

**The Third Biennial Dr. Henry Armitage Memorial
Scholarship Symposium
NecronomiCon Providence, RI
17-20 August, 2017**

**Day One - Bristol-Kent Room, Omni Hotel 3rd Floor
Friday 8/18**

9:00-9:10 Welcome by Niels Hobbs and Dennis P. Quinn

Session I: 9:10-10:25

**Shocking Revelations: Diverse Approaches to Lovecraft
Session Chair: Nathaniel Wallace**

Red Hand, Red Hook: Machen, Lovecraft, and the Urban Uncanny
Karen Joan Kohoutek

Bio:

Karen Joan Kohoutek, an independent scholar and poet, has published in various journals and literary websites on the weird fiction of Robert E. Howard and Arthur Machen. She has written on a wide range of other popular culture, especially cult horror and Bollywood films. Her upcoming publications include an essay on Mystery Science Theatre 3000 and the Gamera films for Giant Creatures in Our World: Essays on Kaiju and American Popular Culture, which will be published by McFarland, and a reference guide to the St. Louis Cemetery #2 in New Orleans, Louisiana, through Skull and Book Press. She lives in Fargo, North Dakota.

Abstract:

From Thomas DeQuincey and James Thomson to 20th-century horror films like C.H.U.D., urban environments have been depicted as sites for the fantastic and the uncanny. While many artists and thinkers have contributed to the genre's tropes, weird writers Arthur Machen and H.P. Lovecraft can be seen to exemplify a pivotal period in the development of the urban uncanny, as it shifts from an inward, psychological experience to one that focuses outward, projected onto threatening populations within the city's boundaries.

Machen was a habitual wanderer of the city streets, experiencing its strangeness and the resultant personal unease. He translated his sense of London's mystery into more concrete tales of crime and menace, well-illustrated by "The Red Hand," in

which a community of under-evolved “troglodytes” functions mostly as a red herring, although it does turn out to exist in the background of the tale.

Lovecraft would extend that example in his xenophobic New York stories, “He” and “The Horror at Red Hook,” the latter of which begins with a quote from “The Red Hand.” In these tales, the city’s uncanny elements are displaced onto marginalized groups, a sinister demographic who are depicted as uncanny and threatening to the larger (assumed Anglo-Saxon) society and its values. In Lovecraft’s case, such fears were reflective of his personal discomfort with different ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes. Similar symbolic fears continue to be seen in contemporary popular culture, where the urban underclasses frequently embody the individual’s fears of the city’s unknown elements, especially when they occur in groups (such as gatherings of homeless persons or youth street gangs).

The major psychological theories of the uncanny were published between the writing of the Machen and Lovecraft tales, and can be used to explore how this trend further developed into contemporary times, when individuals, isolated and alienated among a vast city of strangers, focus their fear of its unknown elements on ethnic minorities and the economically disadvantaged.

The Death of the Artist: H. P. Lovecraft and the Nihilism of the Text
Eric Berardis

Bio:

Eric Berardis is an independent scholar and entertainer seeking affiliations with a new institution. He holds an advanced degree from Rhode Island College with a specialty in American Gothic Literature. Berardis' literary field expertise includes critical deconstruction, philosophical nihilism and reader response theory, to name a few. Though not published, he has written numerous short stories, novellas, and screenplays from myriad genres. While holding no print publications, he holds illustration publications through The Easton Press. Berardis continues to add to the manuscript of his master's thesis, *The Death of the Artist*, in hopes of one day publishing it and adding his voice to Lovecraft's critical discourse. When he is not slaving away writing at the computer, he entertains the nocturnal masses at several of Providence's nightclubs, integrating the Weird into facets of his art.

Abstract:

The question of an artist’s influential role in society has been the topic of debate since Ancient Greek times. A polarized debate between critics and philosophers alike developed a schism in thought, with one side believing that an artist either has the power to change society and others holding that only its works can be judged and not the artist’s influence on them. Invoking the nihilistic writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, the nonfiction treatises of H.P. Lovecraft, as well as the criticism of S.T. Joshi, Donald Burleson and Vivian Ralickas, this study investigates

the function of the artist in American Gothic literature, specifically in the fiction of Lovecraft himself, a topic which, until now, has not yet been adequately addressed in critical discourse. This study addresses this gap in the critical debate by exploring Lovecraft's constant of cosmic indifferentism in relation to Nietzsche's definition of nihilism and the state of the American artist in a burgeoning literary community reliant of realistic details in art. The question is discussed in relation to one of Lovecraft's nonfiction essays, "Nietzscheism and Realism" (1921), accused of being nihilistic and pessimistic, as well as several of Lovecraft's most known texts.

In addition to Lovecraft's writings, this study also pits his philosophy and texts against established American Gothic texts such as "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820) and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838). Lovecraft's texts suggest that the relationship between the artist and its creation(s) exposes its own death as a concept; that the artist as creator is dead because of society's need for realism and the only value it can have is relevant only to the individual not the whole of civilization. I argue that, because Lovecraft's fiction signals that the artist is dead, the time is ripe for a radical reevaluation of how we alienate an artist from its creation, acknowledge its influence, and examine how readers perceive the artist's version of reality.

The Cosmic Drone of Azathoth: Adaptation, Genre and the Sublime
Nathanial Wallace

Bio:

Nate Wallace is an independent scholar currently employed at the Office of Research at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. He holds an associate's degree in multimedia design from Columbus State, a bachelor's degree from Ohio State University and master's degree from Ohio University in political science. In the fall of 2014, he completed his dissertation, "H.P. Lovecraft's 'Supernatural Horror' in Literature" and earned his Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Arts with a focus on the visual arts and film. Currently he is working on creating a series of articles on adaptation based on his dissertation, and initiating creative projects to place his theories into practice.

Abstract:

This paper examines musical adaptations of H.P. Lovecraft's fictional deity Azathoth by artists associated with the genre of drone music. In 1919 Lovecraft initially wrote the name Azathoth in his common place book of ideas, and spent subsequent years elaborating upon the concept with each consecutive story. Compiling all of Lovecraft's descriptions of the fictional deity, one finds that the author ultimately characterized Azathoth as infinite concurrent reactionary processes rather than a singular entity, and its description closely aligns with Dionysian Mystery rituals conducted in ancient Greece. In terms of specific qualities of sound, Azathoth is an aperture that mutters and blasphemes, erodes

and undermines the order of the universe, while unnamed creatures accompany it with flutes and drums intended to induce a hypnotic and mitigated state within the deity. Although Lovecraft references instrumentation in his characterizations of the deity, his allusions to an ancient musical performance and a set of abstract processes make Azathoth a rather problematic object to adapt into a self-contained song given its “untranslatable” qualities.

Despite these adaptation-related complications, Azathoth has been the subject of at least 25 songs, dating back to a composition by psychedelic British band Uriel in 1969. While there are some genre-related variations within these works, the majority are drone and metal based. This analysis of Azathoth adaptations focuses on works within the genre of drone music, a minimalistic and largely static music established in the mid-1960s with historical roots in various cultures throughout the world. Azathoth-based drone compositions have been prevalent because characteristics of the genre conform to Lovecraft’s aesthetic as laid out in his letters and fictional stories, the Dionysian Mystery rituals Azathoth is similar to have traditionally featured a drone instrument, the Aulos, and there are qualities of the genre that induce the sublime within the audience which have historical associations with divinity. These aesthetic influences will be evaluated for their significance within a specific selection of songs, including those by Uriel, the ambient drone band Ungl'Unl'Rrlh'Chchch, and the drone collective Cryo Chamber.

Will the Real Lovecraft Please Stand Up: An Example of Intertextuality in the Work of Frank Belknap Long and H. P. Lovecraft
Byron Nakamura

Bio:

Byron Nakamura is an associate professor of history at Southern Connecticut State University, where he has taught classes in ancient history, Greco-Roman religion, and courses in Latin and Greek. He has published on the subjects of Roman religion and the history of the Roman frontier in such journals as *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, *Classical Philology*, and the *Journal of Military History*. Recently, he has developed an interest in classical reception in the works of HP Lovecraft and has recently published an article, "Dreams of Antiquity: HP Lovecraft and His Great Roman Dream of 1927" in *Lovecraftian Studies* vol. 2.

Abstract:

HP Lovecraft’s Great Roman Dream of 1927 was published in two variants, one borrowed (with Lovecraft’s permission [SL 2.261]) and incorporated into Frank Belknap Long’s novella, *The Horror from the Hills* in 1931 and the other, published posthumously as a stand-alone tale entitled, “The Very Old Folk” in 1940. Lovecraft himself wrote that Long had used his dream text originally described in a series of letters without any, “...linguistic change...” (SL 4.334). This is to say that Lovecraft understood that Long had not made any alterations to the original text of

Lovecraft's description of his dream in a letter to Long (which no longer exists). Yet, is this case? Despite Lovecraft's assertions that the dream text had been preserved in *The Horror from the Hills* unchanged from his original letter, there is strong stylistic and structural evidence to the contrary. If we analyze and compare Lovecraft's stylistic peculiarities, use of grammar and syntax, and vocabulary with the extant versions of the Great Roman Dream of 1927 in his correspondence to Donald Wandrei and Bernard Austin Dwyer to Long's version, it appears that Long had either edited or rewritten Lovecraft's dream text to fit his own style in the novella.

