability to act to "a Hamlet-like nature"; since the cause was a *specific hypnosis from outside.* Left to himself, Blake was not necessarily of an indecisive temperament. I may add that I am rather fond

of depicting central figures as helpless in the face of oncoming horrors, because that is the way people largely *are* during real nightmares. I have found it effective to make a spectral horror-story resemble an actual nightmare as closely as possible—& nothing helps this resemblance better than a helpless & inactive "hero" with the monstrous shapes of doom closing in relentlessly around him. Indeed, the secret of all dream-literature is to have the central figure largely passive (symbolising the dreamer himself), with the events floating more or less detachedly & uncontrolled by him. Another tale of mine with a "hero" whose helplessness might puzzle some readers (though explained in the text) is *The Whisperer in Darkness*—laid in your own Vermont. By the way—is your "Doc" Lowndes one Robert W. Lowndes of West Cornwall, Conn.? If so, I have heard from him & found him an extremely intelligent & artistically sensitive person.

About the N.A.P.A.—here is an application blank. It is a nation-wide society of persons who either publish small amateur papers or write for them, & in my opinion forms one of the most truly encouraging aids for the young writer in existence. One can get a good deal of material published which would be rejected by the professional press, & once it is published it is carefully read by the limited circle of members (200 or 300) & usually criticised & reviewed in a good many of the papers. The society has been in existence nearly 61 years, & has been a substantial developing influence in the career of many writers—among them the fantasy author Frank B. Long Jr. A number of the youthful publishers & readers of fantasy "fan" magazines are now joining—Donald Wollheim, Duane W. Rimel, R. H. Barlow, & Emil Petaja being among our new members. I've been in "amateur-journalism" (as the field covered by the N.A.P.A. & one or two similar associations is called) for 23 years, & have always found it extremely helpful. If you're interested I'll send you sample amateur papers.

. . . .

No—I don't care for science fiction of the sort published in cheap magazines. There's no vitality in it—merely dry theories tacked on to shallow, unreal, insincere juvenile adventure stories. But I do like the few real masterpieces in that field—certain of H. G. Wells's novels, S. Fowler Wright's *The World Below*, & that marvellous piece of imagination by W. Olaf Stapledon, *Last & First Men*.

My latest story? *The Haunter of the Dark!* Haven't had a single

chance to write a story since November 1935. Other tasks press heavily upon me, my correspondence utterly swamps me, & my health has of late been very poor. I had hoped that I might arrange for some fiction-writing leisure this winter, but the prospects now seem very slim. If I can keep up with revision work I shall be doing well. However, whenever I *do* get at yarn-spinning again, I shall no doubt drag in the primal pre-human entities of Earth's youth as often as of yore.

. . . .

All good wishes—
Yrs. most sincerely—
HPL

927. TO HARRY O. FISCHER

Unknown Kadath—
(late February, 1937)

Valiant & (I fervently trust) Undrowned Mouser:—

. . . . . Regarding the element of *fear*—I don't think I share your immunity. I am a middle-grounder, with *heights* as my weak point. Lacking any natural sense of balance (some of those curious equilibrating devices in the inner ear must be weak or absent in me), I become dizzy in lofty & difficult places, & could easily fall to a pulpy doom (in more than the figurative, literary sense) if I tried to duplicate some of the stunts which others perform as a matter of course. I used to war against this weakness, & have at times temporarily conquered it enough to let me walk on high, narrow wall-tops & over dizzying trestles—but in later years I have lost ground. Just about a decade ago I began refusing to take dares—beginning with the time a friend challenged me to walk along the foot-wide and not-quite level parapet of upper Riverside Drive in New York, with a 500-foot perpendicular drop to ragged rocks & railway tracks on one side. In other fields, however, I'm an especial Caspar Milquetoast—being willing to take a chance where there really *is* a chance. I'm not especially set on living for ever, although I'd dislike meeting a messy or disintegrative end. I don't bear pain well, & dodge it whenever possible. However, I endeavour not to do my yelling out loud. In infancy I was afraid of the dark, which I

peopled with all sorts of things; but my grandfather cured me of that by daring me to walk through certain dark parts of the house when I was 3 or 4 years old. After that, dark places held a certain fascination for me. But it is in *dreams* that I have known the real clutch of stark, hideous, maddening, paralysing *fear*. My infant nightmares were classics, & in them there is not an abyss of agonising cosmic horror that I have not explored. I don't have such dreams now—but the memory of them will never leave me. It is undoubtedly from them that the darkest & most gruesome side of my fictional imagination is derived. At the ages of 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8 I have been whirled through formless abysses of infinite night and adumbrated horrors as black & as seethingly sinister as any of our friend Fafhrd's "splatter-stencil" triumphs. That's why I appreciate such triumphs so keenly. *I have seen these things!* Many a time I have awaked in shrieks of panic, & have fought desperately to keep from sinking back into sleep & its unutterable horrors. At the age of six my dreams became peopled with a race of lean, faceless, rubbery, winged things to which I applied the home-made name of *night-gaunts*. Night after night they would appear in exactly the same form—& the terror they brought was beyond any verbal description. Long decades later I embodied them in one of my *Fungi from Yuggoth* pseudo-sonnets, which you may have read. Well—after I was 8 all these things abated, perhaps because of the scientific habit of mind which I was acquiring (or trying to acquire). I ceased to believe in religion or any other form of the supernatural, & the new logic gradually reached my subconscious imagination. Still, occasional nightmares brought recurrent touches of the ancient fear—& as late as 1919 I had some that I could use in fiction without much change. *The Statement of Randolph Carter* is a literal dream transcript. Now, in the sere & yellow leaf (I shall be 47 in August), I seem to be rather deserted by stark horror. I have nightmares only 2 or 3 times a year, & of these none even approaches those of my youth in soul-shattering, phobic monstrousness. It is fully a decade & more since I have known *fear* in its most stupefying & hideous form. And yet, so strong is the impress of the past, I shall never cease to be fascinated by *fear* as a subject for aesthetic treatment. Along with the element of cosmic mystery & outsideness, it will always interest me more than anything else. It is, in a way, amusing that one of my chief interests should be an emotion whose poignant extremes I have never known in waking life!