In the past, Lovecraft had often been a ghost writer for other literary aspirants like Hazel Heald, Zealia Bishop, Harry Houdini, and others, but here we have an example of one of Lovecraft's correspondents using his friend's ideas in his own work. This shows the trust that existed between Lovecraft his literary circle of weird fiction writers. In addition, the use of stylometric analysis of Lovecraft's writing can provide new avenues of explorations into his work.

Session II: 10:30-11:45

Gruesome Fashions: Lovecraft and Popular Culture

Session Chair: Faye Ringel

Mike Mignola and The Lovecraft Circle - Inspiration and World Sharing
Anders Lundgren

Bio:

Anders Lundgren has a background in literature, esthetics and cinema studies. At present he divides his time between work as a freelance writer, projectionist, film curator and events producer. Working at Serieteket (The Comic Book Library) he has to date produced 15 editions of The Stockholm International Comics Festival. In 2012 he established The Stockholm H.P. Lovecraft Festival. The next edition is planned for October of this year. Being part of the film society/publishers/archive/production company Klubb Super 8 he has also organized festivals and separate screenings of various horror and exploitation pictures too numerous to list here.

He has written about subjects such as Santo, El Enmascarado de Plata, Tarzan fandom in Israel, contributed to occulture journal *The Fenris Wolf* and continues to write reviews and articles for *Home Theatre Magazine*, comics journalism for the blog *Shazam.se* and publications by The Swedish Arts Council. He has a regular column in *Image & Thought Bubble*, published by the Swedish Comics Association and one of the oldest magazines devoted to the comics medium, covering the American scene. He is also one of the driving forces behind the weekly comics podcast *High on Comics*.

Abstract:

With this presentation I hope to provide insights into some of the stuff that makes the cartoonist and writer Mike Mignola and his work tick. I'm not aiming for the annotated version of his long running series *Hellboy*. That would take several volumes. I simply wish to trace some of the influences back to their sources and analyse what function they serve for the stories. A brief introduction to Mignola's work is provided to service those previously unfamiliar with it.

Among the topics I discuss are connections between H. P. Lovecraft's (1890 – 1937) writing and Mignola's comics. In what way does Mignola's approach differ from all the others that have been inspired by the Yog-Sothothery over the years? A case in point is Alan Moore who recently wrapped up *Providence*, his 12 issue dissection of all things Lovecraftian. I demonstrate how two very different temperaments taking inspiration from the same source can yield very different results. But the net is cast wider than that. In Mignola's work we also find traces of H. P. Blavatsky (1831-1891) and her Theosophists, the Zermatism of Stanisław Szukalski (1893-1987), various hollow earth theories and Hyperborea as encountered in the writings of Clark Ashton Smith (1893 – 1961) and Robert E. Howard (1906-1936). A fictitious country is however not all Mignola got from Howard. He also took the notion of telling the story of his main protagonist in a disjointed fashion, jumping back and forth in the chronology of his life. Time travel of a different sort is something else Howard explored in stories like "Kings of the Night" featuring his Pictish hero Bran Mak Morn. This is mirrored in the miniseries *B.P.R.D. Hell on Earth: The Abyss of Time* #1-2, written Mignola, Scott Allie and drawn by James Harren with color work by Dave Stewart. Which brings us to the last topic. What are the similarities and differences between how The Lovecraft Circle, Mignola and his many collaborators go about writing stories in a shared world?

Shadows over Camelot: Lovecraftian Motifs in Arthurian Fiction
Michael A. Torregrossa

Bio:

Independent scholar Michael A. Torregrossa is a graduate of the Medieval Studies program at the University of Connecticut (Storrs). His research interests include adaptation, Arthuriana, comics and comic art, medievalism, monsters, and wizards. Michael has presented papers on these topics at regional, national, and international conferences, and his work has been published in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia*, *Arthuriana*, *The Arthuriana / Camelot Project Bibliographies*, *Cinema Arthuriana: Twenty Essays, Film & History*, *The 1999 Film & History CD-ROM Annual*, *The Medieval Hero on Screen: Representations from Beowulf to Buffy*, and the three most recent supplements to *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*. In addition, Michael is founder of both The Alliance for the Promotion of Research on the Matter of Britain and The Association for the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching of the Medieval in

Popular Culture; he also serves as editor for these organizations' various blogs and moderator of their discussion lists. Besides these activities, he is currently Fantastic (Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Horror) Area Chair for the Northeast Popular Culture/American Culture Association and organizes sessions for their annual conference in the fall and maintains the area's blogs.

Abstract:

For just over a millennium and a half, the Matter of Britain, the massive conglomeration of stories dealing with the activities of King Arthur and his court, has remained a living and ever changing tradition, and one linked, for much of its history, with the monstrous, the supernatural, and the weird, a fact made most readily apparent in manifestations of the new Matter of Britain produced in the various multimedia of the present day. Some creative artists, their contributions not as yet fully surveyed, have added a further threat to this catalogue and have brought the Arthurian world into contact with preternatural menaces reminiscent of the horrors described in the fiction of Howard Philip Lovecraft to create, within the larger Arthurian tradition, a series of innovative intermedia subtraditions best labeled Lovecraftian Arthuriana.

Borrowing heavily from Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, the corpus of Lovecraftian Arthuriana remains relatively small, although its text base is composed of a variety of popular media, including fiction, film, television programming, and comics. Despite their relative rarity, the intermedia subtraditions that develop within these texts through the integration of both the Arthurian and Cthulhuan mythologies represent unique contributions to the Arthurian legend. Furthermore, they display the continued vitality of both sources through the creation of a series of new narrative patterns for depicting the monstrous within the modern-day Matter of Britain. These motifs build upon two major themes in Lovecraft's work, both, as categorized by S. T. Joshi, "a wide array of extraterrestrials (deemed 'gods' by their human followers)" and "an entire library of mythical books containing the 'forbidden,' truths about these 'gods'" (Introduction xvii). In Arthurian works, these themes manifest as Cthulhuan menaces faced by Arthurian heroes (usually presented as reinterpretations of Arthur's role as the Once and Future King) and as a series of arcane tomes present at Camelot and used for various results. Works of Lovecraftian Arthuriana do not reflect a sophisticated engagement with Lovecraft's writings or the mythology that developed from them, but they do represent interesting appropriations of his ideas that deserve further reflection.

Dynamics of Detective Fiction in H. P. Lovecraft
Heather Poirier

Bio:

Heather Poirier is a writer/editor living in Washington, DC. After teaching at the university level for 10 years and working at a biomedical research center with a

world-class researcher for 5 years, she moved to DC, where she currently works as a senior editor at an oncology journal. Her current project is a book on H.P. Lovecraft and detective fiction.

Abstract:

Scholars frequently treat HP Lovecraft's narrators as a doorway to an extensive study of cosmic horror; few scholars have studied these characters as detectives. Even though some recent popular works feature Lovecraft himself as a detective, the critical literature does not offer much in the way of analysis of detective fiction elements in his works. This gap in knowledge prevents us from understanding the energy these elements bring to Lovecraft's fiction.

Detective fiction dynamics are strongly present in Lovecraft's works. His narrators use, then subvert, the genre's conventions. In most detective fiction, a detective investigates a crime, then presents a clear-cut case with facts to support the conclusions reached. The criminal is caught, and justice is served. In contrast, Lovecraft's investigators are often unreliable, yet the reader comes to trust them. Investigations lead to the dire clarity of cosmic horror, which must then be concealed. Truth and deceit are meaningless in the face of cosmic terror, yet that terror powers the investigator's pursuit of the truth. Evidence and facts have uncertain status. Confessions are disregarded, crimes are concealed, and investigators face incarceration while perpetrators cannot be caught. Justice cannot be served because no redemption is possible.

This paper examines the role of detective fiction dynamics in Lovecraft's work and explores some of the implications. Specifically, this paper looks at how Lovecraft uses elements that are core to the genre; how the tripartite dynamics of detective fiction power Lovecraft's narrators; and how certain Lovecraft stories, when juxtaposed against traditional works of detective fiction, reveal the connections and disjunctions between popular detectives and Lovecraft's investigators, thus placing Lovecraft within the genre as a subverter. In doing so, this project provides a better understanding of the little-recognized intersection of Lovecraft and detective fiction.

Your Eldritch Horror is in Another Castle: The Quest for Cosmicism in Gaming
Ash Darrow

Bio:

Ash Darrow recently graduated from National University with a Master's in Gothic studies. He is currently an independent researcher interested in the Gothic and games studies. His Master's thesis discussed Gothic found text and epistolary fiction through the lens of ludology. Ash has presented papers at the Buffy at 20 conference and the International Gothic Association. He is currently working on articles on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, digital Gothic architecture, and Witch Feminism. You can get in touch with Ash on Twitter @CinereusDarrow or at his

blog CinereusDarrow.com. Ash likes to spend his free time getting lost in the Miskatonic University library.

Abstract:

Lovecraftian fiction is more abundant than ever. Lovecraftian themes and Mythos characters are becoming ubiquitous in our media and at the center of this growth is Lovecraft's impact on gaming. Lovecraft's presence in gaming has grown from the tabletop RPG to awkward gimmick titles like *Cthulhu Monopoly* (2016) and *Cthulhu Yahtzee* (2015). With Lovecraftian gaming so pervasive, how do Lovecraftian games interact with his Cosmicist philosophy? Lovecraft expressed a central notion that humanity, as both a body of individuals and a concept, has no meaningful significance when viewed from geological or cosmic time scales. This runs contrary to the core experience expressed by most games. Gaming, at its core, is built upon ludic mastery. That is to say, games are designed to be conquered by their players via stories and gameplay that empower the player over adversity. This is a direct contradiction to Lovecraft's Cosmicism. While survival horror challenges player empowerment, it still offers validity to the player's experience and eventual empowerment. Cosmicist gaming, on the other hand, rejects the validity of empowerment by subverting narratological and ludic tropes. Games such as *BloodBorne* (2015) and *Devil Daggers* (2016) utilize Cosmicism as a guiding principle. While other, more expressly "Lovecraftian" games, such as *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (2005), fail to successfully grapple with Lovecraft's philosophy and become bogged down in the Mythos. This paper explores the successes and failures at attempting to systematize Lovecraft's philosophy.

Session III: 3:00-4:15

Straining in its Own Direction: Lovecraft and the Sciences

Session Chair: Heather Poirier

The Lovecraftian Solar System: A Tour of Our Cosmic Neighborhood Through the Eyes of H. P. Lovecraft

Fred S. Lubnow

Bio:

Fred Lubnow received his Bachelor's of Science in Biology from Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove Pennsylvania (1988), his Master's degree in Environmental Sciences from the University of California, Davis, California (1992) and his Ph.D. in Limnology (1994) from U. C., Davis, California. During his day job, he is the Director of Aquatic Programs at Princeton Hydro, LLC, specializing in managing lakes, streams and ponds throughout the Mid-Atlantic States. Fred is also an adjunct professor at Delaware Valley University where he teaches a class in watershed management. He also hosts the web site www.lovecraftianscience.wordpress.com where a scientific exploration of the

Cthulhu Mythos is conducted. He has given talks at the 2013 and 2015 NecronomiCon conferences and frequently collaborates with Steve Maschuck who produces the artwork for those presentations and for several volumes of “The Journal of Lovecraftian Science” that they have published through a series of Kickstarters.

Abstract:

H.P. Lovecraft had a life-long love of science and of all the disciplines astronomy was his favorite. From 1906 to 1918 Lovecraft would gaze into the heavens each night, occasionally visit the Ladd Observatory, and record the movement and appearance of celestial objects in a series of articles. Lovecraft documented his observations on a regular basis and although he never became a professional astronomer, he did incorporate his observations and knowledge into his tales of cosmic dread and horror. Lovecraft admitted that when he initiated his exploration of the Cosmos he largely “ignored the abysses of space” and focused primarily on the moon and the potential habitability of it and the other planets. This presentation focuses on how Lovecraft incorporated what was known about the solar system in the early 20th century into his tales and how our view of the solar system has changed over the last nearly 100 years.

This presentation utilizes many of Lovecraft’s tales to present a view of the solar system in the “Lovecraftian Universe” and where possible, it compares Lovecraft’s ideas to past and current scientific investigations. Some of the tales discussed include, but are not limited to, “The Whisperer in Darkness,” “The Colour Out of Space,” “The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath,” and “The Shadow Out of Time.” The presentation utilizes Neil deGrasse Tyson’s categorization of the solar system, which includes five families of bodies: the terrestrial / rocky planets, the Asteroid Belt, the gas giant planets, the Kuiper Belt (which includes Pluto, known to some as Yuggoth), and the Oort Cloud of comets. Finally, the presentation explores components of the solar system that Lovecraft was not aware of but may yield some Lovecraftian discoveries and/or horrors.

At the Mountains of Mars: Lovecraft’s Relationship with the Red Planet

Edward Guimont

Bio:

Edward received his BA in political science and history from Guilford College in 2009, and is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Connecticut Department of History specializing in interconnected nationalist movements in the late British Empire. His dissertation is titled “Redefining ‘Nation’: Colonial Federalism, the European Economic Community, and Political Conceptions of the State in Scotland and England, 1945-70.” His article “From King Solomon to Ian Smith: Rhodesian Alternate Histories of Zimbabwe” is forthcoming in the *Tufts Historical Review*, and he is working on expanding it into a book on the political use

of lost civilization and living fossil myths in settler colonial ideology. When not working on the dissertation and book, or teaching undergrads, Edward is writing a passion project on the role of astronomy in the development of nineteenth and twentieth century socialist thought.

Abstract:

This paper explores the influence of Mars in H. P. Lovecraft's fiction. From a young age, he was interested in astronomical observations of the red planet, even meeting famous Martian canal proponent Percival Lowell. But Mars and its hypothetical inhabitants are almost entirely absent from Lovecraft's extraterrestrial pantheon.

I argue that both scientific and fictional representations of Mars and the possibility of Martian life can be seen to be influences on Lovecraft's conceptions of cosmicism and of powerful alien entities who were utterly indifferent to humanity. Both Lowell's nonfiction treatises and the novels of H. G. Wells and his various knockoffs depict advanced, non-anthropomorphic Martians who are morally indifferent to humanity and engage in the construction of massive engineering works, but for all their technology are unable to prevent their civilization's decline from the inexorable forces of nature – all themes that obviously presage Lovecraft.

I will also explore some of the reasons that Lovecraft may not have wanted to explicitly depict Mars and Martians, including the planet's heavy use in works of allegory and satire; its associations with the Soviet regime; and it being a favorite locale of subpar pulp space operas. However, I show that *At the Mountains of Madness* can be read as effectively being a 'Mars story,' as its themes (scientific explorers in advanced vehicles journeying to a distant frozen wasteland, where they uncover the remains of an advanced ancient alien civilization felled by climate change) parallel the tropes of contemporary Mars-set fiction, including a trilogy of stories written by Lovecraft's friend, Clark Ashton Smith. I conclude by exploring Lovecraft's influence on subsequent works of Martian fiction, and note how Wells' much less popular second Martian novel, *Star-Begotten*, published the year of Lovecraft's death, can be interpreted as a recognizably 'Lovecraftian' work.

The Madness of Minds: Consciousness and Materialism in Lovecraft's Fiction
Shawn McKinney

Bio:

Shawn McKinney has published on Fatalism in *Deadpool*, the morality of genocide in *Ender's Game*, and consciousness and materialism in *Dracula*. His research interests include applied ethics, philosophy of mind, and political philosophy. He is an instructor of philosophy at Hillsborough Community College in Florida. He is a life-long fan of Lovecraft and weird fiction, but is new to Lovecraft scholarship. In addition to Lovecraft, he enjoys reading comic books and watching monster movies.

Abstract:

An interesting facet of Lovecraft's fiction is that he explored the unknown real. Space is real, it is not a unicorn or a squared circle, but the nature and extent of space is still unknown. Time is real, but we still are not sure what time is. Dimensions beyond our perception are real, the math says, but it is difficult to explain exactly what they are. Amongst these other, more obvious, Lovecraftian cosmic horror elements is another unknown real: consciousness. In Lovecraft's fiction consciousness is real, and its possession is not restricted to human beings. Various beings can swap their consciousness between bodies and throughout time. Entire Dreamlands exist that humans can only access with their mind.

What makes Lovecraft's attention to consciousness more interesting is his belief in materialism. The type of materialism he advocated was that everything that was real was, ultimately, made of something like matter and causally connected to every other real thing: like the cosmos is a great machine. The great philosophical issue of the mind has been, for millennia, whether consciousness is composed, somehow, of matter, or, if consciousness is made of something other than matter (and if so, how does that work?).

I am not the first person to find Lovecraft's treatment of consciousness philosophically interesting. Lovecraft's work has been characterized as advocating a pseudo-Platonic, non-materialist ideal of mind. The topic was even touched upon at this very conference in 2013, where his work was claimed to promote a pseudo-materialist theory called epi-phenomenalism. I investigate whether Lovecraft's work presents a more or less consistent theory of what consciousness is, and whether that theory is reconcilable with his materialism. I find that the answer to both questions is probably yes.

Reviewing Lovecraft's Cause of Death: A Clinicopathological Conference**Joshua D. King****Bio:**

Josh King is an internal medicine doctor, nephrologist (kidney doctor), and medical toxicologist (a doctor who treats drug overdose and poisoning). He received his M.D. from Penn State, and subsequently trained in residency and fellowship at the University of Virginia and Johns Hopkins. Currently, Josh is an assistant professor of medicine and emergency medicine at the University of Virginia and has a practice as a clinician-educator, actively teaching medical students, residents, and fellows patient care. He carries out clinical research in toxicology and nephrology, regularly authors papers and book chapters in both fields, and has given local and national presentations on his fields of interest. Reading weird fiction and making weird diagnoses are two of Josh's favorite things, and he's excited to try and combine the two today.