Of the celebrated "phobias" of the modern psychologists (or of things like them) I have only *one;* & that, amusingly enough, is one I have never seen cited or named. Probably it *has* a name & record, but my very superficial knowledge of psychology (a subject which fails to fascinate me greatly, despite its grotesque fictional possibilities) does not include any glimpse of it. I know about *claustrophobia* & *agoraphobia,* but have neither. I have, however, a *cross betwixt the two*—in the form of a distinct fear of *very large enclosed spaces.* The dark carriage-room of a stable—the shadowy interior of a deserted gas-house—an empty assembly-room or theatre-auditorium—a large cave—you can probably get the idea. Not that such things throw me into visible & uncontrollable jittery spasms, but that they give me a profound & crawling sense of the sinister—even at my age. I'm not sure of the source of this fear, but I believe it must link up somehow with the black abysses of my infant nightmares. Anyhow, I keep it in mind to deflate my ego when I tend to feel superior about the illogical aversions & timidities of others. Grandpa must not forget his Achillean heel!

. . . . . The name "Abdul Alhazred" is one which some adult (I can't recall who) devised for me when I was 5 years old & eager to be an Arab after reading the Arabian Nights. Years later I thought it would be fun to use it as the name of a forbidden-book author. The name *Necronomicon* (νεκρός, corpse; νόμος, law; εἰκών, image = An Image [or Picture] of the Law of the Dead) occurred to me in the course of a dream, although the etymology is perfectly sound. In assigning an *Arabic* author to a *Greek-named* book I was whimsically reversing the condition whereby the monumental astronomical work of the *Greek* Ptolemy (Μεγάλη Σύνταξις Τῆς Ἀστρονομίας) is commonly known by the *Arabic* name *Almagest* (or more truly, Tabrir al Magesthi), which was evolved from a corruption of the original title when the Arabs made their translation (μέγιστη is the superlative of μεγάλη, & the Arabs probably found it in common use to distinguish the work from another of Ptolemy's). It was not until later that I took the trouble to hunt up a genuine Arabic title (Al Azif—a word which I found in Henley's learned notes to *Vathek.* I use the term correctly, though at second-hand) for old Abdul's *original* version of the Byzantinely translated Νεκρονόμικον. . . . . .

I can well comprehend the vague impression of aloneness or differentiation which you have always had in some degree. Such, I imagine,

is always the concomitant of a very active imagination & highly individualised personality. The bulk of the human race lives very little in the imaginative realm; hence can seldom grasp the goals, motives, & aspirations of anyone with whom subtle perspectives, symbolic associations, & obscure mental correlations form important emotional factors. Such a one must inhabit a quasi-solipsistic world of his own even more completely than the average individual, & he is always fortunate when he encounters others of a cast sufficiently similar to appreciate the existence, general principles, & typical laws of his private universe. This general comprehension of separate worlds & their workings is usually as sound a basis of congeniality as that rarer & perhaps wholly non-existent phenomenon of an *identity* of private universes. At least, what makes me feel cordial & at ease toward anyone is not so much an identity of tastes & beliefs & perspectives, as an assurance that my own tastes & beliefs & perspectives are not regarded as insane, incomprehensible, or non-existent! .....

Yrs by *still*-sunken R'lyeh—
Grandpa Cthulhu

928. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

February 28, 1937

Jonckheer:—

Yrs of the 15th found me completely knocked out with an acute intestinal trouble following 2 mos. of dragging grippe. Don't know how long or serious an ordeal I'm in for, but Dr. Dustin plans to call in a stomach specialist Tuesday. Am in constant pain, take only liquid food, and so bloated with gas that I can't lie down. Spend all time in chair propped with pillows, and can read or write only a few minutes at a time. Taking 3 medicines at once.

But I must not delay answering yours of the 15th. Thanks immensely for the antiquarian travel bits, and for the *Texaco Star*. No—I didn't get your steel number. The last *Star* I had before this new one was the Texaco Centennial issue.

As for that book proposition—I'm devilish sorry to say that it looks rather stalled. I've had no strength since the middle of December, and

could attend only to immediate things. Now it looks as if all bets were off. I've no idea what lies ahead of me—and any systematic effort seems fantastically remote. You and the firm are unbelievably kind and liberal —but what can a guy do when he hardly has strength enough to walk across the room? If I ever get through this damned mess, and the firm still feels receptive, we may be able to talk more to the point. All my correspondence and affairs are going to hell, though I'm dropping cards —or having my aunt drop them—in important cases. Hope Belknap's magnum opus will be one of the sensations of 1937. His confidence at least is in his favour.

Good luck with your own pulp experiments. It all depends on what one's basic values and ambitions are. There is certainly vast economic advantage in the pulp field.

Well—I hope all is progressing well with you. Again let me apologise for the apparent letdown, and assure you that the cause is all too adequate. I'll see that you hear of any salient future development.

Blessings and genuflections—
Grandpa van Kasje

929. TO WILLIAM LUMLEY

66 College St.
Providence, R. I.
(Feby. 28, 1937)

Dear Mr. Lumley:—

. . . I am surely sorry to hear of your poor health, which is at present more or less paralleled by my own. My persistent touch of grippe—or whatever it is—keeps my digestion in very bad shape, and I have no strength at all. All I can do is to attend to a few insistent matters and get out for brief afternoon walks when it is warm enough. . . Letter delayed. Am now acutely ill with intestinal trouble following grippe. No strength—constant pain. Bloated with gas and have to sit and sleep constantly in chair with pillows. Doctor is going to call in a stomach specialist Tuesday. So I fear I shan't be able to do much for a long time to come.

HPL

930. TO JAMES F. MORTON

(H. P. Lovecraft's last letter, unfinished, found on his desk after he had been taken to the hospital, where the end came to him, March 15, 1937. The letter was preceded by these memos:

Hadley N. A. P. A. donations to self and R. K.
Goodenough
Edkins
Cook
Californian
Kleiner criticism
Floods
Recent *Weird Tale* issues:
Finlay and C. A. S. verses
Derleth
Leiber (odd about Sp. stencil work) and Fischer
Kuttner and de Castro
Innsmouth
Chivers
Surrealism (?)
Winterset and Mids. N. D.)

The Antient Hill
March, 1937

Pinnacled Pharos of Petrological Profundity:—

Continuing the chronicle of Theobaldian vegetativeness from Sept. 13's train-time onward, we find no extremely striking landmarks to record ..... unless the abysmal foot swelling and damned intestinal grippe of recent weeks form an item of biographical interest. Cripes, but I'm about all in—with the strength of an eviscerated dishrag!

Following your too-soon-terminated sojourn, the next social event of the dying season was a visit from young Moe Sept. 19-20, which included some sight-seeing in his 1928 Ford. Meanwhile I plugged along with that Renshaw job—being unable to persuade the author to reproportion those familiar allusions or to let me doctor the whole thing up into something definite. Time got rushed toward the last, so that

I had to work sixty hours without sleep in order to make the deadline. Cooking up a good reading course was a helluva job. In the end everything was cut down ruthlessly—though the result is a very neat little cloth-bound volume. I read the proofs three times, reducing errors to a minimum.

October 9th I attended a meeting of the local organisation of amateur astronomers—"The Skyscrapers", which functions more or less under the auspices of Brown University—and was astonished at its degree of development. Some of the members are really serious scientific observers, and the society has recently purchased a well-known private observatory (that of the late F. E. Seagrave—whom Charles A. A. Parker once knew—with an 8″ refracting telescope) in the western part of the state. It has separate meteor, variable star, planet, etc. sections, which hold meetings of their own and report as units, and enjoys the use of the college observatory. At the recent meeting there was an address on early Rhode-Island astronomy, and the reflecting telescope of Joseph Brown—used to observe the transit of Venus here on June 3, 1769 and owned by the college since 1780—was exhibited. Oddly enough, this meeting proved a prelude to another and wholly unrelated revival of my old astronomical interests. Down in De Land my friend Charles B. Johnston has become connected with Stetson University and its astronomical society, and asked me for a series of elementary articles on the heavens for the local paper. I had an old series—published twenty-two years ago—which seemed of about the right sort; but when I got them out, their obsoleteness completely bowled me over. The progress of the science in the last twenty or thirty years had left me utterly behind, and I saw that I'd have to do a helluva lot of brushing up if I ever expected to bridge the last decades and give the ancient articles an intelligent revision to date. Well—I decided to try it, hence began an intermittent reading course with which I'm still busy. Our public library has some excellent new books on the subject—the textbook by J. C. Duncan and the layman's manuals by Bartky and Stokeley being apparently the best short cuts for the non-mathematical amateur. Curious how one's early interests crop up again in one's sunset years. I used to be an ardent amateur chemist as well as astronomer—and the other day I learned that one of the youths of the fantasy fan group is likewise a chemical enthusiast—having assembled a really impressive laboratory besides organising an Organic Chemists' Correspondence Club.

Also in October I came into touch with a rather quaint egg in San Francisco—one Stuart Morton (relative o' yourn?) Boland, who seems to possess occult leanings. He is a librarian of some sort, has travelled extensively, and claims to have seen many real-life prototypes of the *Necronomicon*. He most generously presented me with a fine book on primal American civilisations, plus some of his photographs of Aztec ruins (largely in Teotihuacán) taken on a recent Mexican trip.

As for outings—of course I kept in the open most of the time until the hellish chill of autumn finally began to shut down. Even after that I managed to take occasional trips to the woods and fields throughout October and just over the line into November. The unique feature of my autumnal explorations was that I succeeded in discovering several splendid rural regions within a three-mile radius of here *which I had never seen before.* One is a wooded hill—Neutaconkanut—on the western rim of the town (much south of Friend Mariano), whence a series of marvellous views of the outspread city and adjacent countryside may be obtained. I had often ascended it before, but the exquisitely mystical sylvan scenery beyond the crest—curious mounds, hummocked pastures, and hushed, hidden valleys—was wholly new to me. On October 28th I explored this region still further—including the country west of Neutaconkanut and the western slopes of that eminence itself. At certain stages of this ramble I penetrated a terrain which took me half a mile from any spot I had ever trod before in the course of a long life. I followed a road which branches north and west from the Plainfield Pike, ascending a low rise which skirts Neutaconkanut's western foot and which commands an utterly idyllic vista of rolling meadows, ancient stone walls, hoary groves, and distant cottage roofs to the west and south. Only two or three miles from the city's heart, and yet in the primal rural New England of the first colonists! Just before sunset I ascended the hill by a precipitous cart-path bordering an ancient wood, and from the dizzy crest obtained an almost stupefying prospect of unfolded leagues of farmsteads and champaigns, gleaming rivulets and far-off forests, and mystical orange sky with a great solar disc sinking redly amidst bars of stratus clouds. Entering the wood, I saw the actual sunset through the trees, and then turned east to cross the hill to that more familiar cityward slope which I have always known. Never before had I realised the great extent of Neutaconkanut's surface. It is really a miniature plateau or table-land, with valleys, ridges, and summits of