Abstract:

H.P. Lovecraft passed away on March 15, 1937, at 46 years of age. Lovecraft's death has been ascribed to intestinal cancer, with chronic nephritis (kidney disease) as a secondary cause; however, the basis for this is by no means firmly established. Lovecraft had no confirmatory testing to establish this diagnosis, nor was an autopsy performed – his cause of death was largely established by physical exam and symptoms alone. In addition, Lovecraft's kidney failure is somewhat unexplained; its duration, cause, and significance to his health are uncertain.

Medical professionals regularly determine patient cause of death without fully supportive information; this was even more true in Lovecraft's day than today. However, studies in the modern era evaluating the accuracy of the cause of death listed on death certificates find that roughly 25-50% of these causes are disproved at autopsy. At the time of Lovecraft's passing, many diagnostic tests considered routine today were unavailable; it is unlikely that causes of death were more accurate in his day.

Throughout his life, particularly in his final years, H.P. Lovecraft periodically mentioned bothersome symptoms in the course of his voluminous correspondence to many others. Utilizing Lovecraft's own words about his health and daily practices as written in his many letters to correspondents, as well as the few records which exist concerning Lovecraft's medical condition, an appreciation of Lovecraft's health in decline can be achieved. These data are used toward informed speculation on possible health conditions that Lovecraft suffered from, assessment to the extent possible whether his recorded cause of death is consistent with all available data, as well as discussion of possible alternate causes of death.

Day Two - Bristol-Kent Room, Omni Hotel 3rd Floor Saturday 8/19

Session IV: 9:00-10:15

Very Terrible Difference: Race, Gender, and the Other Session Chair: Byron Nakamura

Perspectives on Lovecraft and Racism: Internet "Facts" and Recent Metafiction
Faye Ringel and Jenna Randall

Bios:

Jenna Randall holds a B.A. in English and Women's Studies from Smith College (2004). A lifelong fan of horror in all its manifestations (film, art, theatre, literature), she is drawn to all the places where feminism, pop culture, and horror intersect. She has presented papers with her mentor Faye Ringel at conferences on horror, fantasy, and popular culture, including the 2015 Armitage Symposium.

Faye Ringel, Professor Emerita of English, taught for 25 years at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT, directing the Honors Program and teaching composition and literature. Her A.B. in Comparative Literature is from Brandeis University, her doctorate in Comparative Literature from Brown University. She is the author of *New England's Gothic Literature: History and Folklore of the Supernatural* (E. Mellen Press 1995) and articles in scholarly encyclopedias, collections, and journals, including chapters on Lovecraft and the New England Gothic in *The Companion to American Gothic* (Wiley-Blackwell 2013) and on Early American Gothic in *The Cambridge Companion to the American Gothic* (Cambridge UP 2017).

Abstract:

In the same period that saw Lovecraft canonized by the Library of America (2005) and selected as a Penguin Anniversary Classic (2016), a chorus of voices criticizing Lovecraft's racism rose to a crescendo in 2015, campaigning to remove HPL's image from the World Fantasy Award. Mainstream media coverage meant that readers to whom his name was unknown first heard of him as Lovecraft the Racist. The internet turned this exaggerated, monolithic perception into games and memes. Perhaps the worst result: white supremacists and Neo-Nazis have come to his defense. When the White supremacist publisher Counter Currents heard the WFA would no longer carry Lovecraft's likeness, they invented a "Counter-Currents H.P. Lovecraft Prize for Literature." This website maintains a database of Lovecraft scholars, thus aligning them with Neo-Nazism.

These events and controversies in popular culture are reflected and wrestled with in a group of recent metafictional works by mainstream and genre authors. African-American author Victor LaValle dedicates his novella *The Ballad Of Black Tom* (2016) "For H.P. Lovecraft, with all my conflicted feelings." Readers of this revisioning of Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925) are presumed to understand that his conflict is over whether the value of Lovecraft's art overcomes his racism. LaValle's novella employs a Black protagonist to deconstruct one of Lovecraft's most problematic stories, part of a larger trend of authors commenting upon America's racist past and present utilizing fantastic tropes. The most mainstream example, Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*, features a literal steam-driven railway linking states, each of which reflects a different aspect of American racism. Within the fantastic genres, Matt Ruff's *Lovecraft Country* does the same work, refracted through a Lovecraftian lens. Nick Mamatas uses the 2015 NecronomiCon Providence as backdrop for a murder mystery, *I Am Providence* (2016). These and other recent fictions such as Paul LaFarge's *The Night Ocean* join over 90 years of writers responding to Lovecraft, beginning in his lifetime before the term "metafiction" was coined, and continuing through references, shared worlds, pastiche, rewriting, and rejection of his influence.

Lovecraft Meets the Mummy: Orientalism, Race, and Monstrous Egypt in “Out of the Aeons” and Other Stories

Troy Rondinone

Bio:

Troy Rondinone is a Professor of History at Southern Connecticut State University. He additionally serves on the Executive Board of the Greater New Haven Labor History Association. Troy received his Ph.D. in History at UCLA, and his areas of scholarly interest include working-class history, economic history, and radical studies. He has published articles in *American Quarterly*, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, *Connecticut History*, *Lovecraftian Proceedings*, and *Labor Studies*. In addition, he’s written submissions in the *Oxford Bibliographies in Latino Studies* and the *Cambridge Companion to Boxing*. His first book, titled *The Great Industrial War: Framing Class Conflict in America, 1865-1950* (2010), was published by Rutgers University Press. His second book, *Friday Night Fighter: Gaspar “Indio” Ortega and the Golden Age of Television Boxing*, was published by University of Illinois Press in 2013. He is the recipient of the Norton Nezvinsky Trustees Research Award for 2010. He is currently working on a cultural history of the American asylum.

Abstract:

In this paper I discuss the figure of the mummy in works written by, or in collaboration with, H.P. Lovecraft. Since at least the 1800s, mummies have been compelling figures, surrounded by mystery and terror. The process of mummification, the enigma of a sprawling and advanced pre-Western civilization with bizarre gods, and the connections made in the popular imagination between Egypt and the currents of imperialism, all influenced weird fiction. Especially following the 1922 discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in the Valley of the Kings, Americans became fascinated with the mummy and its ancient and gruesome technology of immortality. In this paper I examine “Out of the Aeons” (a Lovecraft collaboration with Hazel Heald) and “Imprisoned with the Pharaohs” (a collaboration with Harry Houdini), situating their themes and references in the broader context of Orientalism, xenophobia, racial ideology, and the production of knowledge. I include a brief contextual sketch of earlier popular mummy stories by Bram Stoker and others, and a look ahead to future mummy horror developments. I make use of the insights of Edward Said, Jackson Lears, Lynn Hunt, and other historical theorists in this discussion. The mummy, for Lovecraft and many other writers, was more than a mere monster—it was a symbol wrapped in contemporary fears.

A Correlation of Contents: Mapping the Intersections of Queerness and Negativity in the Works of Lovecraft

Fiona Maeve Geist & Eli Shurberg

Bios:

Fiona Maeve Geist is a recent PhD graduate from the Philosophy, Interpretation & Culture program at SUNY Binghamton. She is interested in studies at the intersections of sexuality, race, colonialism, and gender. In her free time she cultivates a morbid interest in genre fiction as it relates to her work.

Eli Shurberg is an undergraduate student at Hampshire College, where they study English and Cultural Studies. They are interested in the liberatory potential of speculative fiction, Gothic horror, the history of Euro-American colonial and racial logics, and fan community creations. They are in the process of completing a senior thesis on racial and cultural politics of H.P. Lovecraft's recent popular revival. Eli loves reading horror, pulpy science fiction, playing story heavy video games, and listening to fast and loud music when not writing.

Abstract:

Excavating queerness from Lovecraft seems, on surface, like a fruitless endeavor. What little information there is about his sexuality is overwhelmingly heterosexual (his brief and unsuccessful marriage to Sonia Greene) and themes of sexuality seem divorced from his cosmic mythos. In spite of the seeming futility of this project at outset, Lovecraft himself and his work are suffused with a sexuality—one which is very much queer. This is not an endeavor to *reclaim* Lovecraft as a queer exemplar, however; instead, the purpose of this proposal is to interrogate the *incomprehensibly* queer aspects of his life and writing. This entails engagement with Lovecraft through a lens which takes his asexuality (and the asexuality of his characters) juxtaposed with the fear of fecund masses and interspecies breeding to be significant aspects of his work that have been frequently neglected *as* sexual. Following scholars such as Heather Love, this is not a redemptive project which seeks to apologize for the disturbing and sexualized aspects of Lovecraft's work but, instead, to contextualize them and trace their unsettling influences. Of specific import is Lovecraft's unapologetic racism—often a focus of critical work regarding Lovecraft—and the genealogies of corruption that saturate his work. While Lovecraft's entwined racism and repulsion regarding sex is occasionally quite overt—“The Horror at Red Hook” frequently gets dishonorable mentions and critical drubbing for this content—the argument that it is a ubiquitous phenomenon has been neglected in terms of critical attention. Mining this vein, including tracing stylistic choices in his critically acclaimed and pseudonymous work, attempts to launch a new space for scholarly attention to Lovecraft's work.