its own, rather than a simple hill. From some of its hidden interior meadows—remote from every sign of nearby human life—I secured truly marvellous glimpses of the remote urban skyline—a dream of enchanted pinnacles and domes half-floating in air, and with an obscure aura of mystery around them. The upper windows of some of the taller towers held the fire of the sun after I had lost it, affording a spectacle of cryptic and curious glamour. Then I saw the great yellow disc of the Hunter's Moon (two days before full) floating above the belfries and minarets, while in the orange-glowing west Venus and Jupiter commenced to twinkle. My route across the plateau was varied—sometimes through the interior, but now and then getting toward the wooded edge where dark valleys slope down to the plain below, and huge balanced boulders on rocky heights impart a spectral, druidic effect as they stand out against the twilight. I did not begin to cover the full extent of the plateau, and can see that I have a field for several voyages of discovery when warm days return. Finally I came to more familiar ground—where the grassy ridge of an old buried aqueduct gives the illusion of one of those vestigial Roman roads in Machen's Caermaen country—and stood once more on the well-known eastward crest which I have gazed at since infancy. The outspread city was rapidly lighting up, and lay like a constellation in the deepening dusk. The moon poured down increasing floods of pale gold, and the glow of Venus and Jupiter in the fading west grew intense. Then down the steep hillside to the car line (too cold for enjoyable walking without scenery to compensate for shivers) and back to the prosaic haunts of man.**

October 20 and 21 were phenomenally warm, and I utilised them in exploring a hitherto untapped region down the east shore of Narragansett Bay where the Barrington Parkway winds along the lofty bluff above the water. It is, in general, the area to the right of our usual route to Aunt Julia's. I found a highly fascinating forest called the Squantum Woods—where there are great oaks and birches, steep slopes and rock ledges, and breath-taking westward vistas beyond the trees. On both occasions there was a fine sunset—then glimpses of the crescent moon, Venus, and Jupiter ..... and the lights of far-off Providence from high places along the parkway. On my expedition of the 20th a par-

** August Derleth later incorporated the preceding descriptive sequence into a short story, *The Lamp of Alhazred.*

ticularly congenial bodyguard or retinue attended me through the sunlit arcades of the grove—in the persons of *two tiny kittens,* one gray and one tortoise-shell, who appeared out of nowhere in the midst of the sylvan solitudes. Blithe spirits of the ancient wood—furry faunlets of the shadowy vale! I wonder where their mother was? Judging by their diminutiveness, they could scarce have been fully graduated from her as a source of nourishment. Probably they appertained to an hospital whose grounds are contiguous with the mystical forest. Both were at first very timid, and reluctant to let Grandpa catch them; but eventually the little grey fellow became very purr-ful and amicable—climbing over the old gentleman, playing with twigs and with Grandpa's watch-charm, and eventually curling up and going to sleep in the grandpaternal lap. But Little Brother remained suspicious and aloof—clawing and spitting with surprising vehemence on the one occasion when Grandpa caught him. He hung around, however, because he didn't want to lose his brother! Not wishing to wake my new friend, I carried him about when I continued my ramble—Little Tortoise-Shell Brother tagging along reluctantly and dubiously at a discreet distance in the rear. When the grey faunlet awaked, he requested to be set down; but proceeded to trot companionably after Grandpa—sometimes getting under the old gentleman's feet and considerably retarding progress. Thus I roamed the venerable forest aisles for an hour and a half—till the ruddy disc of the sun vanished behind the farther hills. As I emerged from the wood, I feared that my faithful retinue might follow me on to the broad parkway and incur the perils of motor traffic—and was considering expedients (such as putting Little Grey Boy a short distance up a tree) for discouraging their further attendance—but discovered that they were not without native caution. Or perhaps they were wholly genii loci, without real existence apart from their dim nemorense habitat. At any rate, Little Grey Boy paused at the edge of the grove with a mewed farewell—and naturally Little Tortoise-Shell had no great eagerness to follow. I bade them a regretful and ceremonious adieu—and on the next day looked for them in vain.

As a whole, our autumn was notably lacking in visual splendour. Not as prematurely cold as I had feared, but with the dullest October foliage within my memory. Half the trees were swept bare by heavy rains as soon as they began to turn, whilst the other half remained green for an anomalous length of time—the leaves then falling almost as soon as

they did turn. *Red* hues were especially rare. The result was a tremendous loss of glamour—although we heard of gorgeous woodlands at points not many miles distant, while the Vermont and New-Hampshire leafage is said to have been of unparalleled magnificence. Derleth also told of riotous autumn colours in Wisconsin.

By the way—another event of that genial October 20th was my first sight of President Roosevelt, who was in town in the morning and who spoke from the terrace of our marble state-house. Despite the crowds, I obtained several close and excellent glimpses of the distinguished visitor whose coming triumph was so obvious—my third sight of a chief executive; T. R. and Big Bill Taft constituting the others.

As for the November election—I expected a brilliant victory, but the *extent* of the landslide surprised and delighted me. Late in October I attended a highly interesting New Deal rally, with the eminent Rabbi Wise of New York as principal speaker. He sized up the inevitable awakening of the public mind with phenomenal penetration and wit, and exposed the putrescent deadness and irrelevance of the obsolete slogans and artificial basic premises on which the reactionaries based their pitiful appeal. I can well imagine the Wall Street Nazis of Hoover and Ogden Mills cursing him as a dangerous non-Aryan intellectual! On the eve of the election I did—for the second time in a long life—what I did on the night of November 7-8th, 1916, when the fortunes of Hughes and Wilson hung in the balance ("he kep' us outa war") ..... went to a late cinema show where election returns were announced. The national results were early manifest, but the state and city figures (a clean Democratic sweep) took longer to settle. By the time the performance closed—two-forty-five a. m.—there was no danger of any contrary report next day as there was twenty years ago. On that occasion, you will recall, the nation retired believing Hughes elected, but had that belief shattered the next day. All in all, the recent triumph is pretty significant in what it implies. The feeble arguments, obvious hokum, absurd accusations, and occasionally underhanded tactics of the enemy reacted against them, while some obscure instinct of common sense seemed to hold the extreme radicals to the Popular Front and keep them from wasting their votes on obviously hopeless tickets. It amuses me to see the woebegone state of the staid reactionary reliques with whom I am surrounded—the Providence old-family clique away from whose past-drugged ideology it is impossible to pull my aunt.

Around election time I came damn near having a family feud on my hands! Poor old ostriches! Trembling for the republic's safety, they actually thought their beloved Langston or Langhorne or Lemeke (or whatever his name was) had a chance! However, the intelligent university element was not so blind. Indeed, one of the professors said just before the election that his idea of a rotten sport was a man who would actually *take* one of the pro-Lansdowne (or whatever his name was) bets offered by the walrus-moustached constitution-savers of the Hope Club easy-chairs. Well—even the most stubborn must some day learn that the tide of social evolution cannot be checked forever. The shade of old King Canute will again speak his famed command to the waves, and teach the economic royalists of this age the lesson he taught the courtiers of his own.

With the coming of hibernation there came also a few compensating events in the form of lectures—on subjects as varied as the Williamsburg restoration, the relation of poetry to philosophy, Peruvian antiquities, Italian Romanesque architecture, and Greek astronomical hypotheses. The last-named formed a very timely coincidence in view of my recent researches—and included the exhibition of Christopher Clavius's celebrated volume with its defense and explanation of the Ptolemaic system.

I trust that your Yule was duly festive. Ours here was commendably cheerful—including a turkey dinner at the boarding-house across the garden, with a congenial cat meandering among the tables and finally jumping up on the windowseat for a nap. We had a tree by the living-room fireplace—its verdant boughs thickly festooned with a tinsel imitation of Florida's best Spanish moss, and its outlines emphasised by a not ungraceful lighting system. Around its base were ranged the modest Saturnalian gifts—which included (on my side) a hassock tall enough to let me reach the top shelves of my bookcases, and (on my aunt's side) a cabinet of drawers for odds and ends, not unlike my own filing cabinets, but of more ladylike arrangement and aspect. Of outside gifts the most distinctive was perhaps that which came quite unexpectedly from one of the kid fantasy fan group (Willis Conover, Jun. of Cambridge, Md.)—for lo! when I had removed numberless layers of corrugated paper and excelsior, what should I find before me but the yellowed and crumbling fragments of *a long-interred human skull!* Verily, a fitting gift from a youthful ghoul to one of the hoary elders

of the necropolitan clan! This sightlessly staring monument of mortality came from an Indian mound not far from the sender's home on the Maryland eastern shore—a place distinguished by many archaeological exploits on the part of Conover and his young friends. Its condition is such as to make its reassembling a somewhat ticklish task—so that I may reserve it for the ministrations of some expert mender like Bobby Barlow upon the occasion of a future visit. Viewing this shattered yield of the ossuary, the reflective fancy strives to evoke the image of him to whom it once belonged. Was it some feathered chieftain who in his day oft ululated in triumph as he counted the tufted scalps sliced from coppery or colonist foes? Or some crafty medicine-man who with mask and drum called forth from the Great Abyss those shadowy things which were better left uncalled? This we may never know—unless perchance some incantation droned out of the pages of the *Necronomicon* will have power to draw strange emanations from the lifeless and centuried clay, and raise up amidst the cobwebs of my ancient study a shimmering mist not without power to speak. In such a case, the revelation might be such that no man hearing it could any longer live save as one of those hapless entities "who laugh, but smile no more"!

Since Yuletide, my annals are largely the quiet chronicles of infirmity. Despite the general mildness of the winter, I was caught in the cold two or three times in early December—and as a result have had some of my old-time foot and ankle swelling, which occasionally forces me to wear an old pair of cut and stretched shoes. This won't wholly go until I've had a week or two of eighty degree weather to be outdoors and active in. And on top of this came the pervasive and enervating malady (probably some sort of intestinal grippe) which has forced me on a diet and sapped my strength to a minimum. My programme, as you may well imagine, has greatly suffered—but so far I haven't been forced wholly off my feet. Indeed, on warm days I totter forth in the afternoon for air and exercise. Were the winter so cold as to prevent these modest airings, I should be much worse off.

By the way, I was glad to learn of your enjoyable year's-end pilgrimage as related in your Cincinnati card. Glad the floods didn't catch you, as they might have done a little later!

I've lacked the time and energy to read recent *Weird Tales* issues systematically, but have merely glanced at such tales as have been mentioned in my correspondence. Among these is *The Headless Miller of*

Kobold's Keep, which I enjoyed very much despite certain obvious crudities. This story—of whose author I never heard before—has a peculiar atmospheric quality which makes for convincingness. I liked the Finlay illustrations to my two tales—indeed, I believe Finlay is the best all-around artist *Weird Tales* has ever had. His drawing for the *Doorstep* was really an imaginative masterpiece. Wright has generously presented me with the originals of both *Haunter* and *Doorstep* pictures —and they far transcend the mechanical reproductions. I am now in epistolary touch with Finlay, and find him a most remarkable youth—a poet as well as artist. He is only twenty-two, and a native and resident of Rochester, New York. His cover-design is good, though lacking his typical genius. Not long ago Finlay was expressing regret at the decline of the old-time custom of writing verses on appreciated works of art, so I turned out the following specimen just to shew him that Grandpa still adheres to the ancient tradition:

To Mr. Finlay, upon his Drawing for
Mr. Bloch's Tale, *The Faceless God.*

In dim abysses pulse the shapes of night,
  Hungry and hideous, with strange mitres crown'd;
Black pinions beating in fantastic flight
  From orb to orb thro' sunless voids profound.
None dares to name the cosmos whence they course,
  Or guess the look on each amorphous face,
Or speak the words that with resistless force
  Would draw them from the hells of outer space.