Human Sacrifice and Ritual Murder on the Bayou: Historical antecedents of the “endless Bacchanal” in The Call of Cthulhu
Daniel Schnopp-Wyatt

Bio:

Daniel Schnopp-Wyatt is an associate professor of counseling and human development at Lindsey Wilson College. His current areas of research include

human sacrifice and ritual murder, unethical human experimentation, historical approaches to substance abuse treatment, and nuclear weaponry. Most of his publications are in the public health domain. He teaches qualitative research in his school's doctoral program and research methodology, ethics, and recreational drug use at the undergraduate level. He collects books and hopes that when he dies his body will be flensed and his skin used to bind a nice three volume edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Abstract:

Between 1910 and 1912, in the bayou country of Louisiana and East Texas, between 47 and 63 African Americans, mostly women and children, were ritualistically murdered in what the newspapers of the time referred to as "blood orgies." The bodies were hideously mutilated and displayed, the blood collected in basins. Only one person, a young Black woman named Clementine Barnabet – dubbed "the Ax-Woman of the Sacrifice Sect" was ever convicted. This presentation will summarize what is known of the murders, the trial, incarceration, sanctioned mutilation, and eventual disappearance of Ms. Barnabet. It will speculate on the nature of cult responsible, placing it in the context of the flowering of esoteric Black religious movements in the Jim Crow era. The case, widely publicized at the time but now almost totally forgotten, likely provided the inspiration for "The Tale of Inspector Legrasse" in "The Call of Cthulhu." The character of Legrasse was likely inspired by Sherriff Louis LaCoste, the lead investigator of the killings. This presentation outlines the murders, discusses connections to the *Xwetanu* human sacrifice ritual of the Mande and Fon peoples of West Africa from which most of the rice belt slaves were taken, and touches on the possibility that anthropomorphized depictions of Fon leaders as sharks influenced Lovecraft's depiction of the Deep Ones in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*.

Session V: 10:30-11:45

**Still Others Have Made Me Tremble: Comparative Lovecraft
Session Chair: Matthew Beach**

Through a Lens Dark and Lightly: The Cosmicism of E. E. Smith and H. P. Lovecraft

Rolf Maurer

Bio:

Rolf Maurer spent several years in trade publishing at *Folio* magazine and was Associate Editor of the small press title, *NOVA*. In print and online, he has also contributed to Suite101.com, *Starlog*, *Sci-Fi Universe* and other genre media publications. Currently, Rolf manages the blog of the "Tuesdays at Curley's/PoemAlley" writing group (<http://poemalley.blogspot.com>), posts occasional commentary and articles on "Full-Frontal Context"

(<http://fullfrontalcontext.blogspot.com>) and is active with the state Green Party. He lives in Stamford, Connecticut.

Abstract:

Despite his general dismissal of the space adventure form competing for pages in “Astounding Stories”, “Weird Tales”, or the other pulps of his day, H.P. Lovecraft, the self-styled antiquarian throwback trapped in the twentieth century, surprisingly enough, had a fan in none other than E.E. “Doc” Smith, generally regarded as the father of science fiction’s space opera sub-category.

Their worldviews as to humanity’s future and place in the universe as either hopelessly vulnerable or expansively anthropocentric merit scrutiny as literary examples of the anticipation and uncertainty defining the years in which their careers overlapped and, in the case of “Doc” Smith, how his narrative perspective has an ongoing resonance as part of our contemporary hi-tech societal self-definition, compared with Lovecraft’s more cyclical appeal.

Among the assorted areas to be examined in this paper are the writers’ respective attitudes toward the exotic and the Other in their writing (be it revulsive or inclusive, human-like or radically different), the contrasting role of Lovecraft’s characters as learned-but-fragile pawns of higher powers, versus Smith’s irrepressibly optimistic, learn-as-you-go heroes facing similar extra-dimensional challenges, as well as what the authors’ attitudes and use of technology in their fiction reveals about particular socio/political and economic inclinations.

Lovecraft, Bataille, and Sacred Terror

Ray Huling

Bio:

Ray Huling is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he studies the folklore of sustainable food. In 2012, the Lyons Press at Globe Pequot published his book, *Harvesting the Bay*, which presents the shellfishing industry of Narragansett Bay as a model of sustainable food production. Ray's scholarship extends and deepens the explorations of his first book by investigating the folklore of urban agriculture through a phenomenological approach to ethnography. His research relies on the anti-productivist, degrowth, or “excessivist” model of sustainability developed over the past decade by scholars who have brought the thought of Georges Bataille to bear on ecological concerns.

Ray has presented papers on Bataille at the 2015 International Society for Humor Studies Conference and the 2017 New England American Studies Association Conference, the latter of which also concerned Lovecraft (and Lovecraft-inspired

board games). Ray's paper on Bataille and the French erotic-horror director Jean Rollin will appear in 2018, in a special issue of the *University of Toronto Quarterly*.

Though he is now a resident of Massachusetts, Ray was born and raised in Rhode Island, and his father's family has lived there since the 1660s. Indeed, the historical section of Lovecraft's tale, "The Shunned House," gives a pretty good account of the locality where he grew up—and even of a few of his neighbors, not to say his relatives.

Abstract:

Had they met in the summer of 1936 and had each known a thing or two about the other, Georges Bataille would have refused to shake H.P. Lovecraft's hand—and Lovecraft would likely have refused Bataille's. By this time, Bataille had founded *Acéphale*, a secret society that, among other things, practiced a taboo against shaking hands with anti-Semites. Lovecraft would have found Bataille's pornography and sexual habits too revolting for *politesse*. This mutual disgust is important to keep in mind when exploring the connections between Lovecraft and Bataille, an exploration that has excited numerous scholars in recent years. Not only do their worldviews, their philosophies, and their dramatizations of their ideas exhibit many parallels, so do their experiences: they both described feelings of horror in confronting the limits and implications of science and the animality of sex, for example. Yet, Bataille and Lovecraft ended up writing from the poles of the extreme left and the extreme right, respectively. What is the meaning of this? My paper not only thinks through Lovecraft from a leftist position, but establishes Lovecraft's fiction as a confrontation with sacredness, in Bataille's sense of the sacred as communication. The keys to this analysis are fascism, a phenomenon that fascinated them both, and eroticism, a phenomenon Bataille dove for the bottom of and Lovecraft hardly dipped a toe into. Bataille sought to counter fascism with his own violent myths, with cultic rituals and sacrificial expenditures that would leave the world too exhausted for war-making. He failed. Lovecraft's sensibilities conformed to and even occasionally exceeded those of the fascists and those of the most continent prudes of his day. But it is Lovecraft's mythologies that endure and inspire to this day, even among those of the anti-fascist, anti-racist left. Lovecraft failed, too, precisely because he has a cult following and because of the sort of followers in his cult. I argue that a meditation on these failures can help to illuminate a path toward a future success, in contemporary leftist terms.

Lovecraft's Accursed Share in Bataille's General Economy

Christian Roy

Bio:

Christian Roy (Ph.D. McGill 1993) is an independent scholar in intellectual history by vocation, a multilingual freelance translator by trade, as well as an art and film critic, who has for instance written extensive analyses of the science-fiction films

The Abyss, Oblivion and Prometheus. Living in Montreal, he is an associate researcher with the Nice-based Centre international de formation européenne, as an expert on the French Personalist school of Federalism to which it is heir. He has published numerous scholarly works and papers on this and other strands of early to mid-twentieth century Western intellectual history, dealing with figures ranging from Paul Tillich to Marshall McLuhan and from Jacques Ellul to Georges Bataille. Roy first approached Lovecraft in light of Bataille in his contribution to NecromoniCon Providence 2015, just published in *Lovecraftian Proceedings 2* (Hippocampus). He is also the author of *Traditional Festivals: A Multicultural Encyclopedia* (2 vols./e-book, ABC-Clio, 2005) sampling rituals and folklore from all continents and periods, available in most North American college and public libraries. Roy is currently completing the first English translation of Ellul's mentor Bernard Charbonneau, an early French pioneer of political ecology and Degrowth: *The Green Light. A Self-Critique of the Ecological Movement* (Bloomsbury).