Yet here upon a page our frighten'd glance
  Finds monstrous forms no human eye should see;
Hints of those blasphemies whose countenance
  Spreads death and madness thro' infinity.
What limner he who braves black gulfs alone
And lives to make their alien horrors known?

The original of this drawing—Finlay's acknowledged masterpiece to date—hangs framed upon the walls of Wright's office. The model for the quasi-feline faces was the cherished Finlay cat "Tammany", who has since departed this life amidst universal lamentation. But having writ these lines upon the work of a new-found genius, I could not for-

bear writing some more upon the products of one well tested by time ..... hence the following to a tried and true colleague of fifteen years, whose greatness not even the underestimation of certain eminent critics can obscure. Which reminds me that Klarkash-Ton is now having an exhibition of his grotesque sculptures at the Crocker Art Gallery in Sacramento. He is now experimenting—with increasing success—in the making of moulds and casts of certain pieces; so that each sculptural effort will not be limited to one lone specimen. I am eager to behold the fruits of this process. But here is the tribute:

To Clark Ashton Smith, Esq., upon his
Fantastic Tales, Verses, Pictures, and Sculptures:

A time-black tower against dim banks of cloud;
  Around its base the pathless, pressing wood.
Shadow and silence, moss and mould, enshroud
  Grey, age-fell'd slabs that once as cromlechs stood.
No fall of foot, no song of bird awakes
  The lethal aisles of sempiternal night,
Tho' oft with stir of wings the dense air shakes,
  As in the tower there glows a pallid light.

For here, apart, dwells one whose hands have wrought
  Strange eidola that chill the world with fear;
Whose graven runes in tones of dread have taught
  What things beyond the star-gulfs lurk and leer.
Dark Lord of Averoigne—whose windows stare
On pits of dream no other gaze could bear!

On the whole, recent *Weird Tales* issues perpetuate the usual qualitative average. Two-Gun Bob shines posthumously in December—his description of the ancient ruins holding a very striking quality. Blade's Haitian tale has good touches, and Kuttner's story is excellent—with a real punch for a climax. I didn't care much for *The Album* (despite a certain atmospheric effectiveness) because of the anachronisms—the tacit assumption that successful photography existed in the eighteenth century (actually, nothing like a permanent photograph existed before Niepce's classic achievement of 1814), and the absurd gibberish supposed (judging from the date the book began to work, as indicated by its captures) to represent the English of the late eighteenth century. Tsathoggua! but what sort of insanity gets hold of some of these birds

(W. H. Hodgson is the classic and memorable offender, and Seabury Quinn has likewise pulled some choice boners in this line) when they try to represent the diction of an age which after all is, historically speaking, essentially modern? Haven't they ever read Goldsmith and Fielding and Johnson and Gibbon and Sterne and Smollett and dozens of other prose writers of that fairly recent yesterday? What in Yuggoth's name causes them to drag down from the remoter reaches of antiquity a cobwebbed jargon more Chaucerian or Elizabethan than anything else, and serve it up as contemporary with Burke's speeches and the seditious Declaration of Independence? Actually—assuming a date around 1780—the message in the book (in *The Album*) would have run something like this:

To Whomsoever May Open This Book:

> This is set down as a Warning to you, Sir or Madam, that you are not to open this Book beyond the Place mark'd by a red Riband. It wou'd be better for you to throw the whole Book unopen'd into the Fire; but being unable to do so myself, I cannot hope that you will. I do nevertheless adjure you to look nowhere in it beyond the Riband, lest you lose yourself to this World, Body and Soul; for truly, it is a Tomb for the Living.

But instead of such a straight eighteenth century text, see what a mess of quasi-Tudor bunk the author had .... "booke", "worlde", "bodie and soule" ..... Hell! *Portrait of a Murderer* is poor, and *The Theatre Upstairs* (by a friend of Talman's) does not live up to its atmospheric possibilities. Comte d'Erlette's offering is just another pot-boiler, and Sultan Malik's collaborated dime novel has just a touch of redeeming mystery and suspense. *Out of the Sun* is incredibly bad—even for pulp "scientifiction". The January issue—which I've read only in part—has a good professional debut by young Rimel, as well as the interesting *Kobold's Keep*. I've only just dipped into the February issue, but note a powerful (even if a bit hackneyed) tale by Two-Gun, and a very good attempt by Little Augie to give the old "beast with five fingers" plot a new twist. By the way—Little Augie's first continuous serious novel is just appearing under Scribner auspices. It is a Wisconsin historical tale—the first of a long cycle—entitled *Still is the Summer Night*.

Crawford has at last issued my *Innsmouth* as a lousily misprinted and sloppily bound book. The printed errata slip doesn't cover half the mistakes—but I'll send you a full list if you ever get the damn thing. The one redeeming feature is the set of four Utpatel illustrations.

Wright informs me that *Pickman's Model* is about to be reprinted again—in a Special Coronation Omnibus of the *Not at Night* series. The material reward will be only £1 sterling—but it will gratify me to be connected in any way with the enthronement of our new Sovereign. God Save the King!

By the way—to let an association of ideas start me off at a tangent—here's a remarkable case of coincidence or "small world" stuff or what-the-hell. You've probably heard me spout more than a dozen times those favourite lines of mine from the close of *King John*, which make me swell with a kind of exaltation every time I even think of them:

> This England never did, nor never shall,
> Lie at the proud Foot of a Conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
> Now these her Princes are come home again,
> Come the three Corners of the World in Arms,
> And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue
> If England to itself do rest but true!

I had the privilege of hearing these lines on the actual boards a quarter of a century ago when Robert Mantell's repertory company played Providence, and ever afterward associated them with the extremely gifted young actor who spoke them in the part of the bastard Faulconbridge—a chap named Fritz Leiber, who handled all such secondary roles as Horatio, Mercutio, Iago, Macduff, Richmond, Edgar, Bassanio, Antony, and so on. I used to think that Leiber was really better than Mantell himself—for the latter was getting egotistical, self-conscious, and stagey. Well—I lately had occasion to revive those ancient memories, when I received (through *Astounding Stories*) a communication from *Fritz Leiber's son and namesake*—a fanatical and scholarly devotee of weird fiction and the aesthetic, psychological, and philosophical background behind it. Young Fritz (twenty-five, a University of Chicago graduate, and entering his father's profession) has one of the keenest minds I have ever encountered, and in the interval since last November has become one of the star correspondents on my desperately crowded list. His understanding of the profound emotions behind the groping

for cosmic concepts surpasses that of almost anyone else with whom I've discussed the matter; and his own tales and poems, while not without marks of the beginner, shew infinite insight and promise. Papa's genius certainly reached the second generation in this case—for whether or not Fritz Jun. equals his sire on the boards, he'll certainly get somewhere in literature if he keeps on at his present rate. He has had classic thespian experience—having played in his father's companies (which have never visited Providence) in recent years those self-same roles (Edgar, Iago, etc.) which in my day old Fritz himself played in Mantell's companies. Incidentally, I saw old Fritz in two cinemas last year—the Pasteur opera and *Anthony Adverse.* Young Fritz has a momentary bit in the current *Camille* film—which I have not seen. Pater et filius reside together (though young Fritz has a wife) in Beverly Hills, California.—the same town with young Henry Kuttner. Young Fritz resembles his parent —who, by the way, is an amateur sculptor of much talent, with some remarkable Shakespearian busts to his credit. The son's artistic ability is manifest in something he sent me for Christmas—a series of strangely potent and macabre illustrations for some of my tales. These designs were produced by a novel and original process which the artist-inventor calls "splatter-stencil work", and they convey surprisingly vivid effects in a semi-futuristic way. The best is probably one shewing the earthward flight of certain winged entities from nighted Yuggoth—illustrating *The Whisperer in Darkness.* There will shortly be circulated among the gang (you can be on the list if you like) a remarkable unpublished novelette by young Leiber—*Adept's Gambit,* rejected by Wright and now under revision according to my suggestions. It is a very brilliant piece of fantastic imagination—with suggestions of Cabell, Beckford, Dunsany, and even Two-Gun Bob—and ought to see publication some day. Being wholly out of the cheap tradesman tradition, it has small chance of early magazine placement—hence the idea of circulation amongst the members of the circle. This novelette is part of a very unusual myth-cycle spontaneously evolved in the correspondence of young Leiber and his closest friend—Harry O. Fischer of lately-inundated Louisville. Fischer has also come within my congested epistolary circle, and is in some ways even more remarkable than Leiber—he has more imaginative fertility, though less concentrated emotional power and philosophic insight. Their myth-cycle, originally started by Fischer, involves my own pantheon of Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu, etc., and revolves round the adventures of two roving characters (Fafhrd the Viking,

modelled after Leiber—who is six feet four—and the Gray Mouser, modelled after the diminutive Fischer) in a vague congeries of fabulous and half-fabulous worlds of the remote past. Fischer's parts of this cycle are vivid but unformulated and disjointed, so that at present Leiber—the better cratfsman—is the only publicly visible author of the pair. *Adept's Gambit* is laid in the Syria of the earlier Hellenistic period, but soon moves away from Tyre and Ephesus to a fabulous mountain realm of inland Asia. Fischer's wife is an accomplished artist, and has made several very effective pastel drawings of some of the inconceivable Entities in the Fafhrd-Mouser cycle.

Oh—by the way. You may recall my having mentioned that old de Castro, when here last August, discovered that he had known the father of young Henry Kuttner a generation ago. Kuttner Sr. is long dead, but the other day the youthful heir announced that old 'Dolph had crossed the continent and blown in on him! Hope he doesn't bore the kid to death with his tales of departed grandeur . . . . . "how I made William H. Taft and Warren G. Harding president" and all that! If you've ever seen the popular syndicated cartoon-series featuring "Judge Puffle", you have Old Dolph to the life!