Abstract:

In writings such as *The Accursed Share* (1946-49), Georges Bataille appropriated Einstein's distinction between general and special relativity for a non-anthropocentric recasting of cosmology and sociology, contrasting the "general economy" of the universe's boundless, pointless wastage of energy with the "special economy" of living entities designed for self-perpetuation. Humans thus tend to economize for utilitarian motives of survival, security and profit, resisting or channeling the lure of loss in the profligate vastness beyond, to which they only give in on special, often ambiguously "sacred" occasions. Lovecraft's once-and-future gods, indifferent or hostile to mankind, moving in deep time on unimaginable scales, may well stand for Bataille's "general economy", where organic life, personal sanity and human civilization appear as insignificant marginal phenomena. This "economic" angle to cosmic horror seems literally translated in *The Shadow Out of Time* (1935). For Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, professor of Political Economy at Miskatonic University, loses his mind to an alien entity in mid-sentence during a lecture in 1908. His amnesia shares the dates of Lovecraft's bout of depression, as he comes back to his senses five years later. Peaslee then completes the mind-blowing thought that "orthodox economist" William Stanley Jevons, who gave the theory of utility its mathematical features and thus "typifies the prevailing trend toward scientific correlation", could take it to its "apex" in tying "the commercial cycle of prosperity and depression with the physical cycle of the solar spots." As with Bataille's paeans to the sun's mad self-expenditure and the galaxies' swirling movement, Lovecraft's "economic" point is that "man must be prepared to accept notions of the cosmos, and of his own place in the seething vortex of time, whose merest mention is paralyzing." The Great Race's social system also reflects Lovecraft's interest in the New Deal with its emphasis on expenditure over savings, which would also fascinate Bataille in the Marshall Plan. However, Bataille sought radical outlets for the energies monopolized by capitalist accumulation, whereas Lovecraft, closer to Marcel Mauss's original anti-utilitarian retrieval of the gift

economy, wanted reformist socialism to save civilization by spreading its energy gains to make non-calculative leisure generally available.

Session VI: 3:00-4:15

No Ordinary Aesthetic Canon: Literary Studies

Session Chair: Troy Rondinone

Anthropodermic Bibliopeggy and the Literature of H. P. Lovecraft

Perry Neil Harrison

Bio:

Perry Neil Harrison is a doctoral candidate in English at Baylor University. Perry is a specialist in Medieval Studies and Old English language and literature, and he moonlights as a scholar of both Robin Hood and H.P. Lovecraft. He received his MA in literature from Abilene Christian University in 2010 and trained in Folklore Studies at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Perry's work on medieval studies appears in *Medieval Perspectives*, *Robin Hood and the Outlaw/ed Literary Canon*, and the first issue of the Armitage Symposium's own *Lovecraftian Proceedings*. In addition to his work in medieval studies, Perry has published widely on anthropodermic bibliopeggy – the binding of books in human skin. Today, Perry will be discussing the appearance of a skin-bound book in Lovecraft's "The Hound."

Abstract:

In his 1924 short story "The Hound," H.P. Lovecraft describes among the belongings of the unnamed narrator and St John, "A locked portfolio, bound in tanned human skin, [holding] certain unknown unnameable drawings which it was rumored Goya had perpetrated but dared not acknowledge." While, at first, this document seems to simply be another artifact in the pair's macabre collection, a closer examination shows that this detail is rooted in the real-life practice of anthropodermic bibliopeggy – the binding of books in human skin.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that Lovecraft drew upon the anthropodermic bookbinding practices of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while creating his fictional folio and characters. Specifically, I argue that the narrator and St John share indisputable traits with the real-life owners and producers of skin-bound books. Carolyn Marvin links those who created and owned these books with "a desire for personal recognition within . . . [an] upper-class avocation of rare-book collecting." While the pair is not formally of the upper class, the narrator goes to great pains to present their tastes in a way that obviously echoes the cultural and aesthetic elite of the time. By demonstrating that the characters in "The Hound" possess the same upper-class artistic tastes as the real-

life owners of anthropodermic books, I demonstrate that Lovecraft situated his narrative within a larger, real-world tradition.

The Rats in the Trenches: The Gothic Horror of the Great War as Revealed in the Writing of H. P. Lovecraft

Steve Walker

Bio:

Stephen (Steve) Walker worked as a librarian at the University of Central Missouri from 1979 up to his retirement in 2016. For some thirty years he was in Technical Services as a cataloger before being traded to Public Services where his duties were that of a reference librarian and bibliographer. Since 1986 he has written a fanzine about H. P. Lovecraft as a result of his membership in the Esoteric Order of Dagon, an amateur press association dedicated to Lovecraft and his world. At the 2013 Necronomicon he presented a paper on Lovecraft and humour, and in 2015 on Lovecraft and names. This time he is humourless and nameless, but not ratless. He will be exploring Lovecraft and the relationship of rats in the Great War to "The Rats in the Walls."

Abstract:

2017 is a centennial for the Great War. Allusions to it appear in several Lovecraft stories, among them "The Rats in the Walls". An indirect reference may be found in the title creatures, since rats compose a frequent presence in some literature about trench warfare. How much does the presentation of the rat nourish Lovecraft's writing of the story? In the war literature, no less than Winston Churchill mentions the presence of rats, and an eyewitness account by a barber-turned-soldier together with an early non-fiction bestseller, *Over the Top*, features them prominently and may establish or re-fortify or extend conventions about them. Poetry and other sources that also include them are evidence. As a symbol the rat is an intermediary between this and the demonic world (to borrow from Northrop Frye), and as such negotiates an ambiguous status, embodying the bestial side of nature and of man, and appears in fiction of the era, including allegorical and fantasy. For example, the war literature portrays rats as, in effect, a placeholder for the ghoul that feasts on the endless supply of the dead, the fallen in battle. A reference in the story to the rats as a "ravenous army" (a pun?) may be traceable to the association of rats as an army and the identification of soldiers with rats. Since during the war the rat was known for eating corpses and destroying food it may be an implicit synecdoche of consumption. Rats also provided sport for soldiers as targets for hunting and more practically helping to save lives through their ability to smell gas. Rats may also represent the manifestations of madness, the result of "shell-shock", now known as PTSD; breakdown of the mind corresponds to the breaching of physical barriers, the human form compromising on a were-rat. When Lovecraft's story first appeared, readers may have been more susceptible to the image of the rat as a creature that was a product of war, the connection being gradually effaced through the years.

Transhumanism, Monstrosity, and Modernity: Rhetorics of Abjection in H. P. Lovecraft's "The Whisperer in Darkness"

Faith Trowell

Bio:

Although Faith Trowell completed her Master's in Rhetoric and Professional writing from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, her first love is Literature. She focuses on Lovecraft, but dabbles in Victorian studies. She has presented at the Tennessee Philological Society and threatens to present again this October at the Popular Culture/American Culture Association in the South's conference in Savannah, Georgia.

When not engaged in academic pursuits, Faith works as a Medicare Marketing Materials Specialist for BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. This affords her enough to support her video gaming hobby and chronic addictions to fashion and yoga.

Faith is currently working towards an MBA in Marketing at UTC. She lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee with her partner of four years and a small, mutinous dog.

Abstract:

This paper explores the ways that H.P. Lovecraft engages with transhumanist rhetorics in "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1931). It incorporates selections from Lovecraft's personal letters that highlight the places in which his strange blend of Enlightenment-era humanist and early twentieth century modernist discourses clash with what he saw as the monstrous, growing "machine culture" of the 1920s and 30s. Based on a close reading of "Whisperer" informed by Lovecraft's letters, what conclusions can we draw about his stance on and answers to transhumanist rhetorics? In what ways are the dynamics of power and powerlessness bound up in this figuration of the abject other? How does Lovecraft use specific rhetorical devices to produce horror and abjection in the transhuman subject? Placing Lovecraft within his own kairotic moment in the years between the two World Wars will prove fruitful to understanding his ethos as a writer of weird fiction and a rhetor. It is hard to believe that such a voluminous letter-writer who also styled himself as an antiquarian and classicist did not have a functional understanding of and use for rhetorical writing. I posit "Whisperer" as a story in which those two elements -- letter writing and rhetorical discourse -- are brought to bear in ways that create a unique opportunity to showcase horror and abjection set against the backdrop of contemporary proto-transhumanist discourses operating in the post-World War I and pre-World War II milieu. This is a time during which humanity was seriously re-evaluating its place in the universe and its relationship to machinery and modernity. Do such developments in technology make humanity monstrous? Even more pertinent to this discussion is *how* humans become more monstrous, more horrific when they allow themselves to be molded by modern (and futuristic) contrivances.

Lovecraft's Dark Continent: At the Mountains of Madness and Antarctic Literature
Ian Feters

Bio:

Ian Feters is a Teaching Associate at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. He teaches Rhetoric & Composition and he is also an ESL specialist at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo. He was selected as the John Hay Library's 2017 recipient of the S. T. Joshi research fellowship. His areas of interest include Lovecraft studies, contemporary weird fiction, psychoanalytic theory, and an abiding love for Antarctic fiction and the Antarctic literary tradition.