Not much energy for reading these days, but some of my political-minded colleagues are bullying me into digesting Strachey's *Nature of Capitalist Crisis* and R. P. Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution*. A more voluntary piece of recent reading is the very excellent life of Thomas Holley Chivers by my next-door neighbour (literally, since his field of endeavour is in the marble library adjacent to #66) Prof. S. Foster Damon, and I have emerged from it with a new respect for the powers and genius of Poe's eccentric friend, rival, and imaginative kinsman. I should never have let myself be prejudiced by the absurd and ineffable slop which he sometimes perpetrated. Like Blackwood, he was undisciplined and uneven—and suppose one tried to judge Brother Algy by something like *The Extra Day* or *The Garden of Survival?* Setting aside his junk, we may see him as the possessor of a rich cosmic imagination, an occasionally inspired command of pictorial symbols, and a metrical sense which in musical value and sensitiveness to new, bizarre, and obscure harmonies was not inferior to Poe's own. He and Poe undoubtedly borrowed ideas, phrases, and metres from each other, yet in every case the borrowing was attended with such distinctive individual development that charges of plagiarism are absurd. Chivers was injudicious and irresponsible in making occasional charges of plagiarism

(which never, however, involved any diminution of his general esteem or his desire to refute Griswoldian and other libels) against Poe after the latter's death. Prof. Damon (formerly of your alma mater) is one of the two leading authorities on Chivers, and The Harris Collection of American Poetry (housed in the John Hay next door), of which he is curator, contains the largest existing array of the poet's works. All Chivers scholars come to Providence and the ancient hill in order to consult material and among those who have done so is Prof. Lewis Chase of North Carolina, the other leading authority on the bard. Chase lived here a year or two, going over Chivers material and collaborating with Damon. The two of them will eventually issue a complete annotated edition of Chivers' works. Our friend Samuelus, as you are doubtless aware, is an old-time Chivers enthusiast. That poem on Chivers in the *Caxton Herm* was originally published in my *Conservative* in '23.

Speaking of American poetry (and you can let that apply to either Chivers or S. L.!)—I saw the cinema of the recent drama *Winterset,* and found it impressively good despite the absurdly slipped-in happy ending. I had heard great accounts of it, but was prepared to be disappointed because of the presumable conflict betwixt a modern setting and the poetic, conventionalised, consciously exaggerated and coincidence-ridden nature of the play. Actually, the effect was truly powerful. Great care in arrangements and scenic effects removed the whole episode from the realm of the distance-lent glamour which 1936 will have in the eyes of 2436 or so. The slum settings in the shadow of Brooklyn Bridge—against a background of ceaseless rain—reminded me of the misty, half-unreal Dublin of *The Informer.* And the setting, too, was very adequate. The one other cinema I've seen this winter is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—and it was certainly no disappointment. The delivery of the lines was in nearly every case excellent; and though there were some cuts in the text which I lamented, these did not amount to more than the excisions common to all acting versions from the Restoration down. The music blended effectively with setting and dialogue, and the pageantry was excellently managed. Some of the elusively weird photographic effects connected with the haunted wood were incomparably fine. As the animating spirit of the grove, that little elf who played Puck certainly scored a triumph. In aspect and voice and demeanour he represented with utter perfection the bland, mischievous *indifferentism*

of the traditional sylvan deity, while that shrill, eery, alienly-motivated mirth of his was the most convincing thing of its kind that I've ever seen.

During the past few months so many of my correspondents in the pest zone have been writing me about that display of fantastic and surrealistic painting at the Museum of Modern Art that I'm hoping its travelling residue will include ancient Providence on its route. The group of elder sources—pictorial fantaisistes as far back as El Greco and Hell-Fire Bosch—would have especially fascinated me . . . . . but I fear it won't be included in the migratory aftermath. In general, though, I am not a surrealistic enthusiast, for I think the practitioners of the school give their subconscious impressions too much automatic leeway. Not that the impressions are not potentially valuable, but that they tend to become trivial and meaningless except when more or less guided by some coherent imaginative concept. A thing like Señor Dali's humorously-dubbed *Wet Watches* tends to become a reductio ad absurdum of the fantastic principle, and to exemplify the aesthetic decadence so manifest in many phases of our moribund and socially transitional era. However, I surely concede that this form of expression should be adequately recognised; since many of its products undoubtedly do possess a powerful imaginative reach and freshness, whilst the whole movement cannot but make important and revivifying contributions to the mainstream of art. There is no drawing a line betwixt what is to be called extreme fantasy of a traditional type and what is to be called surrealism; and I have no doubt but that the nightmare landscapes of some of the surrealists correspond, as well as any actual creations could, to the iconographic horrors attributed by sundry fictioneers to mad or daemon-haunted artists. If there were a real Richard Upton Pickman or Felix Ebbonly, I am sure he would have been represented in the recent exhibition by several blasphemous and abhorrent canvases! Better than the surrealists, though, is good old Nick Roerich, whose joint at Riverside Drive and 103rd Street is one of my shrines in the pest zone. There is something in his handling of perspective and atmosphere which to me suggests other dimensions and alien orders of being—or at least, the gateways leading to such. Those fantastic carven stones in lonely upland deserts—those ominous, almost sentient, lines of jagged pinnacles —and above all, those curious cubical edifices clinging to precipitous slopes and edging upward to forbidden needle-like peaks!

H. P. LOVECRAFT DEAD IN HOSPITAL

Devoted Life to Study and Writing of Fiction About Supernatural.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft, who devoted his life to the study and writing of horror fiction, died early today at Jane Brown Hospital, at the age of 46.

Funeral services will be held Thursday at 12 o'clock in the chapel of Horace B. Knowles' Sons, 187 Benefit street, with burial in the Phillips family lot in Swan Point Cemetery.

Born in this city, Aug. 20, 1890, the only child of the late Winfield S. and Sarah P. Lovecraft, Mr. Lovecraft from early life was handicapped by poor health. Essentially a student and an omnivorous reader, he was able to take his place only from time to time in regular school classrooms with children of his own age but graduated from Hope street high school and secured the equivalent of a college education from private tutors.

His early recourse to the library of his grandfather, Whipple V. Phillips, at 454 Angell street in which he was turned loose to browse at will gave him the bend toward weird writing which was his hobby. In his autobiography, which he wrote up to the day before he was admitted to the hospital last month, he related the importance to his life of the fairy tales and classical tales he read when but six years of age.

Besides his interest in the supernatural, he was a constant student of geneology and of astronomy, and at one time wrote a newspaper col-

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