Abstract:

This project focuses on H. P. Lovecraft's novel *At the Mountains of Madness* and its place in both the Lovecraft tradition and the Antarctic literary tradition. In the paper, I propose two research questions: first, what can an in-depth analysis of Lovecraft's writing process, specifically focused on the meticulous realism of the polar setting and its relationship to other influences, reveal about the novel's place in Lovecraft's oeuvre? Second, how might that repositioning contribute to granting the novel a greater place in the canon of Antarctic fiction? I use primary sources from the John Hay Library's Lovecraft special collection to answer these questions. Textual criticism of original handwritten and typewritten manuscripts help to deconstruct the novel's writing process and to make connections between the novel and its non-fiction and fiction influences, such as Admiral Byrd's 1928-30 Antarctic expedition and Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Primary sources from the Bradford Swan Antarctic special collection are also used in identifying the non-fiction elements upon which Lovecraft draws in drafting the novel. I argue that in the novel Lovecraft's polar realism is not only spot-on, but that it is the crucial element that contributes to a greater representation of the continent than previous fictional attempts had up to that point in time. I also reference primary source correspondences from the Lovecraft special collection in connection to the developments in writing process noted in the manuscript textual criticism. Lovecraft's correspondence to colleagues, notably J. Vernon Shea and Clark Ashton Smith, help to contextualize Lovecraft's writing of the Antarctic and its effect on his storytelling. From these sources I conclude that not only is *At the Mountains of Madness* a stellar achievement in Lovecraft's pursuits of horrific verisimilitude that warrants further investigation into other works from or around the period of the novel's conception, but the novel also stands to be recognized as the head of the Antarctic fiction tradition for its polar realism and its appreciation of the Antarctic continent as a primary locus of adventurous expectancy.

**Day Three - Bristol-Kent Room, Omni Hotel 3rd Floor
Sunday 8/20**

Session VII: 10:00-11:15

Emanations of Abominations: Lovecraft Around the Globe

Session Chair: Fred S. Lubnow

Lovecraft Out of Space: Influences of the American Weird Fiction on Brazilian Literature and Cinema

Lúcio Reis-Filho

Bio:

Lúcio Reis-Filho is a PhD Candidate in Media Studies at University Anhembi Morumbi / Laureate International Universities (São Paulo, Brazil), historian and author specializing in the relations between cinema, history and literature. Focusing on the horror and science fiction genres, he wrote the essay “Demons to Some, Angels to Others: Eldritch Horrors and Hellbound Religion in the *Hellraiser* Films”, published in the book *Divine Horror: Essays on the Cinematic Battle Between the Sacred and the Diabolical* (McFarland, 2017); the chapters “The Withering Corpse and the Resurrection of the Zombies in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema” (2015), and “The Zombie Invasion on Latin American Independent Horror Films” (2012), both published in horror-themed collections (Editorial Isla Negra, Puerto Rico). He also wrote a short biographical study on George Romero, published in 2013 in a Brazilian book on world independent cinema, and the paper “Draft for a Critical History of Argentine Science Fiction Cinema” (2011), along with Alfredo Suppia, for the *SFRA Review*. Currently, researches the oeuvre of H.P. Lovecraft and its cinematic adaptations.

Abstract:

By developing an oeuvre that has shown resilience for nearly a hundred years, H.P. Lovecraft paved the way for a wide range of cultural products such as theatrical films, television shows, cartoons and games. Not by chance, Lovecraft became one of the most renowned horror writers in the twentieth century. By 1969, he was one of the biggest selling authors in the U.S. and had already reached countries outside the Anglo-Saxon world such as France and Brazil. In the latter, Lovecraft was first published in 1966 by “Edições GRD” (GRD Editions) in Rio de Janeiro, an editorial venture aimed at publishing writers who renewed universal literature. Translated by George Gurjan from *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (1963), the collection included the tales “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926), “The Color out of Space” (1927), and “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930). A decade later, Lovecraft seems to have inspired Carlos Hugo Christensen’s *A Mulher do Desejo – A Casa das Sombras* (*The Woman of Desire – The House of Shadows*, 1975), a piece of Brazilian horror

cinema. The film is tied to significant themes of Lovecraft's work, and share similarities with two of his late stories, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927) and "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1933). Through the analysis of Christensen's film, I observe the impact of Lovecraft's fiction outside the Anglo-Saxon world, notably in Brazil, considering his appropriation/adaptation in the context of Brazilian cinema of the Seventies.

Shadows out of Space, Colours Out of Time: The Cosmic Horror of Junji Ito and Charles Burns
Sean Moreland

Bio:

Sean Moreland's essays, frequently focused on Gothic and weird fiction in literary, cinematic, and sequential art media, have appeared in many collections and journals. He co-edited the essay collections *Fear and Learning: Essays on the Pedagogy of Horror* (McFarland, 2013) and *Monstrous Children and Childish Monsters: Essays on Cinema's Holy Terrors* (McFarland, 2015), edited *The Lovecraftian Poe: Essays on Influence, Reception, Interpretation and Transformation* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), and is currently editing volumes on supernatural horror in literature and the literary legacy of Charles Beaumont. He is creator of *Postscripts to Darkness* (www.pstdarkness.com) and his short fiction and award-winning poetry has most recently appeared in *Over the Rainbow: Fairytales from the Margins*, *Lackington's*, *Black Treacle*, *Acidic Fiction* and *Dissections*. Currently the Horror Literature Division Head for the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts and associate reviews editor for its journal, he is also on the editorial board for the *Edgar Allan Poe Review*, and teaches courses on subjects including horror fiction, American literature, and comics and sequential art at the University of Ottawa.

Abstract:

This paper considers both how Lovecraft's ideas of weird fiction and cosmic horror are uniquely suited to the formal characteristics and conceptual possibilities of comics as a medium, and more specifically how the work of mangaka Junji Ito embodies something of the "cosmic outsidersness" that Lovecraft identified as the *sine non qua* of weird fiction.

While Ito acknowledges Lovecraft's influence in interviews and commentaries, he is not known primarily for visual adaptations of Lovecraft, having instead developed a unique approach to the weird. Yet his exploration of the formal and structural possibilities of sequential art embodies the principles of weird fiction, as adumbrated by Lovecraft in *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, and articulated at greater length in many of his letters and other critical writings. I will focus on Ito's *Uzumaki* and his more recent *Fragments of Horror*, graphic texts that share an unsettling interrogation of our human perspectives on spatial and temporal

relationships. Making subversive use of fascinatingly detailed line-work and the relationship between panels and inter-panel gutters, these texts suggest a momentary disruption of “the galling limitations of space and time,” a trait Lovecraft viewed as the central goal of cosmic weird fiction.

Innsmouth, Florida
David Goudsward

Bio:

David Goudsward is an independent scholar now located in Florida. He is the author of 14 books on various nonfiction topics ranging from *H. P. Lovecraft in the Merrimack Valley* (Hippocampus Press) to *Ancient Stone Sites of New England and the Debate Over Early European Exploration* (McFarland). He is co-author of the ongoing *Horror Guide* series from Post Mortem Press, a series of regional gazetteers of horror film and fiction settings. He can occasionally be seen on episodes of the Travel Channel programs *Mysteries at the Museum* and *Mysteries at the Monument*. Future publications include *H. P. Lovecraft in Florida* (Hippocampus Press) and a biography of Samuel Loveman.

Abstract:

Lovecraft makes no secret in his correspondence that Innsmouth is based on Newburyport, Massachusetts, a town he first visits in 1923 and visits repeatedly, including a trip in October 1931. Within a month of this 1931 visit, he begins the first draft of *Shadows over Innsmouth*. Newburyport is unquestionably the primary inspiration for geography, both as both an idealized version of itself and as its own antithesis in Innsmouth, with the narrator paralleling Lovecraft’s own Newburyport tourist destinations. However, during his first visit to Florida earlier that year, Lovecraft notes in a letter to August Derleth that although St. Augustine was his favorite Floridian location, a glass-bottom boat ride from Miami to the coral reefs in Biscayne Bay had sparked an idea for a story set around a reef in the tropics. The tropical story never materializes, but the next story Lovecraft writes features the partially hidden Devil's Reef off the coast of Innsmouth. This letter to Derleth is the first clue that his visit to St. Augustine contributes as much influence, if not more, as Newburyport on *Shadows over Innsmouth*. Placing Lovecraft’s St. Augustine travel destinations in context to the story, they serve as plot points vital to the story.

Alexander Blok and H. P. Lovecraft: On the Mythopoetics of the Supernatural
Elena Tchougounova-Paulson

Bio:

Elena Tchougounova-Paulson received her PhD at the Department of Theory and Methodology of Philology and Art (A.M. Gorky Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow). Her Ph.D. is in 20th Century Russian

literature. She worked as Head of the Communications Department and later as a Research fellow and publisher at the Research Information Centre at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow. As a textual scholar and translator, she took part in several editorial projects. She is currently an independent researcher, resident in Cambridge, taking part in a variety of academic events. Her main research interests are in Russian Literature, American Literature, Textual Studies, Theory of Literature, and the History of Literature.

Abstract:

In this paper, I analyze the vivid resemblance between the literary works of the Russian poet-Symbolist Alexander Blok and HP Lovecraft from the perspective of their mythopoetics. Such an approach is entirely original; although scholars have studied both authors extensively, none has attempted a comparative assessment of their aesthetic worldviews. I address not only the writings of Blok and Lovecraft themselves, but also their extra-textual substantiality, including the evolution of Blok's and Lovecraft's *Weltanschauung* as incarnated in their heritage. My analysis proceeds in two stages. First, I classify the most significant publications on which a comparative study can be based and second, I establish the actual conception on the structural and typological levels, using primarily comparative and intertextual methods as theoretical frameworks.

Why, exactly, these two writers? Because there is a striking similarity in the depth of their world perception and in their philosophical development. Given the extensiveness of this topic, I offer here only an introductory commentary. The works dedicated to Blok and Lovecraft (individually) are voluminous. Of the two, only Blok has received significant attention in both Russian and Western literary studies, largely as the key figure in the literature of the Russian *fin de siècle* (or *Silver Age*). Lovecraft's work has remained primarily the domain of Western scholars, who have addressed his influence on modern American literature, fine art and cinema. Existing work in Russian is preoccupied with the artistic methods used in his fiction, the structure of *The Cthulhu Mythos*, and Lovecraft's substantial role in American neo-Gothic culture. Comparing the poetics of the supernatural in Blok and Lovecraft's works demands an examination of their entire oeuvre, including poetry, fiction, articles, and correspondence.

Session VIII: 11:30-12:45

Transformations and Reintegrations: Reclaiming Lovecraft

Session Chair: Rolf Maurer

Lovecraft's Consolation

Matthew Beach

Bio:

Matthew Beach received his doctorate in English from Brown University in 2017. His research focuses on time and the body in American literature, particularly in popular genres such as pulp and sentimental fiction. His work appears in *Lovecraftian Proceedings Vol. 2*.

Abstract:

H.P. Lovecraft's vision of humanity's place within cosmic space and time has often been noted for its bleakness if not its horror. My talk makes the case for a more complex view of how Lovecraft understood his cosmic philosophy by exploring one of its overlooked dimensions: consolation. Drawing on archival research, my talk focuses on how Lovecraft adapted his theories of cosmic time in his correspondence to provide (weird) consolation to those experiencing suffering. In his letters, Lovecraft speaks of offering consolation by providing a "telescopic" view of time and space. To help relieve pain, make it more endurable, or simply put it in perspective, Lovecraft contextualizes the reader's local suffering within a larger framework of time.

To explore the consoling dimension of Lovecraft's philosophy, my talk focuses on a series of what I argue are consolation letters between Lovecraft and Helen V. Sully, beginning in 1933 and continuing until Lovecraft's death. Throughout these letters, Lovecraft seeks to alleviate Sully's (emotional) pain and suffering by reminding her of the insignificance of humanity within the cosmos. For Lovecraft, the impersonality of the cosmos represents a relief from the intense personality of human pain and suffering. I argue that Lovecraft's writing in the genre of the consolation letter offers insight into the complexity and range of his cosmic philosophy. I suggest these consolation letters represent the human side of Lovecraft's philosophy, which in his stories appears more impersonal or nonhuman. His cosmic philosophy, developed in his stories and his correspondence, contains the potential for both horror and a weird form of consolation.

Naming the Unnamable: The Ethics of Lovecraftian Horror

Paul Neimann

Bio:

Paul Neimann (Ph.D.) is an Instructor at the University of Colorado Boulder. He studies mainly seventeenth and eighteenth century literature, with a focus on religious thought and conflict. He worked to bring courses in Gothic and Horror to the university's core curriculum and teaches them with an emphasis on psychoanalytic theory.

Abstract:

H.P. Lovecraft's brief tale "The Unnamable" (1925) has been taken as a metafictional commentary on the supernatural in fiction. That description points to elements of the story generally evident in Lovecraft's work and treated in criticism: rejection of

realism, baroque prose and obscurity in representation, a conflicted relationship with commercialism. But that reading, which fits Lovecraft's remarks in "Supernatural Horror in Literature," may prove too simple. The story—in remarkably programmatic fashion—examines and, I argue, apparently discards familiar aesthetic theory around Gothic and weird traditions, including perhaps Lovecraft's own statements on the suprasensory. The narrative effort to define "the Unnamable" nearly settles on something like Freud's Uncanny, or the socially repressed, as a source of true horror. References to oppressive Puritanism in Cotton Mather—whose lurid 1702 account of a human/animal hybrid informs the story—flirt with psycho-biographical hermeneutics commonly applied to Lovecraft himself. But the story also resists being read as an account of repression, often seen as horror fiction's clearest moral tendency. This paper tries to discern a theory of horror by looking at what Lovecraft rejects—and then poses some questions about the ethical implications of insisting on the unspeakable.

The Pathos in the Mythos: Real Feeling in Lovecraft and Lavalley

Ann McCarthy

Bio:

Ann McCarthy lives in Boston and always has. She graduated from Barnard College and obtained a Master's in English Literature at Boston University, with a particular focus on 18th century British works. She loves Lovecraft as much as she loves anything in her life.

Abstract:

In "H.P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life," Michel Houellebecq posits meaninglessness as a central Lovecraft theme, claiming that Lovecraft "destroys his characters, invoking only the dismemberment of marionettes." (Houellebecq, 32) This reading is borne out somewhat in the popular conception of Lovecraft. That is to say, everybody knows Cthulhu, but no one's talking about Albert N. Wilmarth. Well, I am here to talk about Albert N. Wilmarth, and some others. Their lives contain fascination and suffering. Discussing "Melmoth, the Wanderer in Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft praises "the white heat of sympathetic passion on the writer's part which makes the book a true document of aesthetic self-expression." (Lovecraft, 32) My goal in this paper is, via close reading, to locate this passion as it manifests in different ways in "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," "The Whisperer in Darkness," "The Rats in the Walls," and Victor Lavalley's *The Ballad of Black Tom*, a recent retelling of "The Horror at Red Hook." The characters' relationships with history and one another, their rich feeling, need not be diminished by any perceived futility in relation to the larger universe.

The seeking, the passion for data, the consultation of primary sources, the attachment to past and present Providence that obsess young Charles Dexter Ward

constitute an academic romance, an ecstasy of research and humanism. “The Whisperer in Darkness” continues the theme of academic engagement, while also adding the element of friendship. The bonding of Wilmarth and Akeley over their shared interest in the mythos, their antiquarian sleuthing collaboration via correspondence, comprise the warm human core of the story.

“The war ate my boy,” Dellapore says at the climax of “The Rats in the Walls.” His grief over his son’s maiming and eventual death from injuries sustained in World War One precipitates his relocation to Exham Priory, and his ultimate break with civilization. No marionette, he! Finally, it is useful for comparison here to look at the centrality of the father-son relationship in Victor Lavalley’s *The Ballad of Black Tom*.

Dreams of Lost Time and Space: Lovecraft's Writings on Nostalgia and Home **Daniel Rottenberg**

Bio:

Daniel Rottenberg is an English student at Metropolitan State University of Denver. He has presented on New Sincerity Movement, mythology, nostalgia, and horror at conferences around the country, including NecronomiCon, Denver Comic Con, the Sigma Tau Delta international convention, and the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association conference. Daniel has always been a fan of horror and came across Lovecraft rather late in 2013, but has since devoured wide ranges of weird fiction and scholarly essays on the topic. He has been published in his school’s magazine for short horror stories in the past. Aside from school and conferences, Daniel works as a piano performer specializing in ragtime and stride. He has played at ragtime festivals in Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. He is also an avid fan of The Muppets, and he builds his own Muppet-style puppets and writes musicals for them.

Abstract:

H. P. Lovecraft’s body of work examines humanity’s bleak position within the indifferent cosmos. This is illustrated by use of unnameable monsters, unmentionable tomes, blasphemous ventures into scientific terrors, and mysterious cults always trying to release horrors upon us which have been writhing perpetually just beyond our peripheries. These elements can be attributed to Lovecraft’s own philosophies on horror, which he establishes opening his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature”: “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.” Lovecraft adhered to the idea that true horror is the unknown and unknowable, and he repeatedly demonstrated this through protagonists ending their own lives or going mad. While this may be true of Lovecraft’s indifferent cosmos, it lingers into our closest liminal spaces, including childhood, nostalgia, and home, which empowers the horror to

turn to wonder. This can be seen in *The Silver Key*, in which Randolph Carter returns to his boyhood home, where he sets aside scientific dogma for the dreams and wonders of his ten-year old self; in *The Outsider*, in which a ghoul laments on the decay of the world and longs for companionship; and in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, in which Carter crosses the Dreamlands for his sunset city, only to have been pining for his home of Boston all along. Indeed, Lovecraft tends to decry the unknown as horrific dreamscapes of ichor-dripping tentacles, but many stories blurred the lines of horror and wonder, conjoining the post-modern New Romanticism to the science fiction-gothic horror he championed. Even the scientists and scholars are tempted through curiosity and wonder when exploring tomes and ancient cities. By equating the three subjects of strong emotion, fear, and the unknown, Lovecraft not only welcomed childhood-like wonder into his cosmos, but also delivered truths about confronting safeguards of memory through nostalgia and home.